1417 War Beast

Sunny remained motionless for a while, looking at the landscape in front of him.

The tower stood on a tall black cliff, perched on top of it like a grey obelisk. There were stone steps climbing down the cliff from its ornate gate, leading to a bridge that arched across the wide moat. Surrounded by the forest from all sides, the tower was like an island in the sea of swirling white mist.

The light in one of its windows was not the only peculiar thing Sunny had noticed, too.

The most striking detail was the moat itself. The water in it was churning and flowing, moving endlessly in a circle. The current was powerful enough to dissuade Sunny from trying to cross it — not he would consider doing such a thing on an island surrounded by a mysterious whirlpool of time.

That made the bridge the only feasible way of getting to the tower apart from flying. The bridge, however...

Sunny's expression dimmed.

The bridge was littered with inhuman bones. There were a few living Nightmare Creatures standing on it, as well — all of them stiff and eerily motionless, as if petrified. Just one look at that scene made Sunny reluctant to go anywhere near the bridge.

He did not need to, anyway. The Guiding Light was pointing past the tower, at the vast expanse of the misty forest behind it. Effie seemed to have landed on the opposite side of the island from Jet.

Still, it was not going to hurt him to observe the tower some more. It was the former citadel of the powerful Seeker who had once lived on Wind Flower, after all — even though investigating it was not the reason why Sunny and his companions had arrived at the island, he had a sneaking suspicion that they would end up having to, somehow.

After staring at the tower for a while longer, Sunny noticed that there were runes carved into the base of the black cliff. They were hard to notice from a distance due to the color of the weathered rock, but he had no doubt that there was a massive enchantment of some sort surrounding the Seeker's citadel.

Perhaps the bones littering the bridge ended up there because of the enchantment.

Finally, Sunny looked up and focused on the single illuminated window at the top of the tower.

'I do wonder what is hidden there.'

But it was not his business. Not in this revolution, at least...

Rather, Sunny was concerned that the Nightmare Creatures standing motionlessly on the bridge would regain their senses and catch his scent. Throwing a look at them, he grimaced.

'Corrupted Tyrant, Great Beast... a Terror...'

The last one did not even look like something that should be able to exist on land. How had that thing reached so far inland? Sunny shook his head, reluctant to find out.

He was ready to send Nightmare away when the ground quaked subtly under them. Instantly, Sunny paled.

Then, the familiar sound of snapping trees reached his ears, making the blood in his veins turn to ice.

A split second later, both the rider and his steed disappeared, turning into shadows.

Hiding in the darkness, Sunny suppressed his fear and looked in the direction from which the cracking sound had come. Frozen, he watched as a towering figure slowly appeared from the mist.

'D—damnation!'

Some distance away, something giant was hunched among the trees. As Sunny watched, petrified, the terrifying giant slowly straightened and towered above the ancient pines, dwarfing them with its impossible height. The tips of the trees barely reached its waist.

'That thing is... is at least a hundred meters tall...'

The giant was vaguely human-like in appearance. At first, Sunny had mistaken it for a beast, but then realized that the ragged fur covering its body was merely a crude cloak sewn from the vast hide of an unknown abomination.

The giant... seemed to be female.

Her gaunt, gargantuan body was brimming with terrifying, primal power. There were many bruises, deep cuts, and gaping lacerations marring her dirty skin, most seeping with rotten puss. Her long hair was matted and wild, hanging down messily to obscure her face. Rugged and wrapped in furs, the giantess seemed more bestial than human... and yet, she was one. Or had been once, at least.

Sunny felt unable to move. While he remained in place, the giantess raised one of her enormous, bruised, painfully familiar hands. In it, a grotesque creature that resembled a massive black octopus was struggling desperately, its long tentacles whipping around with enough force to turn the ancient pines into clouds of dust. A viscous, corrosive liquid streamed from them, dissolving everything it touched.

However, the giantess did not seem bothered at all. The black acid rolled from her skin like water, not dealing any damage to it. A few moments later, she brought the struggling horror to her mouth and bit into it viciously, tearing away an enormous chunk of revolting flesh.

The matted hair parted, revealing her bloodied, twisted face.

The giantess was missing one eye, while the other burned with madness and indescribable hunger. Watching the enormous octopus being greedily devoured, Sunny finally realized how the decaying leopard had perished, and whom the hand that had killed the members of the cohort in the last revolution belonged to.

Her thoughts turned cold. '...Devouring Beast.'

Indeed, the nebulous being that wandered the mist... was none other than the Devouring Beast, one of the Six Plagues of the Great River. Just like Undying Slaughter, she was also here, on Wind Flower.

She was the future, Defiled version of Effie. 'Two of them...'

It... made sense, really. Sunny had theorized that the mist wraith had been sent here to satiate her Flaw. Why would the Devouring Beast be any different? Her hunger was just like Jet's need to kill living beings. Without the cities full of humans to devour, it could only lead to disaster.

How could a creature that always needed to kill and a creature that always needed to consume remain in Verge? If these two abominable slayers were not sent somewhere where their Flaws could be contained, they would have brought the city of the Defiled to extinction, as well.

Had they come here voluntarily? Or had the Dread Lord lured and imprisoned them here once the sybils were defeated?

In any case, the situation of the cohort did not change.

Sunny stared at the harrowing giantess for a few more moments, then rushed away as fast as he could. He and Nightmare had to escape before she noticed them.

'I guess... I did find Effie.'

However, that abomination was not the Effie he wanted to find.