1422 The Incredible Adventures and Astonishing Deeds of Heroic Dreamer Sunless and his Valiant Companions in the Evil Pyramid of Ancient Dread, Abridged (Volume VI)

After the initial shock of their meeting subsided, Sunny and Effie slowly headed deeper inland. Sunny was retracing his steps, while Effie had never been this far into the misty forest before — most of her time on Wind Flower had been spent hiding from a ferocious Nightmare Creature that dwelled on the shore.

She had ventured out in search of Jet eventually, but found Sunny instead.

He was still reeling from the fact that the vivacious huntress was with child... and that the father was a Sleeper who had once been under his command. That was a lot to digest and come to terms with.

It also changed a lot...

'No wonder Jet said that she was the only one who killed plenty of enemies.'

Effie still possessed her strength and resilience, and Sunny was still benefiting from being augmented by her Ascended Ability... but the huntress was in no state to fight. Her condition not only made her slower and less agile, but was also too delicate for the kind of physical strain a battle entailed.

What battle? She couldn't even ride Nightmare, so they had to walk at a painfully slow pace.

'That's a problem.'

Now that Effie was with him, Sunny could not cross the chasm in the same manner he had done it the first time... which meant that they would have to go around it. Added to their already lacking speed, the chance of making it to the other side of the island before the revolution ended was low.

He could not run from the Nightmare Creatures inhabiting the forest, either — it had been possible when Sunny was free to use Shadow Step, but the only person who could accompany him into the embrace of

shadows was Nephis. With Effie, he had to stay grounded in his tangible form.

Suddenly, the misty expanse of the hellish island seemed infinitely vaster and more dreadful than before.

However, Sunny kept these thoughts to himself.

"...so, we spent a nice, relaxing month drifting downstream on the corpse of a Great Monster while it was being slowly devoured by a swarm of horrid abominations. Sounds ghastly, I know, but it was actually sort of peaceful. Well... anyway, in the end, I had to turn into a colossal sea serpent and kill another, even more colossal sea serpent. He turned out to be the former king of Twilight..."

Effie stared at him silently.

"...but that Dusk, whom I had killed before, turned out to be... Cassie! That's right, she has been living the sweet life in a beautiful palace all that time. Talk about being lucky, huh? So, we repaired the ship in Fallen Grace and sailed to kill a different sybil. That one, I had not killed before. She was a Corrupted Tyrant, too, but Cassie went and finished her off in one strike. What the hell, I felt so embarrassed... it would have probably taken me at least one-and-a-half strikes, you know?"

The huntress took a deep breath.

"...so, congratulations! Now you know that you have an evil twin from the future. And your Transformation Ability is to become really tall. As if you aren't tall enough already! Right, Jet's evil twin is also here, and she's even less pleasant. If it wasn't for the time loop, I would have been dead because of her."

Sunny paused for a few moments, then nodded.

"Yeah. I think that covers right about everything." Looking at Effie, he noticed that her expression was blank. He raised an eyebrow.

"Uh... did I not explain about the time loop well enough? I know, it's weird."

The huntress slowly shook her head.

"No. I get it. But, Sunny... do you mean to say..." Her eyes were suddenly flashed with annoyance. "...That I've been pregnant for more than a year?!" 'Huh?'

Now, it was his turn to have a blank expression. The corner of Sunny's mouth twitched.

"Everything I said, and that's your only question?!" Effie shook her head furiously.

"No, but you don't understand! Do you think being pregnant is fun?! Do you think it feels great?! Nine months is already bad enough, but it has already been more than a year, and I'm barely half-done!"

She rubbed her back with an aggrieved expression and pierced him with an angry look.

Sunny blinked.

"What are you getting angry at me for? It's not my fault! Plus, it has only technically been that long. From your perspective, those additional months do not even count!"

Effie opened her mouth, then closed it again.

"That's even worse!"

Then, she stopped, leaned on her spear, and let out a long sigh. "...I'm hungry."

Sunny was stunned. He was perplexed.

'Women!'

Shaking his head, he summoned the Covetous Coffer and produced some food from it. Effie's eyes glinted when she saw fruit, bread, and cheese. Grabbing a handful of grapes, she sent them into her mouth.

"Oh. Oh, gods! This is it! You can't imagine... how sick I was of seaweed and fish meat... well, abomination meat..."

Sunny watched her eat silently. It seemed that Effie's already impossible hunger had become twice as dire, now... even though there was a lot of food stored in the Coffer, it was disappearing with a frightening speed.

He had summoned Saint and Fiend soon after realizing that escaping the abominations was not an option anymore, so they were standing guard around them, joined by Nightmare.

After a while, Sunny offered Effie the Endless Spring and hesitated for a few moments.

Eventually, he said:

"It must have been hard. To survive the Great River like that — unable to fight... or even protect yourself well, really. Both yourself and the... the child."

The huntress looked at him for a few moments, then shrugged with a smile.

"Yeah, sure, it wasn't easy. But Jet took good care of me." He lingered for a bit.

"So why did you do it?"

Effie raised an eyebrow.

"Did what?"

Sunny's voice was somber and serious:

"Why did you come to the Nightmare with us instead of escaping with Beastmaster?"

Her expression froze. "Oh..."

Effie did not answer for a while. Then, she looked down and caressed her protruding belly with a distant smile.

After a few moments of silence, she said in a subdued tone:

"Just, you know... the world is already falling apart at the seams. So, I thought, in a place like that... would this kid want to also be raised by a mother who abandons her friends? And the answer... was no."

Looking up, she put on a fake grin and shrugged.

"At least that's what I reckoned."

Sunny studied her face for a few moments, then looked away and nodded. Then, he smiled crookedly.

"I see. So... you challenged the Third Nightmare to set an example for your child. Okay. Alright. Are you crazy?! What kind of example is that?!"

Effie laughed.

When she answered, her voice was soft: "A stupid one?"

...In the end, they did not make it to the Chain Breaker in time. Sunny managed to keep Effie safe, but the revolution ended before they even reached the tower.

Coming to his senses on the familiar deck, Sunny looked into the mist and exhaled slowly.

'A stupid example, huh?'

Professor Obel might have been right...

Humanity needed a little stupidity to survive.

Tiredly closing his eyes, he lowered his head and sighed.

'This... is going to be a very, very long day.'