1425 Cavern Terror

The caverns were a Corrupted Terror's territory.

A Corrupted Terror... it had not been that long ago that Sunny would have shuddered from a mere thought of fighting a creature like that. He was still apprehensive, of course, but not nearly as much as a wise person would have been.

An abomination of that Rank and Class was not something a lone Master should have the ambition to kill — or a cohort of them, really. Sybil of the Fallen Grace, for example, had not only wiped out the entirety of L049 and the enormous battleship sent to rescue its personnel, but also almost ended the lives of Sunny, Naeve, and Saint Bloodwave at Falcon Scott.

A Corrupted Terror was a walking disaster of chilling proportions.

...Of course, just like all people were not the same, Nightmare Creatures weren't either. One Terror could be much more dreadful than another, even within the boundaries of a same Rank. How one's Aspect countered the creature's powers, or was countered instead, also played a large role.

Sybil of the Fallen Grace, for example, had been a harrowing being even among Terrors. She had also possessed an especially insidious kind of power — the power to twist minds and subjugate living beings.

The creature hiding in the caverns of Wind Flower was entirely different.

This Terror did not possess powers that allowed it to play with its prey's mind. Neither could it destroy the prey's soul. Instead, it was viciously strong and covered by nearly impervious armor.

Or maybe it was not nearly, but absolutely impervious. At least Sunny had not been able to break it yet.

As for powers...

He wasn't sure, but it seemed like the incredible toughness of the creature's hide was a part of them. Sunny also suspected that the very existence of the underground caverns had something to do with the Terror.

If not for the fact that time on Wind Flower only encompassed a single day, who knew... perhaps, in the near future, the whole forest would have been swallowed by the growing chasm beneath it. He could also imagine entire cities turning into ruin as they collapsed into the maw of devouring

earth... continents, perhaps, given enough time.

However, Sunny was not too tense about clashing with the Cavern Terror. There were two reasons why he felt hopeful about the upcoming battle.

Firstly, the creature was clearly out of its element. Not only was it trapped on an island and surrounded by water, with no time to let its dreadful influence spread, but it was also without an army of minions. Things would have been much more dreary if the system of caves was flooded with hundreds, or even thousands, of lesser abominations with similarly tough bodies.

The second reason was Jet. Her ability to ignore all forms of physical defense directly countered the most threatening trait of the powerful Terror. As long as they lived long enough for her to deliver several strikes, they would win.

The long pikes were meant to buy them that time.

As the cohort moved deeper into the caverns, Sunny explained all these points to his companions. Nephis nodded, expressing her approval of the plan.

"It would be wise not to kill it too quickly, though." He looked at her in surprise.

"Why?"•

She silently pointed to Cassie.

"Cassie needs a little time to gain knowledge of its Attributes and powers. Even if we kill this Terror now, we'll still have to face it again in the future revolutions. Her insights are much deeper than what any of us can learn from pure observation, so, with her help, fighting this Terror the next time will be easier."

She paused for a moment, and then added evenly:

"In fact, in your place, I would have brought Cassie with me everywhere. To learn about every abomination on this island from her."

Sunny stared at Nephis for a while, then turned to Cassie. 'Actually, she's right.'

He had been dying over and over again, slowly learning more about the dreadful prisoners of Wind Flower with each death. Bringing Cassie along would have sped up the process dramatically, and even allowed him to

learn things he would have never learned otherwise... and yet, he had not. Because it meant that Cassie would die over and over again, too.

And while Sunny shuddered at the thought of being cruelly killed, watching his companions die was so much worse.

...Watching Cassie die was especially hard. Maybe because, despite the fact that the delicate blind girl had proven her strength over and over again, she was still the weakest of them. And he... deep down inside, he still saw her as someone who needed his protection.

Cassie was quiet and unassuming, so it was not easy to keep her martial prowess in mind.

Sunny sighed and lowered his head.

'I'll have to involve her, regardless. My progress is too slow.'

At that moment, they entered another large cavern. The darkness here seemed especially deep and oppressive, barely retreating from the light of their luminous Memories.

He suddenly sensed the shadows moving ominously behind the thick rock wall.

Looking up sharply, Sunny lowered his pike and shouted: "Right side! Prepare!"

In the next moment...

The wall of the cavern to their right suddenly exploded, several tons of broken stone flying at them like an artillery shells. Sunny barely had time to dodge a slab of black rock when a massive shape revealed itself from the cloud of dust, already descending upon them.

'Curses!'

The Terror resembled a giant, monstrous termite. Sunny could only see its massive head and an opened maw, with saw-like mandibles protruding repulsively from its edges. Its head alone was almost as wide as the entire cavern, and it was flying at them with dreadful speed.

The dark chasm of the creature's maw was like a cave itself.

Sunny had perished painfully inside its darkness once or twice, so he knew that there was no escape from it.

His eyes glinted furiously.

'Not this time, damn it!'

But at the same time, another, exhausted part of his mind thought:

'Ah... so what if I die again? I'm so tired...'