1428 Searching Reflection

Sunny waited for a moment... then waited some more. He was back on the deck of the Chain Breaker, surrounded by flowing mist. A slight tremor ran through his body.

'I'm tired.'

He straightened slowly and stared into the fog. It was time for him to take a break, but... Sunny wasn't even sure what he was supposed to do. His companions were just as useless as far as resting was concerned — none of them had given him a single good idea.

Well... except for Jet. She had looked at him for a few moments, chuckled, and told him to take a good nap.

Which was not a bad piece of advice. As a government officer who had always looked overworked and suffering from sleep deprivation, she would know best.

That said...

Even though this revolution was supposed to be his day off, Sunny still had to rescue Jet. Relaxing while she was being killed by Undying Slaughter did not sound restful at all. He couldn't bring himself to even think about skipping this step.

'Ah...'

Glancing at Nephis and Cassie, Sunny walked over to Nightmare and climbed into the saddle. Neph looked at him questioningly.

"Sunny? What are you doing?"

He couldn't be bothered to explain things properly.

"Leaving. Don't worry, I'll be back soon. Until then... just stay here."

Leaving the two bewildered young women behind, Nightmare leaped into the mist.

As the familiar scenes flew past him, Sunny summoned the Mirror of Truth and studied the reflection of Neph's on its mercurial surface. After hesitating for a few moments, he activated the [ Searching Reflection] enchantment.

At the same time, he imagined a pure white flame and thought: 'Soul Flame.'

A small crack appeared on the silver mirror.

Suddenly, Sunny felt very strange. It was as if his soul, which had always been still and silent, was in motion... rolling, billowing. Burning. It was not painful, just unfamiliar.

[ Soul Flame] Ability Description: "Your soul burns with the purest of flames. That flame can both restore and destroy, and is both a blessing and a curse."

'How peculiar.'

Sunny had gained Neph's Dormant Ability. It was then that he realized an important detail — possessing something and being in control of it were two different things. He should have expected that much, though. After all, it took him some time to learn how to use his own Aspect.

For the rest of the way, Sunny kept trying to manifest Soul Flame. As he did, more tiny cracks appeared on the surface of the Mirror of Truth. Judging by the rate at which the Memory deteriorated, he could borrow a Dormant Ability for about half a day.

He suspected that an Awakened one would destroy the Memory in a few hours, while an Ascended one would not last for more than one. A Transcendent Ability might shatter the Mirror of Truth in mere minutes, while anything greater... perhaps just a few moments would be enough.

Still... it was sort of exhilarating.

Eventually, a small black flame appeared on his palm. Sunny stared at it incredulously.

'...It's black?'

He had expected to see the pure white flame, just like what Nephis could summon.

But it made sense. Soulflame was just that... flame produced from one's soul. Neph's soul was pure and incandescent, while his was lightless and dark.

Sunny also felt that his black flame was much, much weaker than hers. It was reasonable, too — although the [Flame of Divinity] and the potency of his Ascended soul fueled it, he lacked Neph's lineage Attribute, [The Fire]. That Attribute granted her unmatched affinity to flame and, among other things, empowered her soul.

Also... Sunny lacked the innate resistance to fire it granted her. "Ouch!"

He hurriedly dismissed the black flame when the skin on his palm started to blister. It hurt like hell.

Sunny was no stranger to pain, but burning... burning was up there with the absolute worst kinds of it. It was hard to imagine something more terrible.

A deep frown contorted his face.

As Nightmare dashed deeper into the misty forest, Sunny continued concentrating on his newfound Ability. Eventually, he managed to summon soulflame again, this time channeling it into his body instead of manifesting it outside of himself. This time, it did not hurt.

His skin was suddenly suffused with a strange dark radiance. Concentrating it on his hands, he watched as the blisters on his palm slowly disappeared.

Sunny had just healed himself.

'Wow.'

How nice would it be, to be able to mend his own wounds? He shook his head.

'Where did Neph get the audacity to call me a cockroach, even?' If anything, she was the ultimate roach!

He spent a bit more time experimenting with soulflame and eventually managed to get it to empower his body. Augmented both by both the dark flames and the shadows, Sunny felt dire strength coursing through his veins... it was not quite as daunting as when Nephis shared her flame with him, but almost comparable.

One curious detail of this augmentation was that it did not divide itself into five distinct parts, akin to his five shadows. Instead, it was a single mass of flame which could be divided however he wished.

'Huh...'

Sunny imagined being augmented by his five shadows, all of the authentic soulflame, all of the mirrored souflame, Effie's Ascended Ability, and the Crown of Dawn on top of that.

Wouldn't that turn him into an absolute monster?

Yes, it would... sadly, Wind Flower was a place where even a monster like that was close to the bottom of the food chain.

'It's an option worth remembering, though.'

At this point, Sunny could already smell Jet's blood in the air.

Galloping past the familiar trees, he noticed her hunched figure and reached down.

"Grab my hand!"

Jet looked up, her face pale and pained. It took her a moment to recognize his voice, and another one to shake off her shock. Not even understanding the situation completely, she reached forward.

Sunny pulled her up. This time, however, he put Jet in front of him, instead of behind him.

They ended up in quite an awkward pose, his hand pressed against her back and soaked in her blood.

She grimaced.

"Sunny... you... really know how to..."

He interrupted her:

"Make a girl squeal? Yeah. I know. Now, stay still."

His bloodied hand was suddenly suffused with the dark radiance once again. And washed in that radiance... Jet's wounds slowly began to heal.

It was nowhere near as fast and efficient as when Nephis healed people, but it still worked. And since Neph was currently devoid of essence, that was more than enough.

A dark smile appeared on his face.

'That should save me a lot of time in the future...'

No matter how many times the future repeated itself.