1433 Trying Something New

Sunny remained under the sacred tree for a while, staring silently into the mist. The cold wind blew from beyond the island, bringing with it an insidious chill. The silence was only broken by the muffled rustling of leaves.

His thoughts were dark.

He did not know how much time had passed, exactly, when something seemed to change about the world. Sunny let out a quiet sigh and rose to his feet, hugging himself to preserve what little warmth remained from escaping into the fog.

Looking down, he lingered for a few moments, and then said somberly: "So you are finally here."

At first, there was no response.

Then, the fog moved slightly, revealing a vague silhouette that had been hidden by its flowing veil. A wraith made of mist was standing on the deck of the Chain Breaker, mere meters away. Her inhumanly cold blue eyes were gazing at him with no emotion.

Sunny smiled darkly.

"No wonder it took me a whole week to catch up on sleep."

Every time Sunny slept, he would come to his senses at the start of the loop. There were two possible explanations for why he did — either Sunny was sleeping for too long... or something killed him while he slept.

He had assumed that it was the former. But now, he knew that it was the latter.

His hands trembled and turned into fists. 'Of course...of course. Why else?'

For dozens of revolutions, Sunny had been telling his companions to hide inside the Chain Breaker and wait while he risked his life exploring the island.

But who said that the ship was safe?

Sunny had never seen Undying Slaughter find it. But today was also the

first time he had remained on the Chain Breaker for more than a couple of hours, awake...

'Curse you...'

A deep darkness shrouded his eyes.

It meant that every time Sunny had left, thinking that his companions would be safe, the mist wraith discovered them.

And killed them.

Cassie and Jet had been killed terribly, over and over again, while he was gallivanting around the island.

Nephs had been killed, too. Or had she been?

Would he have felt if his master was no more? Would the Spell have announced her passing? If Sunny had checked his runes... would he have seen her name grow dim and disappear?

Staring at Undying Slaughter, Sunny gritted his teeth "I'll... destroy you."

As a bitter smile appeared on his lips, he took a step forward and added calmly:

"...One day."

The mist wraith moved.

Not long after that, Sunny died.

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Sunny was crouching on the deck of the Chain Breaker once again. Straightening, he looked into the fog.

His face remained motionless.

After a while, a sigh escaped from his lips 'Well. I guess my break is over.'

He turned his head and silently watched as Nephis and Cassie discussed the Guiding Light. They had forgotten the events of the previous revolution... the conversations they had with him, the laughter they shared. Everything was now erased, and his companions did not even know that they had lost something.

But he knew.

On this damned island, only two beings remembered everything. Sunny... and the Sin of Solace. The wraith conjured from his own mind by the echo of Ariel's whisper.

Looking down, Sunny pressed down on the wooden railing hard enough to hear it crack, then took a step back.

This time, he did not mount Nightmare immediately. Instead, Sunny concentrated and summoned the runes.

Something about his posture must have attracted the attention of his companions, because they both suddenly grew silent. A moment later, Nephis asked:

"Sunny? What is it?"

His gaze fell at the bottom of the field of runes. He remained silent for a bit, then answered calmly:

"I am going to try something. I'm not sure what will happen, exactly, so... stay calm."

With that, Sunny took a deep breath and called upon the Fragment of Shadow Realm.

It was strange... the Fragment was not a Memory, and neither was it an Echo or a Shadow. As such, he did not really know how to make it manifest. A mere Ascended Tyrant's essence was surely insufficient to summon a piece of a god's Domain into existence.

And yet... somehow, Sunny knew exactly what to do. That knowledge was buried deep in his soul, as if he had always known.

In the next moment...

The world around them suddenly grew dimmer. Then dimmer, dimmer, and dimmer still.

A strong gale rose, making Sunny's black mantle flutter. It was as though his figure was devouring all light, replacing it with an endless shadow.

His eyes widened.

Behind Sunny, Cassie shuddered.

"What..."

It was as though a tide of darkness flooded the world, rolling outward

from the Chain Breaker. The sacred tree instantly disappeared from view, drowned in it, as did the figure of Saint at the bow of the ship. The dark cliffs could not be seen a moment later.

The darkness did not stop there.

Even though Nephis and Cassie could not perceive it, Sunny could, somehow... he felt the entire island being swallowed by the shadow he had unleashed, with all light becoming extinguished in an instant.

Soon, it was as though they were standing in a lightless, black void. Only Sunny could see that the world had not really disappeared... it was still there. The sacred tree still swayed subtly in the wind, and Saint was still standing at the bow. The dark cliffs were where they had been a few moments ago. The mist still swirled and flowed, only now, it was like a liquid darkness.

And he could feel...

'So that's what it is.'

The Fragment of the Shadow Realm... was, unsurprisingly, a shadow.

A shadow so vast and ancient that his mind failed to comprehend its scale, so deep and unfathomable that his heart trembled in front of it. More than that... if Sunny wasn't mistaken, this inconceivable shadow was... of the Divine Rank.

It was lightless and black, but shone with the golden light of divinity in his vision at the same time.

It was not alive, but it wasn't empty like the shadows of inanimate objects, either.

It did not belong to Sunny, and yet, he was connected to it, somehow.

Even though Sunny had summoned it... he was, perhaps, not qualified yet to be its master.