1434 World of Darkness

As Sunny stood frozen in the world of darkness, Nephis summoned a Memory lantern and raised it, illuminating the deck of the Chain Breaker. A small island of warm light appeared around them — however, it was not nearly as wide as it should have been, as if the lantern was struggling to push back the unfathomable shadow.

Its light trembled pitifully.

"Sunny... what did you do?"

He lingered with the answer, then said honestly:

"I summoned a fragment of Shadow God's domain. You must have seen it in my runes... it's a Legacy Relic I received."

The Fragment had already swallowed all of Wind Flower. Sunny could feel it... which was strange. As an Ascended Tyrant, he could control his shadows from around twenty kilometers away. However, the range of his shadow sense was much more modest, less even than that of his vision.

How was it that he could vaguely sense the far side of the island?

Sunny hesitated for a few moments, then carefully extended his shadow sense... however, he did not extend it outward. Instead, he extended it into the Fragment.

In the next moment, Sunny yelped, staggered, and fell. "Ah, hell!"

Before he landed on the hard wood, Nephis caught him. Suddenly, her concerned face was very close.

"Are you alright?"

He retracted his shadow sense, and stared at her for a few strangely awkward moments. Then, Sunny coughed and nodded.

There was a salty taste of blood on his tongue. "Yes. I just... overdid it a little."

Supported by her, he rose to his feet and grimaced.

"This Domain Fragment... I'm not sure what else it can do, but it definitely enhances the range of my shadow sense. To a degree where I

can perceive everywhere on the island, at the same time — well, except for the tower. It seems to be shielded from view, somehow. Needless to say, that's not something that a human brain, even that of a Master, is wired to handle."

The sensory overload he had been blasted with was not something he wanted to experience again. Even though it was only like a minuscule fraction of the indescribable horror of using [Where is my eye?], the strain was still too much for Sunny.

And that was not even counting what he would perceive... there were all kinds of great and terrible creatures on Wind Flower, and witnessing some of them was dangerous in and of itself.

Not to mention that more than one of these beings were capable of staring at him back.

That said... Sunny was almost certain that he could be more precise with spreading his senses through the Fragment.

He reassured Nephis and Cassie was everything was alright, and made another attempt.

...A moment later, his stifled scream traveled through the mist.

In the end, it took Sunny some time, and a lot of cursing, to teach himself how to limit the scope of his shadow sense to a comparatively narrow area. The boon of this situation was that he could concentrate on any location on the island... meaning that he could observe all of it at will.

He could also feel something else...

As long as he remained in the unfathomable depths of the Fragment, his Aspect seemed to be enhanced. It was as if the ancient shadow was nourishing it... Sunny was not sure yet what this enhancement meant, but it had to be useful.

As soon as he grew confident in not collapsing after extending his shadow sense into the dark distance, Sunny concentrated and searched for Jet. Soon, he felt her moving through the forest. Drops of blood fell into the moss, and a murderous wraith was pursuing her.

'How convenient.'

Jumping into the saddle, Sunny warned Nephis and Cassie to stay on the Chain Breaker and sent his steed into the mist.

The next hour went somewhat differently from how it usually was. The

descent of the Shadow Realm Fragment affected his companions enough so that their familiar reactions and thoughts changed... but overall, it was all the same.

Sunny rescued Jet, healed her with the help of the Mirror of Truth, and returned to the Chain Breaker. Then, he explained the nature of the loop to the members of the cohort.

After that, however...

Sunny had to make new decisions.

Now that he knew that leaving his companions on the Chain Breaker was tantamount to leaving them for dead, there was no other choice but to venture into the mist together... which was a moot point, really, considering that he had already decided to rely on teamwork more before his break.

His goal of compiling a time map of Wind Flower had become much easier, as well, due to how far his shadow sense could reach in the boundary of the Fragment.

Perhaps the best thing about the Fragment of Shadow's Domain was that it existed independently of Sunny. It was not manifested from his essence, and did not consume it to exist. On the flipside, it was also not under his control.

Although Sunny could benefit from being within a piece of Shadow God's Domain, he had not magically become akin to a Sovereign.

There was an unexpected, but welcome side effect to his innate connection to the inconceivable shadow, though...

It was that the rudimentary affinity to water that the Crown of Twilight granted him could spread through the Fragment, as well. And since mist was made of water, Sunny found himself capable of influencing the fog.

He could make it thicker, or push it away from a certain area.

It was hard to say how beneficial, exactly, such an ability would be. But Sunny felt that he would find a way to use it to his advantage.

Other than that, the most obvious advantage of the Fragment was that Sunny could manifest it into tangible objects. Even though these objects were manifested with Ascended essence, their origin was still a Divine shadow. As such, they were much more powerful and robust than what he had been able to conjure up previously.

Of course, using them burned a tremendously larger amount of essence in proportion.

The last thing Sunny experimented with was dismissing the Fragment of the Shadow Realm.

Sadly... it seemed impossible. Just as he had expected, once unleashed, the Fragment couldn't be taken back.

Or at least he had no authority to do so

The only exception was the Shadow Lantern. Sunny discovered that he could hide the Fragment inside the Divine Memory... but, strangely enough, he couldn't summon it back from it. Once the inconceivable shadow entered the gate of the black lantern, it was as though it disappeared forever.

He was somewhat disheartened, but at the same elated.

Armed with the Fragment and the Mirror of Truth and supported by the members of the cohort... suddenly, Sunny felt that creating a moving map of Wind Flower was not as impossible of a task anymore.

Without wasting any time, he got to work.

He was going to find a way to escape this endless hell, and take his companions with him.