1435 Time Map

Over the next few revolutions, Sunny repeated the same actions. He would summon the Fragment of Shadow Realm, rescue Jet, enter the cave system below the island with the cohort, and slay the Cavern Terror. Then, they would proceed to the far side of the island, find Effie, and hide from danger until the end of the loop.

Each time, the time it took to reach the northern edge of Wind Flower grew shorter... but it was still not nearly short enough.

So, Sunny continued to study the island and perfect his time map. He kept the cohort safe — or at least tried to — and explored Wind Flower through shadow sense.

He progressed swiftly due to how drastically the Fragment extended its reach. Sunny already knew which places on the island were too dangerous to observe, so he managed to avoid drawing the attention of the beings who dwelled there. Apart from those horrors, the rest of the creatures imprisoned on Wind Flower were now like an open book to him.

Or rather, somewhat like an open book. Although he could perceive the movement of their shadows, that unique sense of his was not a true replacement for sight. Nor could it replace the experience of actually facing the abominations... luckily, Sunny had already done so in the previous revolutions. Combined with his already existing experience, shadow sense was enough to help him compile a map.

He experimented with the Mirror of Truth, as well, to a varying degree of success.

The second Aspect Ability Sunny tried to copy was Cassie's premonition — he judged that sensing a few seconds into the future would make him nearly invincible. However, Sunny was left disappointed. He seemed to possess the right affinity to use her Ability with a high level of efficiency, but it was simply too strange.

He had long been accustomed to perceiving the world from different points of view simultaneously — that was how he was able to scout through his shadows, after all. His mental ability was further increased by the Shroud of Dusk. However... suddenly perceiving two distinct, but moving and overlapping threads of time was just too much.

The first time Sunny activated the premonition Ability, he instantly got

disoriented and fell to the ground. Simply trying to take a step was enough to paralyze him. Dazed and lost, he stumbled around blindly for a while, then deactivated the enchantment of the Mirror of Truth and watched it crumble into pieces. His head was spinning.

Perhaps Sunny could adapt to Cassie's strange way of perceiving the world, but it was not going to be a short process. His time was better spent exploring other opportunities.

Neph's Ability to control fire, on the other hand, was easy enough to master. Sadly, it was not very useful without her affinities and her soulflame. The same could be said about Cassie's Ability to perceive the world through someone else.

Then, there was Jet. Sunny had high hopes for her Ascended Ability — not because it allowed her to absorb fragments of shattered soul cores and improve her own, but because it removed the limit of how much her body could be enhanced by essence.

Sunny had an enormous reserve of essence, as far as Masters were concerned... so, he thought that he could make himself as powerful as a Saint with the help of this Ability.

Outrageously, his first attempt ended in one of the most gruesome deaths he had experienced in the loop. As it turned out, the ability to oversaturate her flesh with essence worked for Jet only because of her unique constitution — not quite dead, but also not alive. When Sunny tried doing the same, he was quite literally torn apart from the inside.

He did not make the second attempt.

Her Dormant Ability could allow him to absorb the essence of the enemies he killed — a useful tool, but not useful enough to sacrifice the Mirror of Truth for, at least not in their current situation. Her Awakened Ability, though, was extremely powerful. Being able to strike the souls of his enemie directly... it was hard to describe how much more deadly of a creature it made Sunny.

Effie's physical augmentation wasn't bad, either. However... there was one Ability that outshone them all. It was Cassie's Dormant Ability.

That Ability allowed her to learn a lot about the Aspects and Attributes of Awakened, as well as the Attributes and unholy powers of Nightmare

Creatures. Cassie had to be close to receive that information, but Sunny... Sunny could rely on his shadows to serve as his eyes. He could even gain some knowledge purely through shadow sense.

That allowed him to study the prisoners of Wind Flower infinitely faster than he had ever expected.

Slowly but surely, his knowledge of Wind Flower grew. Armed with that knowledge, the cohort managed to kill the Rotting Leopard. They clashed and triumphed over the giant octopus-like abomination, as well. They even learned how to destroy the swarm of black millipedes.

The time map he had been trying to create was becoming more and more complete.

There were empty spaces on it, of course — for example, Sunny had never managed to learn much about the tower. There were a few places on the island that were too lethal for him to explore, as well. But he did not need to study them, anyway, because his goal was not the exploration of Wind Flower.

His goal was simply to get to Effie and return to the Chain Breaker in time, then escape this hell and never look back.

Nevertheless...

The closer his time map came to completion, the colder Sunny felt.

It was because he was growing more and more wary of the truths he learned.

The purpose of creating the map was to track the movements of the dangerous Nightmare Creatures across the island throughout the loop. He needed to know about them to create the most efficient path to the far side of the island and back... to rescue both Jet and Effie and leave Wind Flower in the span of a single day.

However, once Sunny had most of the information he needed...

He felt nothing but dread, realizing that that goal was utterly unattainable.

Even the most efficient of the remotely safe routes was not fast enough to get him to where he needed to be. Even if he made Effie ride Nightmare, there was not enough time.

With their current strength, and with the tools available to them, making a round trip across the island before the loop terminated seemed simply impossible.