1439 Desperate Times

By the time Sunny returned with Jet, Cassie had already explained the situation to Nephis as best as she could. That had already saved him some time — not that it mattered during this revolution.

For now, his goal was to get Cassie up to speed.

As they left the Chain Breaker and headed toward the bone orchard, Sunny started to describe the perils of Wind Flower to her in detail. Jet and Nephis listened, too, growing grimmer with each minute.

"The Devouring Beast is here as well?" Hearing Jet's somber question, Sunny nodded. She lingered for a moment.

"Who is Devouring Beast, though?"

'Oh...'

Soul Reaper only knew who Undying Slaughter was because they had met. She had no concept of who the Six Plagues were, and no explanation to how a Defiled version of her could exist on the island.

Sunny explained the things briefly... not that he knew much more than her.

"...We don't know how they exist, or why. These future versions of ourselves are known as the Six Heralds of the Estuary, of the Six Plagues. And two of them are here, on the island — the future version of you, and the future version of Effie."

He lingered for a moment before adding:

"We also don't know how the two of them ended up here. My theory is that they were exiled to Wind Flower to contain their Flaws, but... it's just conjecture."

Jet's face remained impassive. She nodded silently and did not say anything about his indirect castigation of her Flaw.

Who would like hearing that her personal curse was so terrible that even the Nightmare Creatures had chosen to banish her corrupted future self into isolation?

Sunny let out a quiet sigh and continued explaining things to Cassie. The

blind girl was listening to him attentively, seemingly not having trouble with digesting the incredible amount of information. From time to time, she asked him small, but poignant questions.

By the time they reached the bone orchard and found the Hollow Butterfly, Sunny had already shared the most important pieces of knowledge. Before they went about creating the pikes and the javelins, he drew a crude map of the island on the ground.

"...And Effie is here. For now, I have found no way to get to her and return to the Chain Breaker in time."

Cassie, Nephis, and Jet studied the map.

After a few moments of silence, the blind girl asked:

"Have you considered leaving the island with Jet and returning to the loop from the northern side?"

Sunny hesitated for a while. Eventually, he shook his had and said in a grim tone:

"I can't say that I didn't. But it is simply too dangerous... do remember that it's only called north because that's how I drew the map. In reality, I have no idea which side of the island faces which direction. Navigating to Effie's side won't be easy, and it is not even a given that we'll be able to navigate at all while being thrashed by the whirlpool."

His expression turned even darker.

"I don't see us faring well in the vortex — even if we fly above it, the winds would certainly throw us around. We might be able to get back to the island, but not to a landing zone of our choosing. We have gotten incredibly lucky the first time, actually. That beach where we landed is one of the few relatively safe places on Wind Flower. If we crashed almost anywhere else, we'd be dead in a matter of minutes... even if the abominations dwelling in those places wouldn't have killed us, the thing that hides in the mist above the island would."

Sunny sighed.

"Most importantly, we simply don't know how entering the loop functions. Not only where, but also when we land is a question. We can only leave at the end of the day, when the Crown of Twilight provides me with essence... but if we return to the same point in time, Effie will already be lost. In short, there are too many risks."

Cassie contemplated for a short while, then nodded.

"I see. Remaining on the island seems like the most promising choice, then. But... you have already explored all the routes, and even learned a lot about most Nightmare Creatures here. Some of them, unbelievably, we have even defeated. So why do you say that there is no way to get Effie to the Chain Breaker in time?"

Sunny remained silent for a few moments, then winced.

"The problem is that this damned place is simply impossible to traverse for a bunch of Ascended like us. Sure, we have killed a few of the local residents... but only the weakest and most vulnerable of them, or those that our powers directly counter. The rest are too dreadful for us to fight. So, we can only advance by hiding and timing our movements perfectly. And that... is too slow to get to the other side and come back in the span of a single day."

The blind girl was studying the map. For a moment, Sunny was reminded of how strange the situation was... Cassie could not see, so she was simply pretending to look at the map. She seemed to have developed a habit of imitating the actions of those who had sight, in order to not make the people around her feel uncomfortable.

While, in reality, she was actually seeing the map through the eyes of her companions.

He hesitated, then added with a bit of hope in his voice:

"...But that was back when I was the only one with the detailed knowledge of the loop. Now that there are two of us, the situation might change."

Cassie did not answer for a while. Then, she slowly shook her head. "No. It won't change."

Sunny was taken aback. He stared at her tensely, then asked, his voice even:

"And why is that?" The blind girl sighed

"It's because I am not strong enough to make a decisive difference. Sure,

with my help, you can save an hour or two... but that is not enough. Even

if we separate, the scope of the things I can accomplish is limited. If this island is too dangerous for you, Sunny, then it is certain death for me."

She frowned.

"Even if we somehow manage to make everyone in the cohort remember the previous revolutions, it will still not be enough. Not that having Nephis, Jet, and Effie slowly being driven mad by that cursed sword of yours is an option."

Sunny's face darkened. He scoffed, then looked away. "So what are you suggesting we do, then?"

Cassie shrugged.

"We explore every opportunity. The things we've learned offer us no solution. So there is no other choice but to turn to things we've yet to explore, and hope for the best. Starting with..."

She leaned forward slightly and pointed to the map.

Sunny lowered his gaze and looked at where her delicate finger was pointing. His expression changed subtly.

'Of course it's that place...'

The place the blind girl was pointing at was at the very center of the map.

There, a crude image of a tall tower was drawn, surrounded by a wide moat.