1447 Different Approach

"So, what do we do now?"

The cohort was hidden between the cliffs on the northern side of the island. Effie was pillaging the Covetous Coffer while Jet and Nephis sat tiredly on the ground. They had taken point in the battle against the Cavern Terror, but strangely enough, Sunny and Cassie seemed more drained.

The blind girl shook her head in dejection.

"I'm... not sure."

They had just shared their findings. The method to infiltrate Aletheia's Tower, the remains of a slain Great Tyrant, the sleeping woman on the top floor... and how they had failed to wake her up.

Sunny was in a grim mood. They had wasted so much time and effort, but had nothing to show for it. The escape from the island seemed just as impossible as it had before

'Curse it.'

He remained silent for a few moments, then glanced at Nephis. There was something gnawing at him.

"Cassie said that you've met one of the Nine?"

That question held no real importance for their current situation, but he felt curious. Perhaps knowing more about the former master of the island could help them think of a new solution.

Neph looked at him with a hint of surprise.

"Yes, I did."

Sunny did not react much to her confirmation.

"Was it in your Second Nightmare?"

He was more or less certain of it, but, unexpectedly, Nephis shook her head.

"No... I met him in the Nightmare Desert."

Everyone was confused by her answer — Effie and Jet because they did not know who the Nine were, Sunny and Cassie because they did.

How could a person from the ancient past of the Dream Realm be alive in the present day?

Noticing their confusion, Nephis explained:

"When I first entered the Nightmare Desert, I found two skeletons nailed to a mystical tree. One called himself Azarax the Mighty, and the other called himself Eurys of the Nine. I got the impression that they were left on that tree as punishment."

She paused for a moment, then added quietly:

"That Eurys, he told me that he was a humble slave who had angered the gods by slitting the throat of one of them. I'm not sure if his words can be trusted, though... to me, it seemed like he had been a high-ranking soldier of the Demon Army. In any case, I took him off the tree, and he guided me to the Underworld. We parted not long before I entered the Nightmare."

Sunny stared at her in bewilderment.

'Well, that... is a wild story. Two talking skeletons nailed to a tree? Sure, the Nightmare Desert is full of old bones that refuse to stay dead. However, none of those I've seen ever spoke to me.'

For a moment, he remembered visiting Neph's dream right after she had returned from her Second Nightmare. Had there not been a terrible tree there, with two figures cruelly nailed to its trunk?

'And what was it about slitting a god's throat? Surely, that was a play on words...'

Right? 'Interesting.'

Auro had been a soldier of the War God's empire. However, this Eurys seemed to have participated in the Doom War on the side of the daemons. Aletheia, meanwhile, had come to the Tomb of Ariel — perhaps the only place where the war had never reached.

Just what was he supposed to make of it?

If there was one unfortunate conclusion Sunny had to make... it was that knowing about Eurys of the Nine did not help him at all.

Aletheia's Island still seemed inescapable. The tower, which had been their hope for the last dozen or so revolutions, seemed to be a dead end.

Cassie let out a heavy sigh.

"We should probably try to wake up that woman again. If nothing helps... although I don't like it, we might want to try attacking her."

Sunny raised an eyebrow.

"You want to kill her?"

The blind girl frowned, remained silent for a few moments, then said quietly:

"If that is what it takes, I am."

He was somewhat surprised. Cassie... had changed more than he had thought. The shy girl he had known on the Forgotten Shore would have never thought of killing a bystander without provocation, even if it could help her.

Or rather, she would not have thought of it if given another choice. 'Well, why am I surprised?'

The past years had changed all of them. Sunny was not the same person he had been on the Forgotten Shore... he hoped that it was for the best. Cassie would not have stayed the same, either.

He sighed.

"Actually, we don't need to wake her."

Everyone looked at him questioningly. After a few moments of silence, Nephis shifted slightly:

"Do you mean..."

Sunny nodded. He had visited Neph's dream once... so he could visit the sleeping woman's dreams, as well. That way, they would not need to wake her.

It was all thanks to Nightmare and one of his Abilities, [Dreamwalker]. It allowed the dreadful steed to travel through dreams... and take his master with him.

"Yeah. I can get Nightmare to transport me into this woman's dreams. Perhaps she will tell me something that can help us escape the island."

The others looked at him somberly. After a while, Jet asked:

"Are you sure you want to visit the mind of a Saint who is slowly being Corrupted, Sunny? It... might be dangerous."

Effie, nodded.

"Listen, Sunny... I'm sure that you've visited the dreams of many a young lady even without the help of that scary horse of yours, but this is different. This Defilement, you guys think that it spreads simply through knowing a secret, right? What if you learn that secret in her dream?"

Sunny shrugged.

"It's not that I want to do it, it's that I have to. Don't worry... too much. I'll be careful."

He still had the Mirror of Truth. If push came to shove, he would use it to copy Neph's [Longing] and get Nightmare to carry him away from the mysterious Saint's dream as fast as possible.

It... actually sounded like a plan. He nodded.

"Then it's decided. Cassie and I will go to Aletheia's Tower again come the next revolution."

'And hopefully, this time, we won't leave empty-handed.'