1448 A Beautiful Dream

Finding themselves back on the deck of the Chain Breaker, Cassie and Sunny did not waste any time. After bringing Jet back, they sent her and Nephis to find Effie. Then, they hurried toward Aletheia's Tower.

By now, traversing this area of the misty forest had become a routine for then. They knew just where to go, and when. Nevertheless, both of Cassie's Echoes had to be sacrificed along the way.

Now that they did not have to study the runes cut into the black cliff, there was even some time to rest while they waited for dusk. Hidden away from the killing field surrounding the tower, they shared a haphazard meal and waited.

Sunny studied Cassie's face in the darkness. She seemed calm and collected... but he knew that she had to be struggling to stay sane just as much as he had struggled after living through his own first few revolutions.

Aletheia's Island... was just too cruel and harrowing of a hell. In fact, Sunny was not sure what his mental state would have been if Cassie had not joined him in the knowledge of the loop. Having someone steady to share the burden... was truly a blessing.

Perhaps that was the reason the blind girl seemed less affected by the gruesome things they had lived through here. Unlike him, she had always had a partner to support her.

Still...

He hesitated for a moment, then asked:

"How are you doing?"

Cassie smiled.

Her smile was faint and fleeting, just like it had been ever since their meeting in Fallen Grace.

"I am fine."

Sunny wanted her to say more, but Cassie kept herself closed off. It was strange, really... there had been a time when they were close as siblings, and a time when they were like strangers. The ice between them thawed eventually, but it took Sunny a long time to want to mend their relationship. Now that he was trying, though... Cassie seemed unwilling.

He simply did not know what was happening in that head of hers. Actually, he suspected that no one knew — even Nephis, who was the closest to the blind girl, could not tell what Cassie was thinking.

Perhaps that was the curse of being a seer. Sunny sighed.

'I am way too oblivious about these things to navigate through such a mess.'

But he had to try, at least.

"Well, if you want to talk about it, I'm here."

Cassie nodded.

"Thank you. It means a lot."

However, it seemed as if she was thinking about something else. Shaking his head slightly, Sunny rose and summoned his bow. "It's almost time."

They destroyed the enchantment protecting Aletheia's tower, led Devouring Beast to the released Nightmare Creatures, and slipped past them. Ascending the stone steps, they opened the gate of the tower and hid inside, then climbed to its top floor.

Finally, Sunny and Cassie arrived at Wind Flower's chamber.

Everything here was the same. Calling upon Nightmare, Sunny approached the perfectly preserved bed and looked at the woman sleeping on it through the half-transparent canopy.

The mysterious Saint... was a rare beauty, without a doubt. Her dark skin was smooth and dewy, without a single blemish on it. The lines of her exquisite face were soft and lovely. Her wavy hair was like glistening black silk, while her archaic robe was of a rich azure color, with vivid white accents.

As she dreamt, her expression was vulnerable and innocent. It was... a captivating sight. Sunny found it hard not to let his heart be moved as he looked at the sleeping beauty.

The world itself seemed warmer and softer around her, as if caressed by a gentle wind.

He sighed.

"I'm going. Cassie, you... stay safe. Please."

With that, he took a step back and dissolved into the shadows. Nightmare was already waiting for him in their embrace — his vast form wrapped itself around Sunny, and then...

They were somewhere else.

And yet, they were exactly where they had been.

Sunny was still on the top floor of Aletheia's Tower. However, it looked different.

The wide bed was empty. Cassie was nowhere to be seen. The floating lanterns were gone. Instead, the chamber was drowned in bright light that poured through the windows — Nightmare had to hide in the deep shadows in the corner of the spacious room to avoid it.

'That's... not right.'

Since when was Aletheia's Island so bright?

Wary, Sunny slowly walked to the window and looked outside. His eyes narrowed slightly.

Below him... was the familiar island. However, it had changed entirely. The suffocating mist was gone, revealing the beautiful green expanse of the pine forest. The trees bathed in warm sunlight, swaying slightly in the wind. Here and there, clear streams flowed. The killing field surrounding the tower was drowning in flowers.

The stone bridge was empty, with no Nightmare Creatures in sight. In fact... without the mist, Sunny was supposed to see the towering figure of Devouring Beast wandering the forest. However, she was nowhere to be seen.

There was no harrowing creature in the clear blue sky, either. Aletheia's Island... seemed utterly devoid of danger. Instead, it seemed like a tranquil, beautiful, and peaceful place.

A paradise.

'This... is her dream?'

Sunny knew that he was inside a dream. However, the space around him did not seem like one. It was much more solid, defined, and permanent

than the few dreams he had visited in the past.

'What the hell is going on?'

"It's a wonderful day, isn't it?"

That voice...

Sunny flinched and turned around.

A woman had just entered the chamber, carrying a bouquet of fresh flowers. It was her... the beautiful sleeping Saint of Aletheia's Tower.

She was awake. Or rather... in her dream, she was.

Sunny took an involuntary step back. Despite how lovely the woman was, he couldn't help but feel wary of her.

His voice was slightly hoarse:

"Who are you?"

The beautiful Saint raised an eyebrow and smiled.

"Me? I am Wind Flower."

Then, a hint of amusement appeared on her charming face.

"But why are you asking? And why... are you here again?"