1453 The Other Guest

Sunny remained silent for a few moments, looking at the charming Saint. A gentle breeze blew from the river, playing with her silky hair... the dream of Aletheia's Island was tranquil and at peace.

'Destroy the loop...'

Was such a thing even possible?

'Why wouldn't it be?'

The closed cycle of time had been created by Aletheia of the Nine. Since it was made by someone, it could naturally be destroyed by someone else. However...

The matter was not that simple.

Even if Wind Flower could teach him how to break the loop, there would be dire ramifications if he did. Up until now, Sunny had suffered enormously due to the twisted nature of time on this harrowing island... but he was also only alive because of it.

Once the loop was broken, the terrible prisoners of Aletheia's Island would remain. Undying Slaughter and Devouring Beast would remain, as well... but Sunny was not going to have the luxury of being reborn at the start of a new revolution.

He would only have one chance to prevail against them and escape. 'It's not like I have a lot of choices.'

The plan Wind Flower suggested was a deadly one, but Sunny did not have a better solution. He did not have a lot of time to spare, either... he and Cassie were doing fine, for now, but their mental states would inevitably start to crumble as the trauma of repeated, torturous deaths accumulated.

It could very well be that they would never be in better condition than now. Sooner or later, they were going to start deteriorating. At least Sunny felt that they would.

The question was... did he really trust Wind Flower?

A deep sigh escaped from his lips.

Looking away, Sunny lingered for a few moments, then said: "Before I decide whether to agree, I need to ask you a question." The beautiful Saint chuckled.

"Go ahead."

He glanced at her darkly.

"When you said that we've never met before... was it a lie?"

Wind Flower's smile froze on her lips. She studied him silently for a while, the veil of friendliness finally fading from her gaze to reveal... something much colder, darker, and more frightening.

Finally, for the first time since they met, Sunny felt that he was standing in front of King Daeron's daughter.

...But then the frightening abyss hiding in her eyes was gone, replaced once again by benevolent sweetness.

Wind Flower laughed.

"You really are a sharp one, Sunless. Just like the other one."

Sunny took a deep breath.

'The other one...'

A deep frown appeared on his face.

"The Mad Prince. He is the other visitor you mentioned, then?"

The beautiful Saint looked at him with a nonchalant smile.

A moment later, the white beach disappeared, and they were in Aletheia's Tower again. Wind Flower sat down on her bed and shrugged.

"Indeed. Oh, I must say... even inside the Tomb of Ariel, you truly are the most bizarre of individuals, Sunless. You are the only being to enter my dream in all these years, and yet, there were three visitors."

Sunny slumped on the Shadow Chair.

"...Three?"

She nodded.

"You, that Defiled madman, and the sullen wraith that follows him around."

He stared at her incredulously.

'So the Mad Prince is haunted by his own version of the Sin of Solace. Serves the bastard right... both bastards, really...'

Luckily, his own inner demon had decided to sit the meeting with Wind Flower out.

He shook his head.

"So why did he come to see you? What did he want from you that was worth braving Aletheia's Island?"

The beautiful Saint lingered.

"I'm not sure if I should answer. But then again... why not? You are mistaken, though. Although the Mad Prince did visit me, I was not the reason he had come to the island."

Sunny simply raised an eyebrow, prompting her to continue.

"The reason he came here... was to lure the other two Defiled into a trap."

'What?'

Sunny hid his shock as best he could. Previously, he had theorized that Devouring Beast and Undying Slaughter had been sent to Aletheia's Island because of their Flaws. And it might have been the justification, true... but now, it seemed that they had been left here against their will.

They had been locked in a prison of time by the Mad Prince. Sunny exhaled slowly.

"Why would that lunatic plot against two other Plagues?"

Wind Flower shrugged.

"I really don't know. Is it surprising, though? The Defiled are different from us, to begin with... and your other self, Sunless, is more insane than most. That said, he was surprisingly lucid, for a Nightmare Creature."

Sunny frowned.

"In what way?"

The charming Saint contemplated for a while.

"It's hard to describe. I've met abominations who could talk like humans before, but never one who seemed so... human-like. Even among the Defiled. In any case, it looked like he was not happy about being the Dread Lord's slave. Or liked what the Dread Lord has done after becoming the tyrant of Verge."

She shrugged.

"You would know better about these matters than I do, though. Not because you and the Mad Prince are the same person, even, but merely because the Six Plagues were yet to appear when I was brought to Aletheia's Island. In fact, I only know of their existence because of the things the Defiled madman mumbled in a fit of frenzy."

Sunny remained silent for a while.

'The Dread Lord's slave...'

It seemed that he did not have to wonder what fate would befall him after Nephis was killed in the future. He had thought that Mordret... the Soul Stealer... would be the one to use Shadow Bond and become his master after the current one disappeared. But actually, it was the Dread Lord... Kai.

The corner if his mouth twitched.

'Who would have thought?'

It was a bit stupid, to be hurt by something that a future, Defiled version of his friend had done. And yet, Sunny couldn't help but feel a little betrayed. It had taken a lot of courage for him to open up to Effie and Kai... knowing that it would come back to bite him, in the end, felt like a punch to the gut.

'No... Kai would never betray me. That thing, the Dread Lord, might be the future version of him. But it is a demented Nightmare Creature, not my friend.'

Much more important was the fact that there seemed to be internal strife between the Six Plagues. Enough of it, at least, for the Mad Prince to try eliminating two of his fellow Defiled champions, be it on the orders of the Dread Lord or of his own accord.

It was great news for the cohort, and could potentially help them conquer this Nightmare.

Sunny sighed and asked with dark curiosity in his voice:

"So what did the two of you talk about?"