1470 Farewell Gift

After returning from Wind Flower's dream, Sunny did not linger for a long time before completing his grim task. Every minute he wasted was one minute more that she had to suffer resisting the inevitable spread of Corruption...

And so, with a heavy heart, he delivered the fatal strike to the beautiful Saint, as swift and merciful as he could make it. Then, Sunny used the divine flames of the Cruel Sight to ignite her body and stepped back, watching as fire spread across the wooden bed and devoured the silk canopy.

The floating lanterns that had illuminated the chamber dissolved into a rain of white sparks, drowning it in darkness. Standing at the edge between the darkness and the stark glow of the burial pyre, Sunny sighed and sat down on the stone floor.

He watched the fire dance in silence, his expression bleak.

It was then that the Spell finally whispered into his ear:

[You have slain a Transcendent human, Wind Flower of the Twilight Sea.]

[Your shadow grows stronger.]

It paused for a moment, and then added:

[...You have received a Memory.]

Sunny looked down, not even reacting to the last proclamation.

'Ah...'

He had not known Wind Flower for long. In fact, they had only spoken twice. And yet, a deep and heavy sorrow weighed on his heart.

Wasn't her fate just too bitter, unfair, and sad?

To be the last remnant of a destroyed world, and outlive everything that you ever knew or loved...

He hated it.

But at the same time, perhaps to her, death was a solace.

Closing his eyes, Sunny felt the heat of the blazing flame and remained motionless for a while.

Eventually, he whispered:

"Your nightmare is over."

It was.

But at the same time, it was not.

This Nightmare would not be over until Sunny fulfilled his promise and ended it.

As a dark grimace contorted his face, he gritted his teeth and dove into the Soul Sea.

There, the five black suns hung above the still expanse of dark water, just like always. The legion of silent shadows stood motionlessly in the darkness, just like always. The lightless sea of his soul was quiet and tranquil, just like always.

Sunny lingered for a moment, then walked along the rows of motionless shadows. Past the lumbering shape of the Mountain King, past the formless shadow of the loathsome Thieving Bird's spawn, past the gargantuan figure of the Fallen Titan Goliath...

And so many more, Nightmare Creatures and humans alike.

Eventually, he stopped near the shadow of a tall and imposing man with sharp, fierce features, who wore an archaic robe that seemed both simple and regal.

He was Daeron of the Twilight Sea, the Serpent King.

...The shadow of Wind Flower was standing near him, as beautiful as she had been in the dream, but now motionless and lifeless... just like the rest of the shadows. The father and daughter were reunited in the tranquil darkness of Sunny's soul.

Sunny thought that seeing them together would sooth his heart, perhaps. But it did not. He still felt bitter and despondent.

Not wishing to look anymore, he turned away and gritted his teeth.

"Curse it. Curse it all..."

Curse the daemons and the gods, curse their damned war, and curse the Nightmare Spell that devoured the few realms that had been left intact in its wake.

Curse Weaver, the Demon of Fate, Firstborn of the Unknown.

Shaking his head, he took a few breaths, and then summoned the runes.

There was a new string of them at the end of the list of his Memories. Concentrating, Sunny read its description:

Memory: [Dream Flower].

Memory Rank: Transcendent.

Memory Tier: I.

He paused for a moment, then summoned the Memory down. Soon, a beautiful azure flower appeared in the darkness in front of him, its petals still covered by dew. It was exactly the same as it had been when presented to him in the dream.

Sunny sighed.

So... the gift Wind Flower had given him was not a simple memento. He should have known.

Feeling a pulse of sharp pain in his heart, he turned back to the runes and read:

Memory Description: [The dreams and hopes of Wind Flower of the Twilight Sea are contained within this blossom. It was a farewell gift to her killer, Lost from Light.]

Memory Enchantment: [Given Promise].

Enchantment Description:

[Crush my hopes, crush my dreams. Crush my nightmares.]

The description was short, poignant, and senseless.

Sunny stared at the runes for a long while, his face motionless. Then, he dismissed them and looked at the beautiful azure flower that hovered in the silent darkness in front of him.

He had no idea what the purpose of this Memory was, nor did he know how Wind Flower had ensured that he would receive it from the Spell.

If there was one thing he knew, however, it was that this gift embodied her last will.

It was the embodiment of her most precious, most ardent desire.

With a sigh, Sunny reached forward, grasped the lotus flower in his hand...

And crushed it.

The azure petals broke and dissolved into blinding light, illuminating the vast darkness of his soul. The pure light reflected in the still waters... drowning in them...

Sunny suddenly felt that something was wrong.

'What...'

Before he could finish the thought, the Spell suddenly whispered into his ear, its voice insidious and quiet:

[You Memory has been destroyed.]

[...Your shadow grows stronger.]

And then, he felt a flood of shadow fragments entered his soul, containing enough of them to drown it.

His eyes widened.

'Wait, wait...'

Thrown off balance by the sudden influx of shadow fragments, he couldn't even summon the runes. All he knew was that there were much more fragments pouring into his soul than killing a Transcendent human could have given him. There were more of them than even a normal Awakened would have received, let alone someone like Sunny.

Most soul fragments were lost when one Awakened killed another, after all. Although the killer received a fair share, most of it was wasted.

But not now...

It was as if Wind Flower's entire soul had been contained within the azure flower, and was now being used as fuel to empower his own.

'Wait! At this rate...'

Sunny hurriedly dove out of the Soul Sea and opened his eyes, staring at the blazing pyre in front of him. The fire was still burning, the body of the beautiful Saint turned to ash.

Taking a panicked breath, Sunny jumped away.

It was then that he felt it...

The familiar sensation of his soul shuddering in harrowing pain. At the same time, the Spell whispered again:

[Your shadow is overflowing with power.]

[Your shadow is taking shape...]

Sunny let out a muffled groan and fell to his knees.

Deep in the darkness of his soul, a new Shadow Core was being born.