1476 Attrition

Sunny felt that they had gotten incredibly lucky.

There was always a chance that Undying Slaughter and Devouring Beast would turn on each other, but he had not dared to rely on that possibility. But now, one of the Plagues was dead.

That said, the situation was not ideal. Sunny would have preferred if it was Undying Slaughter that had perished... the best possible outcome, however, would have been if he had arrived just before their battle ended and stole the kill from the mist wraith.

Then, not only would one of the Defiled Saints have died, but the other would have also been deprived of absorbing her essence. Killing Undying Slaughter then would have been much easier.

But although their luck was good, it was not that good.

As things stood now, Undying Slaughter had just replenished her dwindling essence. Sunny did not know how much of it she had gotten, exactly, but it had to be a substantial amount. Devouring Beast had been a mighty abomination, after all... her corrupted soul had to have been extremely potent.

So, while the mist wraith was not in her peak state, she was also more than powerful enough to eliminate the cohort now.

'That's alright.'

They had planned for such an eventuality, as well.

Sunny had fought with Undying Slaughter many times. He had done so alone, supported by his Shadows, and even with the help of the other members of the cohort... he had died in agony each time.

For that reason, their goal today was not to be to overpower and slay the dreadful wraith. She was too powerful for them to prevail against her in a battle... which did not mean that they could not win.

Instead of trying to defeat Undying Slaughter, what they needed to do was tie her down in a prolonged confrontation. It was just how Sunny had imagined killing someone like Jet — the key to doing so was to force her to exhaust her essence while not giving her a chance to replenish it.

Which was why this battle of theirs was going to be a battle of attrition.

...Still smiling, Sunny mockingly saluted Undying Slaughter with the Sin of Solace, and then gave Nightmare a mental command to flee.

The dark destrier turned and shot back the way they had come, splinters and bits of soil flying from under his adamantine hooves. Of course, the mist wraith was not going to let a source of essence escape that easily... almost at the same moment, she lunged forward in pursuit.

Nightmare was incredibly fast — in fact, Sunny doubted that there were many creatures of the same Rank faster than his tenebrous steed. However, to his horror, Undying Slaughter was not much slower. Even though the dark destrier was augmented by the shadows, the distance between him and the mist wraith was remaining the same. It was even dwindling slowly.

'...Just what kind of monster is she?'

Sunny was not too disheartened, though. After all, he did not really want to escape from Undying Slaughter. Instead, he wanted to lure her into the trap that the cohort had prepared.

Soon, he was almost back to the tower. The dreadful enemy was right on his heels.

'It's now or never...'

Before Undying Slaughter could attack, Sunny dismissed Nightmare and fell to the ground. Instead of hitting it, however, he simply dissolved into the shadows and stepped out of them on the other side of the moat, rolling down the stone steps for a moment until Nephis caught him.

The cohort was currently in front of the entrance to the stone bridge. Or rather, Nephis, Jet, Saint, and Fiend were there with Sunny...

Cassie and Effie were much higher up the cliff, standing on the stone steps far above them.

Effie's spear was already flying down.

Nephis was helping Sunny stand up when the spear hit the slope of the cliff with the force of a tactical missile. The whole cliff shuddered, sending him tumbling down once again, and a deafening boom spread from the point of impact, accompanied by the cracking noise of breaking stone.

A large part of the slope simply shattered, stone debris flying in the air, and slid down into the dark chasm of the moat. With it, of course, a

number of ancient runes that had been carved into the cliff were destroyed.

The enchantment protecting the bridge was broken at that moment.

Out there on the opposite end of the bridge, the Nightmare Creatures that had been frozen before shuddered, released from the invisible trap.

And just as they did...

Undying Slaughter appeared from the mist, her glacial blue eyes burning from dreadful, cold killing intent.

Before she could even react, the former prisoners of the stone bridge lunged at her, overcome by bloodlust and fury. A Corrupted Tyrant, a Corrupted Terror... a Great Beast...

Finally managing to stand up, Sunny leaned on Nephis and looked across the bridge. The released abominations had already clashed with Undying Slaughter, the whole island shaking from the dreadful force of their clash.

Or maybe it was simply quaking because the enchantment keeping it in the air was failing.

He exhaled slowly. "So far, so good."

If there was anything they could do to drain Undying Slaughter's essence before facing her themselves, they had to do it. Of course, it was a dangerous gamble...

The Nightmare Creatures that had been trapped on the bridge could force the mist wraith to burn through her precious essence, but they could also become her victims, fueling her defiled soul.

In fact, before a single minute passed, one of the abominations already looked like it was close to death...

Just a split second before Undying Slaughter could finish it off, though, a bone javelin suddenly fell from the sky, piercing the Nightmare Creature's neck and impaling it on the ground. The ghostly blade bit into the massive body of the abomination a moment later, easily passing through its armor.

But it was for naught. There was no soul for the mist wraith to destroy, because the creature was already dead. The bone javelin had killed it

instantly.

Feeling a dark grin twist his lips, Sunny looked up.

There, high above, Cassie and Effie were still standing on the stone steps. There were a dozen more javelins laying on the ground in front of the vigorous huntress.

These javelins had been made from the ribs of the Great Tyrant. Of course, in normal circumstances, it would have been hard for Effie to slay Nightmare Creature of such dire power with one blow...

But when they were already almost dead from Undying Slaughter's attacks? That was much easier.

As for knowing the exact moment when to attack — after the abomination had grown weak from its wounds, but before the mist wraith could deliver the fatal blow — Cassie was there to help. With her ability to perceive several seconds into the future, she could tell Effie just when to throw the javelins, and who to aim for.

Together, they were in a perfect position to achieve a simple, but vitally important task.

Deny Undying Slaughter any essence.

...The two of them were already accomplishing that task splendidly.