1498 Mirror Realm

Sunny slowly turned around and looked behind him... and there he was, the Prince of Nothing.

Mordret looked almost exactly like he had the first time Sunny saw his true face. Tall, slender, with raven-black hair and a sharp face that wasn't exactly handsome, but possessed a strange beauty to it. His most striking feature, however, were his mirror-like eyes, which reflected the world back on itself like two pools of liquid silver.

There was a pleasant, but hollow smile on Mordret's lips.

'Wait... something is wrong.'

Sunny frowned.

The last time he had seen the Prince of Nothing, moments before entering the Seed of Nightmare, the bastard was battered and bruised, covered in dried blood, and missing a hand. But now, Mordret looked perfectly fine — there were no wounds on his body and no bloodstains on his tunic. Even his hand was back, as if it had never been severed.

Mordret's smile widened slightly when he noticed Sunny's gaze. Raising the hand in question, he waved at them.

"It doesn't seem like I've been missed. How hurtful."

Sunny lingered for a moment, then asked cautiously:

"Where are we?"

The space surrounding them looked like one of the floating fortresses of Twilight's chain barrier, but it was also different. Not even mentioning the fact that the entire world had flipped from left to right, there seemed to be a... limit to this place. Not too far away from them, the dreadful battlefield disappeared, turning into pure nothing.

It was as though someone had erased most of the world, leaving only a small island of matter drifting in the sea of nothingness.

'It only encompasses what is reflected in the polished breastplate.'

Sunny felt a chill when he realized that fact. It seemed that his theory that Mordret had somehow pulled them into a reflection was correct. Indeed, the space they had found themselves in only contained the part of the world that reflected in the lustrous breastplate of the withered corpse, and a small area around it.

The Prince of Nothing looked around, then raised his hands in a welcoming gesture.

"Ah. This is... let's call it the Mirror Realm. Consider it an extension of my Ascended Ability. In a sense, it is."

Sunny did not like the sound of these words at all. Neither did his companions.

Frowning slightly, Nephis placed her hand on the hilt of her sword and asked in an even tone:

"In a sense?"

Mordret hesitated.

"Well... it's a long story. Sadly, time is a luxury that we can't afford at the moment."

Cassie tilted her head a little.

"Why not?"

He gave her a guarded look, then looked around with discomfort.

"There are dangers prowling in this Mirror Realm, just like there are outside it. I have already taken a considerable risk by coming to warn you. Do not continue on your way to Twilight... otherwise, you will never come back."

His ominous warning hung between them, turning the eerie atmosphere of the fallen fortress even more frightening.

Sunny took a deep breath, then asked in a dark tone:

"Why? Aren't you here? And where is Kai? You haven't done anything to him, have you? Because, if you did... you better start praying to the dead gods..."

Mordret stared at him for a moment.

"Ah, so much hostility. Granted, I might have deserved such treatment, a bit... but don't fret. Your friend should still be alive. In fact, I'm quite confident that he is. As for how I am able to hold this conversation, you are mistaken. I am not, in fact, here. My reflection is, while my body is lost somewhere in Twilight. If you want to know more, though... you'll have to come with me to somewhere we'll be safe from the monster roaming this Mirror Realm. You might not value your lives, but I do."

Sunny shook his head.

"That is not good enough. What monster are you talking about? And what do you mean, your body is lost? Was it destroyed? Are you a mirror ghost again?"

The Prince of Nothing looked at him with a somber expression.

"It's not nice to call people ghosts, Sunless."

Sunny scoffed.

"Since when am I a nice person? Just answer the questions, dammit!"

Mordret sighed.

"My body is... not destroyed. It's just trapped within the city. As far as I was able to ascertain, it has something to do with the enchantment array that was set up by the inhabitants of Twilight — in any case, I can't freely move in the physical world. The same goes for your friend, Nightingale. The difference is that I am able to escape into the mirrors, while he can't. It's for the best, really... even I have barely survived here."

Sunny wanted to say something, but Nephis interrupted him. Raising a hand, she said impassively:

"One of us stayed back to guard the ship. Is she in danger, as well?"

Mordret shook his head.

"As long as the ship does not come closer to Twilight, she'll be fine. It is us, the visitors of the mirror realm, who are in danger. However, this is also the only place where we can talk... unless one of you is willing to surrender your body to me, of course."

He glanced at them and grinned.

"I guess none of you are, though?"

Sunny gritted his teeth and growled, his voice full of threatening malice: "You're goddamn right. Don't even think about it!"

Mordret sighed.

"Well, then. I don't have much essence left, but it's enough to invite one more person..."

With that, there was a sound of ringing glass, and Effie was suddenly standing near them, a perplexed expression on her face.

...However, it was the Prince of Nothing who looked truly startled. His usual mask of pleasant friendliness cracked for a moment, revealing a hint of sincere bewilderment.

Staring at Effie's belly, Mordret remained silent for a few moments, and then said incredulously:

"Ascended Athena... uh... why... why are you..."

Hearing that, Effie smiled sweetly.

"Pregnant? Well... you see, Your Highness... when a man and a woman love each other very much..."

Sunny's face twitched.

'No way...'

Was it really happening?