1499 Prince's Old Clothes

While Effie was giving Mordret — who silently listened to her with a strange expression on his usually composed face — the talk about the birds and the bees, Sunny secretly looked around.

'A mirror realm...'

He had never learned what Mordret's Ascended Ability was — and he did not really know now, either. But it seemed to have something to do with establishing a physical space in the realm of reflections, or at least a space capable of containing physical items and living things.

So, in a sense, Mordret carried within himself a pocket dimension, similar to Effie's Supreme Memory. It was a pure utility Ability. But there were still many questions about its reach and extent...

For example, could any reflection become an entrance to this Mirror Realm? No... he had called it a mirror realm. So could there be many of such realms? What was the scope of the space he could create? What were its limitations?

The idyllic meadow inside Effie's locket, for example, was around three kilometers across. Additionally, while she could send people and creatures inside without asking for permission, it was easy to escape — all one had to do was reach the edge of the small world and attack its painted boundaries.

With enough force, the fabric of the pocket dimension would come undone, and the locket would be damaged.

What about Mordret's mirror realm? He had already shown the ability to pull people inside against their will, even from some distance. How would one escape being trapped in a reflection?

What powers did Mordret possess within this mirror world that he did not have outside? More than that... could it be connected to two reflections at the same time, serving as a bridge between two physical places?

There were too many questions.

'No, I'm thinking about it wrong.'

The Prince of Nothing had not said that this was a manifestation of his Ascended Ability. He had said that it was an extension of it. How had his Ability been extended? Who had extended it?

And why was there a monster roaming its expanse... one dangerous enough to make Mordret wary?

'Who could invade Mordret's mirror realm?'

A dark expression appeared on Sunny's face.

He could think of an answer. And that answer was not at all to his liking. Finally, Mordret cleared his throat and interrupted Effie.

"I see. That... please accept my sincere congratulations... I guess? Congratulations! Ah, but we've already spent too much time here. It's time to leave."

Before any of them could say anything, the world around them rippled. In the next moment, they found themselves somewhere else... a place much different from the fallen fortress.

Sunny tensed.

There was a vast and somber expanse around them. The grey sky was covered by stormy clouds. The surface beneath their feet was shrouded in white mist. The whole space was suffused with soft light... and there, high above, a single radiant sphere was shining like a sun, its pale rays falling through the veil of storm clouds.

It seemed as though vague symbols were carved into the surface of the sun, but Sunny could not see them clearly.

This place... resembled a Soul Sea. Turning his head slightly, Sunny flinched.

There were motionless figures standing in a row in front of him. For a moment, he even mistook them for the silent shadows... but no, they weren't shadows. They were people, standing in the mist with empty expressions and hollow eyes.

A handsome young man wearing stylish clothes of the waking world. A woman with a weathered face, wearing cheap synthetic attire. A hunched old man in a plain suit similar to those the government officials wore. A broad-shouldered warrior clad in a suit of armor in the colors of Clan Valor, who looked familiar. A young woman in the uniform of the Evacuation army... and a few more.

There were several Nightmare Creatures among them, as well, each more repulsive than the previous one.

They were... Mordret's bodies.

Noticing Sunny's appalled gaze, the Prince of Nothing grinned.

"Perusing my wardrobe? I hope you don't mind."

Sunny gritted his teeth and looked at his companions, who all stared at the hollow bodies with repulsed expressions. He shook his head and turned away.

Mordret chuckled.

"Why, don't look at me as if I'm some kind of monster. These people weren't using their bodies well, anyway. Like this one..."

He patted the handsome young man on the shoulder.

"I took his body while he was dangling in a noose. That one had only a few excruciating hours left to live, her body full of poison from years of toil in an underground factory. This one... well, this one was surprisingly healthy. But he's had siphoned the credits meant for security measures and falsified inspection results to keep the factory running. Ah, well, the one next to him is a retainer of Clan Valor. Enough said..."

Mordret shook his head.

"I too have standards, you know."

Then, noticing Sunny's unconvinced gaze — and perhaps remembering the time he tried to steal Sunny's own body for no reason whatsoever, apart from convenience — he added with an elegant smile:

"...When it suits me. In any case, we should be safe here. This space is mine and mine alone."

Sunny took a deep breath, then looked around. Finally, he showed a sign of interest.

"Is this... you Soul Sea?"

Mordret took a few steps forward, his feet drowning in the swirling mist, and stopped beneath the pale sun.

"It is a reflection of my Soul Sea, technically. This is the true manifestation of my Ascended Ability."

Sunny remained silent for a moment. Suddenly, he remembered the day Nightmare had come into his true power as a Terror, unlocking the [Dream Curse] Ability.

'I wonder... this Ascended Ability of his. Could it be called a lesser mirror domain?'

But then, he frowned.

"Wait... if this is your mirror realm, then what was that reflection of the floating fortress?"

Mordret smiled silently.

"What else? It's a manifestation of the same Ability, just not mine. My powers are not grand enough to encompass an entire city, let alone its surroundings. I simply snuck there like a thief. The true master of that place..."

He grew silent for a moment and then added in a displeased tone:

"Is a rather unpleasant fellow. I think he goes by Soul Stealer."