1523 Endlessly Flowing

Soon enough, the wind carried the clouds of ash away. Twilight was once again illuminated by the beautiful light of dawn... what was left of Twilight, at least.

The floating fortress where the Dread Lord had died broke apart and drowned in the still water.

The water itself was starting to move, sparkling in the sunlight. Now that the Serpent King's city and whatever enchantments had held it in place were destroyed, the current was slowly returning.

Soon enough, the current would carry it all — the blackened ruins of Twilight, the corpses of the Defiled that had stormed it, and the broken ships of its fallen defenders — to the Edge, then throw them into the lightless abyss that lay beyond it. Where they would never be found or seen again, unless someone braved the void and reached the very bottom of Ariel's dreadful world.

Erasing all signs that Twilight had ever existed from the endlessly flowing surface of the Great River.

...Until the next cycle came.

Hopefully, Sunny would not be there to witness it.

The cohort had returned aboard the Chain Breaker before the fortress drowned. Now, they were observing the charred carcass of the inconceivable abomination that had served as the foundation of Twilight slowly crumbling and submerging underwater. The brilliant explosion had put a net of cracks into it, and now, the weight of the immense carapace and the water pressure were slowly pulling it apart.

Well... some of them were observing.

Some were in no condition to pay it much attention, if any at all.

Cassie was still unconscious. Her wounds, including the deep gash on her neck, had been healed by Nephis, but the blind girl was showing no signs of waking up, yet. Surviving the mayhem and the obliterating blast must have taken a toll on her.

Nephis herself was sitting at the stern of the flying vessel, staring into the distance with a detached look on her face. She was utterly exhausted, but also... this was her usual state after overusing her Aspect. It was as if her humanity had been burned away, and needed time to restore itself.

Somehow, Sunny felt that this time, that process would take longer than it had in the past.

Which was... understandable. He already realized that the devastating explosion that destroyed the city, and turned every living being on its streets to ash, had been somehow caused by Nephis.

Sunny did not know the details, but could see that she was a Titan now. That had to be the result of her fires consuming all the Nightmare Creatures that had been fighting against Soul Stealer, and then killing the mirror fiend himself. Neph's [Halfbreed] Innate Ability granted her a portion of the soul fragments of all beings killed by her flames, after all.

He himself was in no mood to observe the collapse of Twilight, either. Slumped against the trunk of the sacred tree, Sunny was not much different from Nephis. Using the [King's Resentment] had taken a toll on him, making him feel utterly drained and exhausted. His gaze was distant, and his face was pale from fatigue.

There was also a confusing storm of emotions raging in his heart, but at the same time, he was too numb to deal with that mess.

For now, he was simply happy to be alive... happy that all of them were alive.

While their enemies — against all odds — were dead.

Saint, Fiend, and Nightmare were guarding the ship... and keeping an eye on Mordret, in case the bastard decided to do something malicious. However, the Prince of Nothing did not seem inclined to turn on his allies, at least not just yet. He walked around the Chain Breaker, looking curiously at this and that.

That would have infuriated Sunny if he wasn't feeling so drained. What was that guy so curious about? He had already seen everything there was to see here, hiding in their eyes on the way to the Second Nightmare.

Perhaps looking at things through someone else's eyes and doing it yourself was not quite the same. Right... perhaps this Chain Breaker was not the same as the real Chain Breaker they had left in the real world, either.

In any case, Mordret was not a problem, for now. Which left only Effie, Jet, and Kai.

The first two had been spared from participating in the battle for Twilight. Cassie had apparently saved them from being taken by Soul Stealer with the help of the Black Beast Locket, and then carried the locket out of the city before the obliterating blast.

Kai, meanwhile, was full of questions, but too polite to ask them all at once. The poor guy must have been utterly confused... out of all of them, the start of his Nightmare was perhaps the most dreadful.

As a result, the three were standing at the railings, looking at the blackened corpse of Twilight and talking quietly between themselves. Kai's expression constantly changed between stunned, expressionless, and mortified.

'Look at him, emoting so much... wait. He was the one who killed the Dread Lord, wasn't he? Damn. If I had a credit for every time Kai killed a dragon... I would have two credits now... strange...'

Sunny studied the face of his friend for a few minutes, considering if he had to apologize for trying to kill him. Kai had blown up his shadow shell, too, so... they were probably even?

In any case, this dilemma seemed too tiring and complicated to consider right now. Looking away, Sunny turned his full attention to the wood grain of the Chain Breaker's deck.

Everything had gone wrong in Twilight. He had failed... but also prevailed, in a sense. Soul Stealer was dead. The Dread Lord was dead, too.

The army they had hoped to recruit was dead as well.

And Nephis had used the Shadow Bond.

To cure Sunny from madness, but still. She had broken her promise.

Again.

And saved him, again.

'What a mess.'

Tired and confused, he closed his eyes and lowered his head to the root of the sacred tree.

He just wanted to sleep.

The problems, messy as they were, could wait until tomorrow.