1539 Sybil's Secrets

Sunny was in his quarters, going over the plan for altering the Transcendent charm. Outside, Fallen Grace was bathed in the beautiful glow of the iridescent water. The short night had descended on the world, shrouding the sky in absolute darkness.

In that dark hour, Cassie was walking along the corridors of the temple —which wasn't that strange, in and of itself, if not for the fact that she was alone. Usually, the two deaf guards would be following behind her, but they were nowhere to be seen.

The only thing accompanying the blind girl was the shadow Sunny had sent to keep an eye on her.

Back in his quarters, he straightened and frowned, distracted from envisioning the complicated tapestry of the charm's spellweave.

'What is she up to?'

Cassie had not given him any reason to feel worried in these past two months... honestly, monitoring her movements was an afterthought by now. Sunny had certainly hoped that it would remain that way.

Feeling a bit somber, he glanced at the motionless figure standing a few meters away. The Sin of Solace was staring at him silently, not bothering to say anything. However, his gaze expressed more than enough.

Sunny winced, then looked away.

"Don't you glare at me. I'm sure it's nothing."

He said that... but did not command the shadow to back away. Instead, he dedicated more of his attention to observing Cassie.

The blind girl certainly did not seem pensive or secretive. She calmly walked along the winding stone corridors, tracing her fingers on the wall. Her other hand was holding the leather-bound journal.

'Maybe her guards are asleep.'

Sunny returned to considering the weave while keeping an eye on Cassie.

She walked for quite some time, eventually entering the part of the temple that he was not familiar with. These chambers were used for preparing for public rituals, so Sunny had no business being there. Cassie, on the other hand, seemed very familiar with that area of the temple.

She made a few more turns and stopped in front of an unassuming wooden door. A mundane-looking key appeared in her hand. Unlocking the door, Cassie entered a narrow staircase that led down, spiraling.

Sunny's frown deepened. 'What the hell?'

She was already on the first floor of the temple. Why was there a way further down, into the frame of the island-ship?

But then again, maybe it was normal. The human cities on the Great River were kept in place by various means, ranging from sails and windcatchers to sorcerous mechanisms. Perhaps Cassie was on her way to inspect the moving parts of one such mechanism.

She descended the stairs for some time before entering a dark and damp network of service tunnels running under the temple. Sunny had not known that there were such corridors there, but it made sense. The mechanisms responsible for allowing the island-ship to resist the current had to be inspected and repaired from time to time.

Fallen Grace, especially, was reliant on such mechanisms. It was situated not too far from the Edge, after all, and so the pull of the current was more powerful here.

Cassie walked along the dark corridors for a little bit and unlocked another door, entering a small chamber.

Sunny was suddenly unable to concentrate on weaving anymore. His face darkened.

The chamber was just what he had expected it to be — it housed a complicated mess of gears and chains that spun and moved, transferring the energy from the wind and the enchantment circuits into the underwater wheels that kept the island-ship stationary. It was a bit like entering the insides of a tower clock, if that tower clock had been built with the help of sorcery.

In a sense, Sunny was looking at the River Civilization's version of spelltech.

However, that was not what attracted his attention.

The chamber and the intricate gears were what he had been expecting to see. What he had not expected, however, was that the floor of the chamber was broken, creating a rough, circular well.

The menacing hole certainly did not look like something that had been planned by the builders of the temple. Instead, it looked like something that had been created much later, and much more violently.

He could hear the sounds of flowing water coming from its dark depths. '...Why is there a well at the bottom of the Temple of Dusk?'

His shadow hid in the darkness of the underground chamber, observing Cassie carefully.

The blind girl did not seem surprised by the presence of the strange well. Neither did she pay it any attention. Locking the door behind her, she circled around the open chasm and approached the opposite wall of the chamber. There, hidden behind a throng of spinning gears, a simple desk stood near the wall, with several chests and cabinets surrounding it.

The underground chamber was absolutely dark, and there were no lanterns anywhere in sight. Of course, Cassie had no need for them. Coming closer to the desk, she lingered for a few moments, facing it with a distant expression.

Then, she moved past it and kneeled near one of the chests, placing a hand on its heavy lid. Several strings of runes ignited on the wooden surface, and the chest opened noiselessly, revealing what was stored inside it.

Sunny tilted his head, his expression turning somber.

Inside the chest... were leather-bound journals, just like the one Cassie was carrying. Dozens of them, or maybe even hundreds. There were several chests like that one in the underground chamber, as well, all locked with sorcerous locks.

The blind girl remained motionless for a while, then sighed deeply and placed the last journal on the pile.

Then, she closed the lid of the chest, kept her hand on it for a few moments, and rose.

Turning away, she approached the edge of the dark well and lowered her head, listening to the sounds of the flowing water with a distant expression.

Cassie stood there for several minutes, unmoving. Separated from her by hundreds of meters and numerous stone walls, Sunny grew tense, ready to step through the shadows and appear in the underground chamber

should something reach for the blind girl from the cold darkness.

'What the hell is that place? Did Dusk leave those things behind?'

It would make sense for the sybil who had lived in the temple for centuries to leave many traces here, including her personal records. However, what was with the ominous well leading to the dark waters?

Sunny gritted his teeth.

But in the end, nothing happened. Cassie clenched her fists, turned away from the underground well, and left the chamber the way she came.

Ascending the narrow steps, she reentered the temple proper and traced her way back to her quarters, entering them through a private passage.

It was only then that Sunny allowed his tense body to relax. His mind, however, was anything but calm.

'Why would Dusk have a secret like that?'

He hesitated for a while, then felt a cold chill run down his spine.

'...Or does it have nothing to do with Dusk, at all?'