1540 Clouded Judgment

The feeling of restlessness Sunny had felt after leaving Twilight returned. Something strange was going on with Cassie... had been going on for a long time, maybe. He was almost sure of it.

But it was the "almost" of it all that made the situation so difficult. He did not know what to do... confront her? Share his concern with others?

What would he say?

That Cassie should not have survived Twilight? None of them should have survived there, really. That she kept journals? There was nothing wrong with that, and claiming otherwise would only make him seem strange. That she was too quiet and unassuming, which made him feel as if she was hiding something vital from them? That sounded like paranoia talking.

In fact, it was — it was the Sin of Solace whispering into his ear. The Sin of Solace, whose only purpose was to drive him mad. Was he a fool to listen to these whispers?

Sunny was not even sure himself what he was suspecting Cassie of, just that he did not feel comfortable with her secrets. But...

Was it really because there was something off about the blind girl, or was it simply because he had never trusted her? Was he still secretly holding on to the grudge after what she had done on the Forgotten Shore, which painted his perception of her?

Sunny would be lying if he said that he had let go of that grudge completely.

None of the others seemed to suspect Cassie of anything, so why was he the only one looking for faults in her actions?

'Ah, damnation.'

What was he supposed to do?

Did he even need to do anything?

So what if Cassie had a pile of old journals? So what if she kept secrets? Was he the right person to blame someone for not being entirely honest?

More than that, he had always known that Cassie kept much of what she knew to herself. In fact, Sunny was the reason why she had closed herself

off, to begin with — he was the one who had told her how destructive of a poison her visions were... in the most cruel way he could think of, at that.

Her personality had only begun to change after that bitter conversation they had in the medical complex of the Academy, right after coming back from the Forgotten Shore.

Nephis was aware that Cassie knew much more than she was letting on, too. She had told him so herself, during one of their conversations on the Ivory Island.

So why was Sunny reacting so strongly now? 'Because we are so close to victory.'

Because this Nightmare was so dreadful, and its end was swiftly approaching. Sunny was nervous that something would ruin their chances of returning to the waking world, and the ominous shadow of Torment was the last thing standing between them and salvation.

Torment had never appeared before them, and so, she was as frightening as their imaginations could make her.

Perhaps Cassie was just a substitute for all that fear.

...Or perhaps there was really something ominous going on with the blind seer.

"Oh, she is definitely planning to betray you. Again."

The Sin of Solace smiled, looking at him with dark amusement.

Sunny cursed and threw a wooden tray at the sword wraith. The tray

passed through the apparition and fell to the floor, clattering loudly.

The hateful wraith laughed.

"Fool, you are simply incapable of learning, are you? Even after what she did to you, what she took from you, you are still willing to give her the benefit of the doubt. No wonder you ended up being made a slave by her... ah, and she never even apologized. I bet she doesn't feel even a little bit remorseful about her betrayal. Since she doesn't, what is going to stop her from turning on you again?"

Sunny glared at the Sin of Solace, then took a deep breath. He slowly calmed down.

"That... doesn't even make any sense. At least try to be convincing when you are spouting nonsense, will you?"

Sunny was prejudiced against Cassie... that much was apparent. Deep in his heart, he still harbored resentment toward her. He valued and cared for her, as well, but that was beside the point. Humans were complicated and contradictory creatures, indeed... just like Nephis had said, they could love and hate someone at the same time.

Because Sunny's judgment was clouded, it was easy to find fault with Cassie. But if he flipped his perception and looked at the situation from a different angle, trying to find the opposite, any suspicion that the blind girl could have been doing something to harm the cohort would crumble. It was a preposterous idea.

Almost every action Cassie had taken was for their benefit. They would have never made it that far without her. From start to finish, she had been nothing but a selfless ally, putting herself in harm's way on numerous occasions. Finding the scattered members of the cohort, escaping Aletheia's Island, surviving the depths of the Great River... none of that would have been possible without her.

So, no matter what secret Cassie was keeping, it was not something that would harm the cohort. Sunny had no reason to worry about that.

After realizing that, he felt his heart calming down.

But then, it suddenly felt heavy once again.

Because while Sunny did not have a reason to worry about the cohort... There might have been a reason to worry about Cassie.

'She's not... preparing herself for something drastic, is she?'

A deep scowl appeared on his face once again. He remained silent for a while, then shook his head.

'No, she wouldn't. Cassie might seem soft, but she is one of the strongest people I know. She's much stronger than anyone gives her credit for.'

Still, a tiny seed of doubt remained.

Sunny cursed quietly, threw a hateful glance at the Sin of Solace, and turned his attention back to the Transcendent charm.

The day of their departure was swiftly approaching, so he had to perform the alteration as soon as possible.