1553 Shadow and Seer

After asking the question, Sunny sat down on a bench across from Cassie.

There they were, alone in a boat, just the two of them… or rather, the four of them.

The Sin of Solace landed on the bench next to Sunny, a sinister smile twisting his lips. His face was hateful, just like always… of course, it was also the exact same face as Sunny's.

Cassie was sittingon the helman's bench a few meters away from them, holding the steering oar. The Echo of the dead sybil was there, too, side by side with her. Since both were wearing flowing garments of vibrant red fabric, traditional for the priestesses of Fallen Grace, they looked quite similar too. The most visible difference between them was that Cassie's exquisite face was bare, while the monstrous Echo was wearing a veil.

Cassie's beautiful blue eyes were full of life, as well, even though she was blind. The sybils's eyes, though, were eerily empty and devoid of life. Her hollow stare made shivers run down Sunny's spine — he felt that way every time he saw an Echo of a human. Granted, this one was made in the image of a human who had succumbed to the Defilement.

The four of them sat opposite each other, surrounded by invisible tension.

Despite Sunny's sudden appearance, though, Cassie remained calm. She deactivated the enchantment of her wooden staff and lowered it, then said in an even voice:.

"I thought you were asleep."

A faint smile appeared on Sunny's lips.

"Did you?"

He had been reasonably sure that his small act had fooled the blind seer, but now that he saw her lack of reaction, a worm of doubt entered his mind. Had she known he was pretending all along?

The Sin of Solace chuckled, staring at Cassie with hate and disdain in his gaze.

"It seems that you've been played like a fiddle, pitiful worm. Even after all my warnings… gods, how frustrating! You should have struck this traitor down long ago. Just look at her… she must despise you just as much as I do!"

The corner of Sunny's mouth twitched, but he suppressed the desire to rebuke the sword wraith. That, however, only gave the apparition the opportunity to press his mocking tirade:

"You truly are a revolting creature, are you not? A lowly, despicable slave… and look, here is the woman who made you into a slave. She betrayed you once, and yet, you allowed the snake to warm her way back into your good graces. You have forgotten her sins, and as gratitude, the blind traitor is about to stab you in the back once again!"

At that point, Cassie took a deep breath.

...Then, she turned her head slightly, facing the Sin of Solace, and spoke, her voice trembling with long-suppressed anger:

"Can you shut your foul mouth, wretch? Who asked you to talk? Be quiet for once!"

Sunny was taken a little aback by that show of emotions.'

The Sin of Solace stared at her vindictively, but did fall silent. A satisfied smile appeared on his face.

Sunny smiled, too.

"So… you can perceive him, after all."

Cassie's mask of composure had finally cracked, revealing an ocean of emotion raging below. However, she regained that composure in a moment and scoffed, throwing a contemptuous glance at the sword wraith.

"So what if I can?"

Sunny shrugged.

"You lied to me, though, on Aletheia's Island. When you said that you couldn't."

Cassie met his gaze without flinching. Her voice was even:

"...So what if I lied? Yes, I can perceive that insufferable wraith through you. I can also perceive your shadows, and what they see. What about it?"

He sighed.

'Damnation.'

So, he was wrong all along. Sunny had assumed that Cassie's Ascended Ability did not affect his shadows, since they were separate beings from him, and she did not have shadow sense. She had also never shown or acted upon the ability to mark his shadows.

So, Sunny had been fooled.

Played like a fool even.

He was still smiling, but that smile did not reach his eyes.

"So you were aware that I had been watching you for the past few months."

She shrugged.

"Sure."

If Cassie was aware that Sunny was suspicious of her… then the situation was completely different from how he imagined it to be. Not only would she have been able to hide her secrets from him, but even the things she had shown him had been shown of purpose.

Like the chamber with the well and the countless journals stored in a runic chest.

Knowing that his shadows were watching her, Cassie would only be able to act freely if she was outside the range of Shadow Control. That was why she wanted to stay behind while Sunny joined the scouting teams…

His pupils widened slightly.

'No…'

If Cassie had known that he was suspicious of her… she would have known that he would refuse to leave her alone on the Chain Breaker, as well. They were too familiar with each other for her to fail predicting that action of his.

Which meant that the blind seer's true purpose was not to remain alone on the flying ship…

Instead, it was for the two of them to remain there together, away from the other members of the cohort.

And he had done exactly what she wanted him to do.

Suddenly, a hint of a strange and cold emotion settled in Sunny's heart. Was it… fear?

Yes, it was. It was the fear of fighting a battle of schemes against a powerful oracle. Cassie might not have been the strongest of them in a direct confrontation, but being caught in a net of schemes and manipulation that someone who could see the future had created…

Was, honestly, nothing short of terrifying.

Sunny deemed himself a master of deceit and manipulation. There was only one person he had met who could truly be considered a fearsome adversary in that field — Mordret.

But now, he was quickly reconsidering that statement.

Actually, there was another contender among them.

And that newcomer was perhaps the most fearsome of the three.

Looking at the blind, who remained calm and composed, Sunny leaned back and asked, his tone relaxed:

"So, why did you want to see me alone, Cassie?"

He lingered for a moment and then added, his voice remaining even:

"...Or should I call you Torment?"