1557 Terrifying Existence

Cassie turned sharply and stared at him, her mask of composure barely holding.

"You... you know why I did what I did. I was young and naive, back then. Stupid, and helpless. I... know better now."

Sunny raised his hands and clapped them, applauding her. "Good for you! Really. What stunning growth. But..."

He lingered for a few moments, and then said through gritted teeth:

"But, you know... you never even apologized for taking my freedom away. So, I guess, you aren't that burdened by having done that."

She flinched.

The cold winds rose, making the sails of the ketch flutter. Nevertheless, it stayed in place, its bow lodged into the icy shore of the desolate land.

Cassie remained silent for a while.

Then, she said, her voice trembling slightly: "But... I did. I did apologize."

Sunny raised an eyebrow.

"Somehow, I don't remember. And I would have remembered something like that. When did you ever apologize for what you had done to me?"

The blind girl hesitated for a few moments, and then said quietly:

"It was... right after we escaped from the Soul Devourer. When we were sailing across the dark sea on the boat Nephis made."

Stunned, Sunny stared at her for a few moments.

Then, his face was twisted by a grimace of anger.

"What? What the hell did you say? You apologized... in advance? Almost an entire year before we stormed the Crimson Spire? What kind of crap is that?! Does it make sense, in that twisted little head of yours?!"

Subjected to his anger, Cassie lowered her head.

Then, however, a cold expression appeared on her face. She looked up, facing him again.

"Sure... yes, Sunny. You're right. That was cowardly of me." A fragile smile appeared on her face.

"But what is the worth of saying sorry? It wouldn't have changed anything. Words are worthless. If someone is truly sorry, they should express it through their actions, don't you think?"

Sunny chuckled.

"And what have you done to redeem your mistake? Huh? What can you even do? It can't be undone!"

Cassie remained silent for a while, and then suddenly pierced him with a fierce gaze.

Even though he knew that she could not see, at that moment, Sunny did not remember it.

Her voice was a little hoarse when she spoke: "...Says who?"

He was slightly taken aback. Glancing at her with a frown, Sunny raised an eyebrow.

"What do you mean?" Cassie smiled bitterly. "Who says that it can't be undone? Who says that it's impossible?"

She shook her head.

"So what if it's impossible? I'll do it anyway."

Sunny stared at her in bewilderment.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

Cassie raised her hands and rubbed her wrists, where the golden shackles had once been.

"What else? I am talking about breaking fate, Sunny. Wasn't that what you wanted to do, too? Wasn't that your entire goal, too? I wish to break fate, as well."

She lowered her head for a moment, then said quietly:

"Everything I've done... everything I've endured... it was all for this. For this moment. It's so impossibly hard, to break fate. No matter how fiercely you attack it, it strikes back with ten times the might. My True

Name, Song of the Fallen... it means that I am destined to witness the fates of others, and carry the memories of them long after they are gone. To be a witness, powerless to change what I see. Well... I refuse. I don't want a fate like that, at all."

Then, a faint smile bloomed on her delicate face.

"It is impossible to break fate with a strike, but what about a thousand strikes? Ten thousand strikes? If each one of them damages its tapestry a little bit, misaligns its strings by a tiny fraction, obstructs its flow by a miniscule amount... then, put together, they can tear fate apart. One just needs a sharp enough weapon."

Cassie faced Sunny, allowing him to look her in the eye.

"I... intend to give you a chance to become such a weapon, Sunny." Suddenly, he felt a chill run down his spine.

The bad premonition he had felt was back, making him tense with fright. "What... what did you do? What did you do, Cassie?"

She shrugged.

"What did I do? This and that. Some of it was easy, and some of it was hard. All of it, though... all of it was almost unbearable. Is unbearable. But not for long, now. Because I'm about to be free of that burden."

Sunny stared at her, his eyes slowly widening.

Suddenly, he saw many of Cassie's actions in a new light.

And the implication of what he saw was so vast and terrifying that it made him shudder.

"You... you planned it all from the start... didn't you?" She smiled softly, then shook her head.

"Not all of it. It's impossible to plan for all of it. I might know a lot, and see a lot, but I am not omniscient, Sunny. The trick, though, is to plan enough of it so that when the unexpected happens, it could still become a part of the plan."

He looked aside, distracted by the glow of the Guiding Light.

"You've been manipulating the events of this cycle all along. That time in the drowned temple... I failed to discover the hidden compartment where the sacred relic was hidden, so you did it for me. Wait... no!"

As Cassie looked at him with a faint smile, Sunny paled.

"It was... it started long before the Nightmare. During the battle where

the seven Saints came together, you manipulated the battle formation... so that I could finish off the Defiled Seeker of Truth..."

He stopped talking as a shiver ran through his body. "No... even before that..."

When had it started?

When had Cassie begin to weave her grandiose plan, manipulating everyone, from the Fire Keepers following her to the leaders of the Great Clans, into doing her bidding?

An powerful oracle... was indeed a terrifying existence.

Especially one as ambitious, but at the same time quiet and unnoticeable, as Cassie had turned out to be.

Finally, Sunny looked at her, utterly stunned. His expression was frozen.

"It... it was..."

Even saying it aloud was difficult, each word immeasurably heavy because of the weight of all the implications.

"...It was back on the Chained Isles. When I came to you, intending to recruit you to challenge the Second Nightmare together. And you told me that you received a vision of us dying in the winter. You have already been planning for today, all the way back then."