1559 Thousand Cuts

"Mordret, Mordret… you remained pretty passive in the Second Nightmare, didn't you? The only time you shared your knowledge of the future with me… was to tell me that he couldn't be allowed to enter the Ivory Tower."

Sunny hesitated for a moment, then smiled crookedly:

"But then, what you really wanted to achieve was not preventing him from entering the Ivory Tower, was it? It was making sure that he entered the Ebony Tower instead, and collected whatever it was that Nether had left there. By telling me that one sentence, you achieved exactly that."

He felt as if the ground was disappearing from beneath his feet.

What had happened to Mordret in the Ebony Tower? The Prince of Nothing had not shared that information completely, but he did mention that after leaving it, he was much harder to find with the help of divination. The strange, vague symbols Sunny had seen on Mordret's soul core were the result of that.

Why would Cassie want the bastard to be resistant to her power? To make sure that Soul Stealer could go against Torment? Or simply to ensure that Valor would not be able to track their exile prince before the time was right? Or for something that would happen in the future?

What else? What else had Cassie done, subtly manipulating the events of the past years?.

Was it a coincidence that the two of them had met Morgan at the Academy on the day that Nephis returned from her Second Nightmare? Surely, no. That was why Sunny had been there the moment she woke up, to welcome her back.

Nephis then spent a month living in his house, then announced her decision to join Valor at the ball… making him leave in anger and enlist for the Southern Campaign. Which was why he was present in the Antarctic Center during the battle against the Remnant of the Jade Queen, and received the Sin of Solace.

Later, Cassie helped him escape the endless tunnel by sending him toward the Heart of Darkness. She also manipulated the battle against the immense horde of Nightmare Creatures as Morgan's adviser, making sure that Sunny was in the right place, at the right time, to deal the final blow to the Fallen Titan, Defiled Seeker of Truth, and therefore received the Mirror of Truth from it.

Finally, she was there at the Battle of the Black Skull, without a doubt knowing what would happen. She was in the Nightmare Desert, as well, eventually entering the Nightmare of the Great River with the six other powerful Masters — Sunny, Nephis, Mordret, Kai, Effie, and Jet.

And these instances were only what Sunny could remember, and had experienced personally. There was no telling how many strings Cassie had really pulled from behind the curtain, how many people she had influenced, and how many coincidences she had engineered to arrange for everything to happen in accordance with her wishes.

The scale of the brilliant web she had woven was nothing short of astonishing... and terrifying.

Of course, it was impossible to say that she was solely responsible for how these events had happened. Fate flowed, pulling everyone with its current, after all… and even if the details were to change, Sunny was pretty sure that he would have ended up in Antarctica one way or another. Nephis would have probably ended up siding with Valor, one way or another.

The Chain of Nightmare would have happened no matter what Cassie could have done. Song and Valor would have clashed, hiding their war on the battlefields of the Southern Quadrant.

But that was precisely what Cassie was doing, wasn't it? Pulling on the strings of fate ever so minutely, compared to the grand scale of the inconceivable tapestry, and pushing toward her goal through these insignificant changes.

One change had no meaning. Two changes had no weight, as well… but a thousand? Ten thousand? By altering the details of countless inevitable events everso slightly, she was creating a chain reaction of changes, which grew like an avalanche, threatening to alter the entire flow of the river of fate… the flow that was supposed to be unchangeable.

Could it work?

Sunny was not sure.'

He felt like some of the changes Cassie had caused were more important than others, though.

The Sin of Solace and the Mirror of Truth, these two Memories… somehow, he felt that they were the key to Cassie's intent.

There was no need to explain the significance of the Sin of Solace. That Memory, containing the whisper of the builder of the Tomb, was perhaps the most important piece at play here, in the Third Nightmare. It was responsible for creating the Mad Prince, after all… and therefore introducing a variable into the endlessly repeating cycles of the Great River.

A single variable that introduced utter chaos to the entire system.

The Mirror of Truth was also very significant. Not only because its runes described a conversation between Weaver and Ariel, but also because it was the sole instrument that could allow someone to replicate Neph's [Longing] Ability, thus making them immune to Corruption for a short period of time.

The First Seeker was an vast source of Corruption, which Aletheia had been plagued by after learning the truth of the Estuary. Sunny did not need to think long to understand how important the Mirror of Truth was.

Still… none of it really explained what exactly Cassie was planning, and what she meant by saying that Sunny could become a weapon to destroy fate.

There were a million questions on his mind, but he threw them all away, looking at the beautiful young woman with a somber expression.

After a bit of silence, Sunny said hoarsely:

"You don't seem to be denying any of it."

Cassie shrugged.

"Why should I deny it?"

She faced him, then closed her eyes suddenly, letting out a long sigh.

"Honestly, it's a relief. I've been keeping it all to myself for too long, so… it's refreshing, to be able to share it with someone. To be witnessed by someone. Maybe it's selfish, but I… am glad that you finally figured it out, Sunny."

His face remained motionless.

'She's happy, huh…'

Well, he couldn't say that he did not understand. It felt nice, to be witnessed.

Still…

Sunny looked at Cassie with a dark expression and asked, his tone devoid of any emotion:

"Well then, tell me, Cassie… what is it that you want? How exactly are you planning to break fate? What is the answer?"

She lingered for a moment and then smiled faintly.

"Simple, really. It's…"

Cassie faced him and finished, her calm voice full of cold, confident determination:

"It's the Well of Wishes."