1567 One Last Time

Sunny remained silent, watching the Sin of Solace with a somber expression.

'Well… that much is obvious.'

Of course, he was not the first version of himself to reach the Estuary. There had been the Mad Prince, as well…

However, the next words of the sword wraith made him flinch:

"Oh, there were numerous Mad Princes before, too. All making schemes and striving to change something that could not be changed, the despicable bastards. Paving the way for their lesser versions… like you… to make it to the end. Each cycle a little different, but ultimately the same."

The apparition took a step forward and spat, his voice trembling with hatred:.

"Gods… I'm so tired of this boring play. Each time you escape the Defilement, you are given the choice of remaining with your allies. And each time, you choose to betray them. You… you really are a piece of scum, you know that? Do you know how many times you've broken your promises? How many times you've betrayed Changing Star in the name of seeking freedom?"

The Sin of Solace laughed and gestured to the sea of broken ships.

"Look! Look, Lost from Light! Each of these wrecks is a monument to your sins."

Sunny remained silentas he looked at the broken ships, feeling a bitter emotion rise in his heart.

It was a tough pill to swallow… to be disappointed in himself.

But then, he smiled darkly.

Sure, knowing that he was an unreliable and treacherous, selfish person was bitter. But did it matter, really? He still did not regret his choice.

More than that… he was still going to see it through.

So what if all his previous selves had failed? They weren't him. He was the latest, and therefore the strongest. He wielded the accumulated legacy of all who came before, granted to him by the Mad Prince — the latest Mad Prince there had been — who remembered all the previous cycles through the Sin of Solace.

They might have failed, but Sunny was not going to. He didn't have to be the first... he simply needed to be the last.

It was impossible for him to fail.

Because the Nightmare was already ending.

By now, Nephis must have already begun her assault on Verge. The Mad Prince, Torment, and Cassie… they had manipulate the events to make sure that the Nightmare was conquered, whether with or without Sunny.'

So, this cycle would be the last one… whether he achieved his goal or not.

And he was going to achieve it.

The Sin of Solace looked at him with disdain.

"What? You have nothing to say? Has the fear stolen your ability to speak?"

Sunny smiled crookedly and walked past him without saying a word.

He entered the ship graveyard and moved through it, making sure to stay away from the wrecks where the sacred trees were healthy and brimming with fruit. The feeling he received from these ones was too similar, if much weaker, than what he had felt under the branches of the Soul Devourer.

Peace. Safety. Happiness. Content.

Therefore, Sunny moved as far away from that feeling as he could.

The Sin of Solae followed, falling silent. The wraith's expression was full of hatred and contempt.

Sunny paid him no attention.

It did not take him a lot of time to travel past the ship graveyard. Beyond it was another slope, this one leading to the peak of a high mountain. If the sphere of black stone had been the Unholy Titan's heart once… then the mountain would be one of the arteries.

Augmented by six shadows, Sunny's body was brimming with strength. Even though he was exhausted after the harrowing journey to the Source, he climbed the mountains without ever slowing down.

The only thing he felt nervous about was not making it to the goal in time.

Finally, Sunny reached the peak of the mountain. It was indeed hollow inside. In front of him was the entrance to a vast circular tunnel, surrounded by tall pillars. There were stone steps leading up to the maw of the tunnel, clearly man-made…

Or rather, daemon-made. Ariel must have shaped this entrance himself, a long time ago.

Walking closer to the steps, Sunny noticed that several of them had cracked over the ages. Jagged pieces of black stone were laying on the ground… the size and shape of them were eerily familiar.

They looked exactly like the jagged black rock the Key of the Estuary had been created from.

Sunny smiled.

'So this is where the Mad Prince picked the base material for his Memory up.'

Which meant that the vile madman had been to the Estuary before crossing from the future into the past. He could have gained his freedom a long time ago.

…But was there a point in being free if it was at the cost of Neph's life? For the Mad Prince, it was not.

That was why he had returned to the Great River without breaking the chains of fate. And that was why he had scratched numerous demented runes into the piece of flotsam drifting in the mist of the Source, all saying the same thing…

Be careful of what you wish for

The Mad Prince had regretted finding the Well of Wishes.

Sunny, however, would not.

Taking a deep breath, he summoned the Mirror of Truth and looked at its polished surface.

There, a reflection of Nephis as caught, looking just like she had on the carapace of the Black Turtle. Sunny had not used the Mirror during the last revolution of the Aletheia's Island's loop, and so, it was in pristine condition.

He looked at Neph's reflection for a while, then held the heavy mirror tightly and stepped into the grandiose tunnel, walking into its darkness.

Entering the heart of the Tomb of Ariel.

He walked forward for a while, not seeing anything particular. He couldn't even determine the direction in which the tunnel led… its floor was supposed to be sloping downward, but if felt flat, stretching endlessly forward.

Slowly, the walls of the tunnel expanded, and its ceiling disappeared from view. Sunny found himself walking between two perfectly flat plains of black stone, surrounded by darkness.

And there, in the darkness… harrowing runes were carved into the stone, dancing madly.

As soon as Sunny caught sight of these runes, he immediately activated the enchantment of the Mirror of Truth.