1568 Knowledge of the Void

Sunny had only caught a glimpse of the runes, but it was enough to send him into a state of utter terror.

Before even having time to think, he shut his eyes tightly and activated the enchantment of the Mirror of Truth, borrowing Neph's [Longing] Ability.

Thus making his soul incorruptible… for a while.

And it was just in time, because simply being close to the runes threatened to make Corruption bloom in his soul.

'Argh…'

He groaned mentally while keeping his mouth shut..

The pain was almost unbearable.

It was a familiar kind of terror, revulsion, and pain, as well.

Because Sunny had recognized the shape of those runes.

There were two types of runes that the Spell refused to translate.

One had to do with the type of beings it simply called the -unknown- — the primordial beings of the eternal, everchanging Void. The other had to do with the singular being that it similarly called the -unknown- — the mysterious progenitor of the seven daemons, which might have been one of the Void Creatures, or might not have been.

The latter runes were hard to look at, causing the head of the person to split with ache, and their mind to become dizzy.

It were the former runes, though, that were truly sinister, making the unfortunate person witnessing them feel terror and revulsion.

Inscribed on the walls of the tunnel were such runes… a great number of them. The walls of the tunnel, which seemed to stretch infinitely in all directions, were littered with them, with barely any empty spaces left between the harrowing symbols.

Sunny gulped for air.

'This… this is the source of the Defilement.'

Now that he thought about it, it made sense.

The dreadful runes described the Void Beings. And he had learned by now that Corruption was the influence of the Void, seeping through the walls of existence that caged it. Therefore, knowledge of the Void… was the source of Corruption, as well.

And that was what Ariel, that madman, had inscribed on the walls of the Estuary. The stories of the Void, the knowledge about it… and the True Names of the harrowing beings that dwelled within its everchanging depths, imprisoned by the gods.

He was sure of it.

That was what Aletheia had found, most likely, and what had turned her into the source of the Defilement… which was merely knowledge that could be shared and transferred, thus turning this form of Corruption into an unstoppable infection.

Knowledge of the Void, and of the True Names of those beings whose names could not be known, let alone uttered aloud.

That was why the Spell refused to translate the harrowing runes — not because it wanted to keep its secrets for itself, but simply because being able to read them would be the end of anyone who did.

Not just reading, as well… merely being in the presence of these runes was harmful. It was already painful and dangerous to glimpse a few of them, as Sunny had done a few times in his life — for example, when reading the descriptions of the drop of Shadow God's blood and the drop of Weaver's blood.

If the Spell had translated those runes for him, those descriptions would have probably gone something like that:

[Before, there was only boundless, eternal void. From that dark abyss, the Creatures of the Void were born. Just like chaos itself, they were endless and everlasting, vast and forever changing…]

Or:

[The loathsome Thieving Bird was hated both by the gods and the creatures of chaos. However, it only cared about shiny things. Enamored by Weaver's beautiful eyes, it stole one of them on a dark, starless night. Impatient, the vile creature looked at its bounty while still in flight. However, when it saw the reflection of the Void forever frozen in the depths of Weaver's pupil, it went mad and screamed, dropping the eye on the mortal realm below. All that was left in its greedy beak was one drop of pure, golden ichor.]

Witnessing those few runes, which merely named the Void and the type of beings born from it, had almost made him faint.

Here in the Estuary, though…

There were numerous ghastly runes carved into the stone, not only mentioning the Void and the Chaos Beings, but also describing them in detail and calling them by their True Names.

Therefore… even though Sunny had only caught a glimpse of the runes, unable to read them, that alone put him at risk of becoming Corrupted.

Remaining near them, in the endless tunnel, was going to make seeds of Corruption bloom in his soul, as well. So, if he remained here at the time the Mirror of Truth crumbled into dust… he would become Defiled.

He would become the Mad Prince again.

Running his fingers over the surface of the enchanted mirror, he could already feel a few thin cracks in it.

For a moment, Sunny considered turning around.

But then, a mocking voice came from the darkness:

"Why don't you open your eyes?"

Hearing the Sin of Solace made him remember why was it that he had come to the Estuary, and what was at stake.

His freedom.

Gritting his teeth, Sunny suppressed the terror and the agony he felt from being close to the harrowing runes and took a step forward.

Then, he took another step.

And then, another.

Even though each of them was so hard that he wanted to fall and shriek in pain, he remained silent and persisted.

Three steps turned into three dozen, and then into three hundred.

Sunny continued to walk through the dark tunnel, keeping his eyes closed. His shadows were wrapped tightly around his body, unable to see anything. Saint, Fiend, and Nightmare were kept safely within his soul, unable to witness the dreadful secrets of the Void.

Enduring the nauseating fear and torturous pain, he kept going.

And hoping…

That he would reach the end of the tunnel before the Mirror of Truth reached its limit.