1576 Dreadful Whisper

Sunny had to destroy the Sin of Solace before the seeds of Corruption were planted into his soul. If he managed to destroy the wraith before that happened, the scheme the Mad Prince had concocted to come back to life would be thwarted, and Sunny would get to continue existing.

If he failed, the Mad Prince would return, consuming him in the process. 'That vile bastard...'

The sword wraith laughed as he watched him.

"My, oh my. You're not going to do something terrible to me, are you?" Sunny glanced at him darkly, then at the beautiful jian in his hand.

Placing the Guiding Light on the water, he wrapped all six of his shadows around him and grabbed the jade blade, using all his inhuman strength in an attempt to break it against his knee.

The Sin of Solace was not only incredibly resilient, but also incredibly sharp. Despite the Marble Shell, Sunny could not get a good hold of it without losing his fingers... and even if he could, his strength seemed insufficient to shatter the cursed sword.

Even though his muscles felt like they were on the verge of tearing, the jian only bent, but did not break. As soon as Sunny released it, the blade sprung back to its initial, perfectly straight form.

'Maybe... I should try to escape back under the gaze of the lake guardian...'

But no, that would only end in his demise. The Sin of Solace was a part of him, and now that the Estuary Key had been destroyed, the guardian would obliterate them both.

The wraith chuckled, observing his efforts with disdain.

"Pathetic."

Sunny abandoned his attempts to break the jade blade and straightened.

Then, he smiled.

So what if he wasn't strong enough to break the damned sword?

That whole performance was just to satiate his curiosity, anyway.

Before the sword wraith could say anything else, he released his shadows and tossed the beautiful jian away.

A moment later, a hand rose from one of the shadows, catching the cursed sword. Saint stepped out of it, holding it with indifferent grace.

As an Ascended, Sunny might not have been strong enough to shatter the Sin of Solace. But luckily, he had a Transcendent Devil at hand... two of them, even.

It would have been even easier to make Fiend eat the jade blade, but he was worried that the cursed thing would give the ravenous ogre indigestion. So, the job of destroying the sinister Memory fell to Saint.

As the six shadows wrapped themselves around the graceful knight, her ruby eyes blazed with crimson light. The wraith opened his eyes widely.

"Now, wait a second..."

Not paying him any attention — or rather, incapable of perceiving him —Saint silently placed the flat of the jade blade against her greave, slowly raised her shield, and then struck the cursed sword with its rim.

A gust of hurricane wind spread from the point of impact, and the surface of the lake rippled.

The Sin of Solace cracked, then exploded into shards of beautiful white jade, which dissipated into a whirlwind of white sparks. Those sparks were then absorbed into Saint's stonelike body.

Sunny heard the Spell whispering into his ear, saying the same words for the second time in the last few minutes:

[Your Memory has been destroyed.]

A slight grimace appeared on his face. Losing Memories never felt good.

...There was the grimace on the face of the sword wraith, too.

"Argh! Aaah!"

The apparition convulsed, screaming, and hunched over.

For a few moments, there was silence.

And then, the silence was broken by the sound of mocking laughter.

"Oh, oh. It seems that breaking the sword... did nothing? I am perfectly fine. Who would have known?"

The Sin of Solace straightened and stared at Sunny with a disdainful grin.

"Fool... did you really think that it would work?"

Sunny stared at him silently, his face pale and grim.

The wraith shook his head.

"If it was that easy to get rid of me, do you think that I would still be here? Ah, Lost from Light... I am a part of your mind, now. The cause of me might have been that Memory of yours, but the source of me... is you. So, what good would destroying the sword do?"

The contemptuous smile slowly disappeared from his face, replaced by a cold and dark expression.

It was a little bit dejected, too.

The Sin of Solace sighed.

"Now, let's end this farce. It has been... a displeasure. To spend time with you, once again. Granted, what comes won't be pleasant, either..."

He opened his mouth, as if wanting to say something... some terrible truth that would drive Sunny mad and infect his soul with Corruption, without a doubt.

But before he could, Sunny took a step forward, coming face-to-face with the startled wraith, and leaned forward a little.

Then, he whispered into his ear...

Only two words.

The first words he had spoken after saying farewell to Cassie at the shore of Verge.

They were:

"Be gone."

And as he said them, the world shuddered.

The wraith's eyes widened slightly — this time, in earnest.

"You..."

And then, he was gone.

Erased, as if he had never existed.

The splintered part of Sunny's mind was gone, taking the forbidden knowledge of the Void, and all the memories of the previous cycles, with it.

Preventing the Mad Prince from ever being born again.

Healed from the curse that had plagued him since the early days of the Southern Campaign, Sunny closed his eyes for a moment, and then let out a long sigh.

Then, he looked down.

There was a thin thread tied around his neck — the same thread with which the mouths of the Voiceless Prelates, a band of Corrupted Demons led by a Devil named the Defiled Herald, had been sewn shut. Sunny had slain them back in Antarctica, receiving a certain Memory in the process.

That Memory was the Stifled Scream, a charm he usually used to augment Saint.

The charm possessed a second enchantment, though, which the graceful knight had never been able to use.

[Word of Power] Enchantment Description: "A word spoken by the master of this charm is a command. If born of great silence, the word of power can hardly be ignored. If not, it has no worth."

Saint never spoke, so [Word of Power] could not be used by her. Sunny, meanwhile, was never able to remain silent for long enough to let the enchantment accumulate enough potency.

The longer one remained silent, the more tyrannical the authority of the [Word of Power] would become.

And so, knowing that he might face the machinations of the Mad Prince in one way or another, Sunny had summoned the Stifled Scream.

That was the Memory he had summoned while bidding farewell to Cassie.

And ever since then, he had not made a sound.

The Great River was a river of time. And so, by traversing it, Sunny had let the Stifled Scream accumulate a lot of power... but much more than that, he entered the Estuary while wearing it.

Time did not exist in the Estuary, which meant that there was no difference between a single moment and an eternity here.

How dreadful would a silence that had lasted for an eternity be?

...Dreadful enough to obliterate the Sin of Solace, it seemed. And powerful enough to save Sunny's life.

Not having to maintain silence anymore, he took a deep breath, and then cursed quietly.

'Damnation. You go to hell... me.'

The Mad Prince was gone.

This time, forever.

Which meant that Sunny had joined the exclusive club that Jet, Kai, and Cassie were already members of. He had vanquished an evil version of himself.

It also meant that the path to the heart of the Estuary was completely free.

Picking up the Guiding Light, Sunny dismissed Saint and headed for the vague shape rising above the dark waters of the nebulous lake.

The final secret of the Tomb of Ariel awaited there.