1582 Banished

Sunny was paralyzed for a few moments.

He tried to summon the runes several more times, but there was no result. The Spell did not respond to him, as though he was not one of its carriers at all. A part of him that had long become integral was simply gone.

The shock Sunny experienced at that moment was hard to describe.

After a while, he tried to calm his wildly beating heart and think things through.

'Calm down. Calm down. This is not the first time something like that happened…'

He had been cut off from the Spell once before, in the Red Colosseum. Back then, it was the result of Solvane's zealots using Hope's own sorcery to prevent the sacrificial slaves from escaping.

But there was no enchanted collar around his neck right now. And he was in the waking world, not inside an ancient theater built by a daemon.

More than that… the absence of the Spell felt much more profound this time, somehow.

In fact, as he concentrated on himself, he realized that he felt rather strange. Something else felt absent from the world..

The world was subtly unfamiliar.

Trying not to panic, Sunny slowly assessed his abilities.

His shadow sense was still with him. So were the other facets inherent to his Aspect. His Abilities, his Attributes — those of them the existence of which he could prove without the runes, at least — and his Aspect Legacy did not disappear.

His Flaw was also present. He had learned that by trying to tell a lie aloud, despite the fact that it hurt like hell.

His six shadows were observing his actions with varying reactions, all present. Saint, Fiend, and Nightmare could also be summoned.

However, he could not summon the runes. Neither could he dive into his Soul Sea to take a look at his Memories.

And the Memories…

Most of them were gone.

After trying to summon every Memory in his soul arsenal, Sunny realized that only a few of them remained.

They were Silver Bell, Puppeteer's Shroud, Extraordinary Rock, Endless Spring, Weaver's Mask, Covetous Coffer, Shadow Lantern, Shadow Chair, Overpriced Saddle, Weaver's Needle, and Ananke's Mantle.

The Midnight Shard, Dark Wing, Moonlight Shard, Autumn Leaf, Cruel Sight, Heavenly Burden, Memory of Fire, Memory of Ice, Strike of Thunder, Morgan's Warbow, Bone Singer, Dying Wish, Bitter Cusp, Stifled Scream, Essence Pearl, Nimble Catch, Shroud of Graceless Dusk, and Crown of Twilight were gone.

He felt a chill running down his spine.

As a Saint, he did not really need to protect himself from the elements with clothes, but it was still uncomfortable not to wear anything underneath his cloak. Sunny manifested the Marble Mantle and grabbed his head.

He quickly realized the pattern in which some of his Memories remained while others seemed to have been destroyed.

The Memories he could still summon were those that had been either personally created or modified by him, as well as his two Divine Memories — Weaver's Mask and Shadow Lantern.

The rest of them were gone, which brought him almost physical pain.

'M—my… my Memories!'

Sunny almost spat blood.

The pain of losing most of his soul arsenal... the precious Memories he had spent years gathering... hurt almost as much as receiving Soul Weave had.

Sunny felt as if he had received a terrible blow.

After he had some time to come to terms with the unforgiving reality, he leaned on the cracked alloy wall and stared into the darkness with an empty gaze.

After a while, Sunny had to admit it.

'I am banished from the Nightmare Spell.'

The damned bird had done something to him, resulting in such an impossible thing happening. Which meant… what?

That he was free from the Spell's tyranny?

It also meant that every tool and assistance it provided to the Awakened would not be accessible to him anymore. No more receiving Memories and Echoes from the slain enemies. No more runes that conveniently described and categorized the world. No more guidance and support in the perilous undertaking of walking the path of Ascension, tyrannical as it might have been.

No more Nightmares… and no more shortcuts to higher Ranks.

The scale of this tectonic change was too vast to comprehend. His life, for better or worse, would be entirely different from now on. Sunny was sure that he would be discovering the consequences of not being a carrier of the Nightmare Spell for a long, long time.

'How the hell did the future me reach further than Transcendence?'

And speaking about not being infected by the Spell and Transcendence…

Without the helpful runes, Sunny did not even know what his Transformation Ability was.

Come to think about it, now that he was a Saint, there were more new things he was supposed to be able to do. Awakened traveled to the Dream Realm when they slept, while Masters could do it at any time… they still needed a Gateway to come back, though.

Saints, however, were akin to miniature Gateways themselves. They were supposed to come and go between the two worlds as they pleased, and could even bring other living beings with them — although that last part was very limited.

So… how was he supposed to learn to do so without the Spell? Although its help was subtle, it did help Awakened learn their innate abilities by making them instinctual. Controlling essence, using Memories, placing tethers in the waking world, and many other things — the subconscious knowledge of how to accomplish all these feats was placed in the heads of the Awakened by the Spell.

Sunny did not have such a luxury anymore.

'I should still be able to sense how to use my Transformation Ability, at least.'

He looked around, evaluating the small pocket of dusty space. What would happen if his Transcendent Form was truly giant? Would he break through the debris, or cause a collapse and bury himself?

Most likely, it would simply not work if there was not enough space.

He was still curious to try, though.

Sunny looked at his six shadows and asked:

"What do you think? Should I?"

Surrounding Sunny in a semicircle, they stared at him silently. Happy shrugged without confidence.

Sunny chuckled wistfully.

"Come on. I am a Saint now… can you believe it? After all the crap I went through to get to this point… it would be a shame not to try."

He searched within his soul, hoping to find something new and unfamiliar.

It was an extremely strange thing, to explore his own self blindly.

However, one's Aspect was their own, existing outside of the Spell. And so, after some time passed, Sunny did sense it… a new kind of power slumbering deep within him, waiting to be called upon.

It was similar to how he sensed his other Abilities, but also different.

'This is how I Transform, I guess.'

Sunny took a deep breath… and then activated his Transformation Ability.

He had expected his body to balloon and change shape.

But nothing happened.

There was a considerable pull on his essence, but apart from that, he did not seem to change at all.

Sunny frowned.

'What the hell?'

Somewhat unsettled, he looked at his shadows and said:

"Why isn't it…"

But then, the words died on his lips.

The shadows... were gone.

Instead, six identical versions of him were sitting in a semicircle around him, all clad in fearsome onyx armor, staring at him with confused expressions.