1636 Man-Shaped Void

Sunny remained motionless for a few moments.

The expression on Cassie's face... was tense and somber. Defiant, even. As if she was saying something that she had said many times already, only to be dismissed. Or even branded as a lunatic.

Sunny knew the feeling.

He sighed, then pointed to the nearest table.

"Have a seat. I sense that it's going to be a long conversation, so let me make you something to drink."

He took a step back and retreated to the kitchen. He could have manifested an avatar instead, but really, Sunny needed a few minutes to collect himself.

'A man-shaped hole in the world...'

Indeed, to someone else, his absence would have felt like that. It was just that no one was able to remember witnessing the inexplicable void where a man named Sunless used to be.

Cassie, however...

Although she didn't seem to know the solution, she had somehow pieced the problem together. She knew that something was wrong with her, with everyone else, and with the world itself. But no matter how hard she tried, she could not prove it. She couldn't even remember trying to solve the problem.

That must have been maddening. Not to mention the fact that her ability to perceive the future had suddenly betrayed her, leaving Cassie without another of her senses. The past four years must have been rough for her...

And yet, selfishly, Sunny was glad. He shamefully felt a warmth in his heart.

He wasn't quite remembered. But it felt so good, for his absence to be witnessed by someone, at least.

A few minutes later, he emerged from the kitchen with a teapot and a couple cups. Cassie was sitting at one of the tables, waiting. Her exquisitely beautiful face was calm, but he could feel a hint of agitation underneath that facade.

Placing a cup in front of her, Sunny poured the tea and sat down.

"A man-shaped hole? You might want to explain, Saint Cassia."

She took the cup and tilted her head a little. At that moment, Sunny realized that he had made a mistake... in an attempt to hide his rattled state, he had been acting much too calm throughout their conversation, No Master would have been that calm in front of Song of the Fallen, let alone while hearing her say such outrageous things,

He was suddenly unhappy with himself,

'What a glaring oversight!’

Since deceit was his craft, Sunny felt ashamed.

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Cassie touched the cup and traced its shape with her finger. When she spoke, her voice sounded even calmer than his:

"Actually, it's not that strange. All of us... the members of Changing Star's cohort... have long realized that something had happened to us in the Third Nightmare. There are things that don't quite make sense, as if there are gaps in our memory. No, not gaps... it's like parts of our memories are corrupted. Not in the Everlasting Void kind of way, but rather in a very mundane way. Like what happens with old communicators."

Sunny stared at her silently. His silence prompted her to continue:

"However, there were a lot of bizarre things that happened to us in the Nightmare, some of them much more so. And because it is almost impossible to remember that there is something that we have forgotten, we simply accepted it as fact and moved on after a while. That is how memory works, anyway. People don't remember what they have forgotten, and therefore don't usually realize it."

He shifted slightly, noticing something strange about her words.

It was indeed impossible to keep any thoughts about his past. People had not only forgotten him, but they couldn't even remember thinking about having forgotten him. That was the insidious part of becoming fateless,

And yet, Cassie was perfectly capable of pinpointing the problem. How?

Sunny took a breath.

"But you don't seem to have a problem with being aware of the missing memories?"

Cassie smiled faintly.

"Hardly. It is very problematic, in fact. But... my Aspect is uniquely suited to remembering. My powers, you see, have to do with memories. I have a great level of control over my own memory, which has become much greater than before. I can also collect the memories of other people, or even replace and manipulate them."

Sunny shivered. What an insidious power it was...

It had to be a facet of Cassie's Transformation Ability, then. She had not been capable of these things before - only Torment was.

...He couldn't help but wonder if this was the first time they were having this conversation, even, or if Cassie had simply erased his memory of meeting her, who knew how many times before.

But no, that should not have been the case. Even such a subtle power had to have a limit, and his Rank and Class would place him beyond that limit.

Enough so, at least, for him to at least be aware of having been manipulated.

'Right?’

Oblivious to his subtle reaction or pretending not to notice it, Cassie continued:

"So, you might see how I would be more sensitive to anomalies in my memory. Which was why, unlike the others, I couldn't stop trying to get to the bottom of things. Especially because fate itself seemed to be in total chaos"

He took a sip of his tea.

"I'm sorry, but what does fate have to do with any of this?"

Cassie's smile grew a little wider.

"Oh... everything. You see, I always wanted to destroy fate. To create a weapon that could cut it. I always wanted to, but strangely enough, I don't recall ever acting on my desire. You must think that I'm a really timid person."

Sunny wanted to point out that confessing all these intimate things to a stranger was a bit odd, but decided against it and simply shook his head.

Cassie's smile suddenly disappeared. Her tone turned colder, as well:

"But I am not a timid person, Master Sunless. Far from it. So, I can't help but think that, maybe, I have actually succeeded in creating that weapon. It's just that I don't remember it. In any case... I spent years trying to place the missing pieces together and restore my memory. It was... a bit of a hardship, to say the least. I failed to achieve my goal, but I did learn something."

She took a deep breath.

"It's that the missing pieces form a person. Someone who was there, with us, in the Tomb of Ariel.., and maybe even earlier than that. A man who has been cut from the world, as if he had never existed. Someone who was... precious to us. To me."

She leaned forward, almost overturning her tea

"So, Master Sunless..."

Before she could continue, he asked neutrally

"You say that the missing pieces form a person. But why are you so sure that it is a man? It might very well be a woman, no?"

Cassie remained silent for a moment, then said tensely:

"Because I think that you are that man."

Then, she clenched her fists.

"Are you?"

Sunny did not answer for a while.

Eventually, he sighed and answered, his voice even:

\*...Yes."

Then, he took a sip of tea and smiled bitterly.

"But it doesn't matter if I confirm it. You won't remember, anyway."

Cassie continued to lean forward. A stunned expression contorted her delicate face for a moment, then disappeared, replaced by momentary confusion and then tense anticipation.

"So,,, are you?"

Sunny turned away, hiding an ugly grimace,

There was no point. It was not as if he had not tried to confess his existence to the people he knew before. He had, on several occasions. But just like his past, they could not retain the information about his connection to their lost memories of hìm.

His confessions were destined to be forgotten, just like he had been.

Funnily enough, he could admit to being Rain's brother - because her neighbor Sunny never had, and the concept of an older brother was thus not connected to her memories of him.

He sighed and answered again:

"Yes, I am."

Sunny waited for a moment. After Cassie had forgotten his answer and before she could ask the question again, he interrupted her:

"Instead of that, do you want to tell me more about that Memory you want me to make? Is it a weapon?”