1642 Selfish Reasons

Sunny contemplated his answer for a few moments, then sald neutrally:

"I guess it's the same as yours."

Cassle seemed a little surprised.

"The same as mine?"

He nodded and glanced at her with hidden worry. They were climbing a slope of stone debris, the surface under their feet treacherous and uneven.

Cassie seemed to be doing fine, but her movements were a little stiff.

No matter how well she had learned to live with her Flaw, she was still blind. Sharing other people's perception or sensing a few seconds into the future could not entirely replace sight. However, Sunny could not think of a way to support her on this treacherous slope - he could offer her his hand, but he doubted that she would accept it. They were not that close... now.

In the end, he did nothing.

"Indeed. You told me that you had always wanted to destroy fate... but that is not entirely true, is it? You wouldn't want to struggle against fate if it carried you to a wonderful outcome. The outcome you saw must be terrible... so, what you really want is to reach a desirable outcome, not destroy fate. The latter is merely a means to an end, while the former is the end. That is your interest.”

Sunny shrugged.

"It is the same for me. My Interest is to reach a desirable outcome."

Cassie hesitated for a moment.

"So what is the outcome you desire?"

He grinned.

"How can I know? It's too soon to talk about an outcome - I don't even know what will happen, let alone how I might want it to end. I merely have a few ideas. In any case, that question is better aimed at you, Saint Cassia. You are much better informed about the future than I am. So... what outcome do you desire?"

Now, they were on the right track. Mutual trust was the end goal, but it had to be built on the foundation of mutual benefit. To help each other benefit, they needed to know what each of them wanted.

What was it that Cassie desired?

Even after knowing her for so many years, Sunny was not sure. She had always kept her secrets close.

Which was why he did not expect to hear her honest response:

"I want to save the world."

Sunny almost tripped, startled.

"Wh-what?"

His eyes might have widened a little.

Cassue laughed quietly.

"Why are you so surprised? It's only reasonable. After all, I am a part of the world, and so are those people I care about - if the world is destroyed, everything I cherish will be destroyed with it. Alright, maybe I was a little grandiose in my statement... I do want to save the world, but purely for selfish reasons. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that I want to save myself. It's just that one and the other are inseparable."

Sunny stared at her silently for a few moments.

"Should I take it as confirmation, then, that the world is doomed? Ah, it's a bit disconcerting. I did not expect to hear something like that from an oracle as powerful as you."

He looked at the shattered moon. The background was also very ominous.

Cassie shrugged.

"I suspect that you know perfectly well what fate awaits our world. It is obvious that the world is doomed... what most people don't realize is how little time we have left. Those who pay careful attention to the Nightmare Spell, though, do."

Sunny frowned.

Was she talking about the fact that their world would eventually be devoured by the Dream Realm? It would be natural to assume that Sunny knew, considering that she suspected that he had been on Aletheia's Island with them. More than that, it was no secret - the Great Clans had known, as well, which was why they were focused on conquering a new world instead of trying to save the old one.

Or was she talking about the Forgotten God and his inevitable awakening? The moment that ancient being struggled free of its slumber, the very existence could come undone at the seams, and the Everlasting Vold could be unleashed from its prison.

...Or were these two events inseparable, as well?

He grimaced.

"So what are your immediate goals?"

Cassie smiled faintly.

"I don't think that we know each other well enough to share such details... Sunny. Maybe I'll tell you another day, after learning more about you from your Memories."

Sunny sighed.

"Fair enough. As for my immediate goals... I'm not trying to doubt your competence, Saint Cassia, but how are you going to get me inside the castle? The guards, the runic array, the other safeguards the King must have put in place - you don't seem to be too concerned about any of these."

Cassie was climbing several steps ahead from him, just a few meters from the more intact section of the wall, Once they reached it, there would be Ascended warriors patrolling, and if any of them saw Song of the Fallen escorting an Intruder into the stronghold of their clan... things would turn ugly.

She was not going to just stride into the heart of Anvil's Domain, was she?

Cassle stopped for a moment, then continued climbing.

"Don't worry about it. I will keep my word

At the same time, she raised her hands and carefully pulled her blindfold off, tying it around one of her wrists.

A few moments later, they were on top of the wall.

There were enchanted lanterns installed on wooden posts, illuminating the ramparts.

And there, just a few meters in front of them...

Three heavily armored Masters were standing, staring at Cassie and Sunny with vigilant expressions. He could see dangerous flames igniting in their eyes.

One of them placed his hand on the hilt of his sword and asked, his voice a mix of confusion and wariness:

"Saint Cassia? Who..."

'Damn it...'

Sunny did not move.

And in the next moment, the three Knights of Valor underwent an eerie change.

Their eyes suddenly grew unfocused, drifting away from Cassie's delicate figure. The tense expressions on their faces disappeared. They remained motionless for a few moments, then continued on their patrol without ever looking back.

One walked right past the blind seer, brushing against her seawave cloak.

Cassie calmly moved in the opposite direction, leaving the patrol behind.

A moment later, she said over her shoulder:

"Don't worry. They won't remember seeing us."

Sunny hurriedly followed her, quietly impressed...

And more than a little bit disturbed.

'What an insidious power, indeed.’