1648 Lost in Reflection

A torrent of shadows flowed into the corridor, submerging it in total darkness. The light of the glowing gemstones was swallowed and disappeared without trace, turning them bleak and lifeless.

Sunny had summoned a swarm of vast and ancient shadows to do the job. These old shadows were unfathomable - it would have taken an equally potent source of light to dispel them. The gemstones had been created from the mind of the Demon of Imagination, true... perhaps they would have chased away the darkness if the shadows were alone.

But they were in the presence of their Lord, and that alone made them much more tyrannical.

A few moments later, a long stretch of the corridor had turned completely lightless. The infinity mirror of its walls was now dull and empty. Nothing reflected on their dim surface, and no reflection haunted the hidden sanctum.

Sunny let out a quiet sigh.

'Who knew that I would use this trick today?’

What he had done was not pure improvisation. Instead, it was one of the methods he had contemplated when thinking about how to deal with Mordret,

Cassle seemed impressed.

"These shadows... obey you?"

Sunny shrugged.

"If I treat them nicely."

Wild shadows were like that. Most were devoted to Sunny, but some were obstinate and willful. The former would obey him out of affection or reverence, but the latter needed to be coaxed and enticed.

"Let's go."

The two of them returned to the corridor. It seemed much smaller without the countless reflections stretching endlessly into the ghostly distance. Claustrophobic, even - still, Sunny felt much more at ease now than he had before.

Cassie suddenly spoke, drawing his attention:

"Are we going left again?"

Sunny smiled.

"That is a good question!

"No... let's try right this time."

They turned right and started walking at a measured pace. The shadows moved with them, keeping the corridor dark both ahead and behind. Just like that, Sunny and Cassie advanced forward for a while,

Then, they encountered an intersection. A similar corridor crossed the one they had been traversing, and so, Sunny had another choice to make.

He frowned slightly and decided to turn right again. The second corridor had a slight bend to it, as well, so it was Impossible to see far ahead... some time later, there was another intersection.

And then another, and another.

Some Intersections formed four paths, some only three... there were even bizarre ones that had six, seven, or eight turns. There were dead ends, as well, and corridors that led to one of the crossroads Sunny and Cassie had already passed. The corridors themselves weren't straight, either, bending and twisting at unexpected angles.

It was a mirror labyrinth.

After a while, Sunny sighed and stopped, covering his face with a palm.

In front of them was an open door leading to a small stone chamber. The same chamber they had left behind.

"Have you noticed it?"

Cassie's voice was calm.

He lingered for a while, then nodded.

"Yeah. Damn it."

Sunny had been counting his steps this whole time. It was hard to keep track because of how convoluted the maze of mirrors was, but he was certain of it they had walked more in each direction than the width of the mountain was.

Which meant that the labyrinth was not beholden to the size of the mountain. It could be endless, for all Sunny knew.

Shaking his head, he leaned on the wall and summoned the Endless Spring. Drinking deeply from the beautiful glass bottle, he then handed it to Cassle.

The young woman took the Memory and frowned for a moment. Then, forgetting the meaning that it held, she brought it to her lips and then returned it to Sunny.

"We can try again."

He hesitated for a bit, then slowly shook his head.

"No. We've been here for too long already. There is still some time before sunrise, but I won't be able to solve this maze quickly. This... is going to be a long project."

Cassie raised an eyebrow.

"We have only agreed that I will bring you inside the castle once."

Sunny smiled.

"Yes. And I have only promised to show you one of my memories. Surely, you want to see more... and I want to explore this place more. It works out perfectly, does it not? We can meet once a month, during the full moon. This way, both of us will slowly gain the knowledge we desire."

She hesitated.

"I don't know how long I'll remain in Bastion, though. Maybe there is something else you want?"

His smile turned a little darker.

"There are many things I want, Saint Cassia. But this is the deal I am offering."

Cassie frowned, remained silent for a few moments, then nodded.

"Fine. I will guide you inside the castle once again, next month. In exchange for another memory."

Sunny dismissed the Endless Spring and suppressed a chuckle.

"Why did she put on a show if we both knew that she would agree?"

"It's a date, then."

He froze for a moment, then added hurriedly:

"No, wait. It's not a date. I misspoke. It's a... well... an arrangement. You know what I mean."

Cassie observed him with a hint of amusement, then shrugged.

"As you wish. Now... I think it's time for me to receive my payment."

Sunny sighed. He had not been looking forward to this part...

"Fine. We have a bit of time left, so let's do it here."

As long as he returned to the lake before sunrise, there was no safer place in Bastion than this labyrinth, Here, they were hidden from the King's gaze, and no one would disturb them.

'I still hate it!

Sunny led Cassie into the stone chamber, called the shadows back into the lantern, and closed the door

Then, he sat on the floor, cross-legged. Cassie sat down in front of him and calmly looked him in the eyes, her back perfectly straight.

"One memory. Of your choosing."

Sunny nodded slowly.

She took a deep breath.

"Then think about what you want me to see."

He did.

The bitter cold. The dim twilight. The cracking of ice as he broke through it and climbed onto the desolate shore... the dark storm of seething emotions raging in his hollow heart...

Cassie's beautiful blue eyes suddenly glistened, pulling him into their depths, changing...

And in the next moment, Sunny gasped.