1649 Memory of Ice

A cold ocean washed the shore of a desolate land, its waves frozen and unmoving. The empty sky seemed dim and uncaring, the sun hidden behind a somber veil. The land itself was silent and forlorn, its lifeless expanse buried in snow.

Not far from the shore, the layer of ice shackling of the ocean suddenly fractured and exploded, revealing the restless surface of the dark water. A pale hand rose above the edge and dug into the ice with crushing force. A moment later, a gaunt young man climbed from the cold water, stepping on the frozen waves with a chilling expression on his sunken, alabaster face.

His appearance was both tantalizing and frightening. The young man only wore the tattered remains of a military bodysuit, which was mostly gone. His fair skin was as white as snow, marred by countless gruesome, but eerily bloodless wounds. His eyes, on the contrary, were as dark as the depths of a lightless abyss. The black silk of his wet hair moved slightly in the frigid wind.

He looked like the wretched corpse of a drowned deity that had crawled out of a frozen hell.

His slender torso was mostly bare, revealing an intricate tattoo of a coiling serpent that covered most of his arms, chest, and back. The dark serpent was so lifelike that it almost seemed like its onyx scales were moving under the young man's skin.

Sunny remained motionless for a while, looking at the desolate landscape in front of him. Then, he took a step forward.

Finally, after so much time had passed, he was back at the Antarctic Center.

He had returned to Falcon Scott.

When he took the second step, his gruesomely torn skin was already healing. When he took the third, the intricate plates of a battered onyx armor covered his mangled body, shielding it from the cold and wind.

'It looks the same.’

After the Third Nightmare, when all was said and done, Sunny had returned to the Northern Quadrant among the refugees. He spent some time there, taking care of unfinished business - not that there was a lot for him to do after being erased from the world. Meeting Rain was the very last thing he did. Then, untethered from everything and everyone, he set his sights back on Antarctica.

Crossing the ocean alone had not been easy. Turning into the Onyx Serpent, Sunny dove into the lightless depths, where the darkness nurtured his soul and was rich in spirit essence. Sadly, even empowered by Soul Weave, he could not maintain such an enormous Shell constantly,

But, luckily, there was no shortage of unimaginable horrors populating the oceans of the waking world.

Sunny used the [Serpentine Steel] Ability of the Soul Serpent to augment his fangs, and fought the harrowing depth dwellers to replenish his essence through its [Soul Reaver] Ability, which allowed Serpent to absorb and transfer a portion of soul essence of all beings slain by it in the Soul Weapon or the Soul Beast forms.

Staying in the Shell for such a long time was potentially dangerous now that Sunny did not possess a True Name, but the Onyx Serpent form was one of the few that he could assume without the risk of losing himself - perhaps it was because he knew it so well, or perhaps it was because he shared a kinship with serpentine creatures as an inheritor of Shadow God.

It had taken Sunny weeks to reach Antarctica. And those weeks... had been a cold and dreadful nightmare. Out there in the dark depths of the ocean, he had faced horrors so hideous and dire that no words were enough to describe them. He killed some, and escaped from others. His body had been torn and broken, but in the end, he survived.

The very idea of crossing the ocean alone had seemed preposterous before, but now that Sunny was a Transcendent Terror, he somehow made it a reality,

The cold darkness currently reigning over his soul was much more terrible than the ocean, anyway, Now that Sunny had left everything behind... his mental state was far from ideal. The pain and anguish had turned into dark anger, and the anger was seething and boiling, refusing to be contained or controlled.

In this world, there was no place for Sunny anymore, and nothing left for him to do

Except to pay his debts.

And the first score he needed to settle was with the Winter Beast.

...Walking across the frozen waves, Sunny reached the shore of the Antarctic Center and looked around without expression. His eyes were like two pools of darkness, full of cold, ruthless killing intent and murderous resentment.

Some distance away, the port fortress of Falcon Scott lay in ruins, half-buried in snow. The city itself was frozen above it, standing silently on the tall cliffs. The buildings were encased in ice, and so were the remains of the millions of people that had been killed by the Winter Beast just before the end of the long, dreadful night.

Sunny stared at the cliffs for some time, then turned his gaze away. He wasn't quite ready to enter the city yet.

He spent several hours roaming the shore aimlessly, as if looking for something. The frigid cold was absolutely lethal, but Sunny paid it no attention. His shadow sense spread far and wide, enveloping a vast area of the desolate land,

'Where is it.,, where is it...'

In the end, he stopped and stared at the ground silently, Finally, there was a hint of emotion on his face. Sunny raised a trembling hand and covered his eyes, a brittle smile twisting his lips.

He couldn't find it. The grave where he had buried his soldiers... he had not been quite in right mind back then, and the terrain had been changed a lot by the snow and Ice. So, he simply did not know where the resting place of Belle, Dorn, and Samara was anymore.

"Ah... damn it..."

A stifled sound escaped from his mouth, and then, Sunny angrily struck the rusted remains of a broken MWP that lay nearby, covered with snow.

There was a thunderous boom, and the massive machine exploded. Jagged pieces of alloy shot into the distance like deadly shrapnel, while its torso was sent flying. It collided against the cliffs a hundred or so meters away, causing an entire section of the cliffside to fracture and collapse in an avalanche of shattered rocks.

Unfazed, Sunny raised his head to the sky and let out a distorted scream, then looked down, his eyes boiling with dark fury.

"Kill it... I will rip that thing apart..."

Gritting his teeth, he breathed in the cold air of Antarctica and headed for the ruins of the city.