1666 Wandering Temple

After getting all the information the frightened Sleeper could share, Sunny and Nephis let him rest. Without wasting any time, Nephis headed for the exit from the temple... however, Sunny led her into its depths Instead.

Soon, they reached a set of stairs and descended underground.

The Nameless Temple was larger than it seemed from outside, because it had a vast basement level. In fact, it was almost a perfect copy of the grandiose upper level, with its own great hall, auxiliary rooms, and inner sanctum.

There were a few differences, of course. For one, there was no altar in the underground temple. There was no path to the courtyard, either. Instead, a towering gate was cut into the marble wall, covered by intricate engravings.

When Sunny and Nephis reached the underground hall, it was bathed in impenetrable darkness. Even the radiant light of the flames burning on her palm could not dispel it... Sunny didn't want anyone to see what was hidden there, yet, and so, he shrouded everything in the deepest of shadows.

And for a good reason.

As Sunny had found out after conquering the Nameless Temple, all Citadels had something special about them. Some special qualities were minor, while some could do truly stunning things.

Sunny called them Components.

He was not sure if these Components were innate to the ancient strongholds or something added to each by the Spell, like the Gateways were. Perhaps it simply built upon what was already there, strengthening existing traits and making them easily accessible by humans.

However, what Sunny did know was that only a Saint that bound the Citadel to their soul could command it, making use of the Components. The Spell made the process easier for them, most likely... as for Sunny, he had to sort everything out himself.

Luckily, it had not been too hard.

As far as he could tell, the Nameless Temple possessed two Components, both of them rather powerful as far as Citadels went - not on the level of the Great Citadels or the Ivory Tower, of course, but far more prominent compared to lesser ones, like the Sanctuary of Noctis.

The first Component of the Nameless Temple was rather straightforward. It was the invisible Guardian. The creature, unseen and imperceptible, had been killing anyone and anything that tried to enter the temple - before Sunny showed up, that was, walking across ancient bones. He suspected that it allowed him to pass because of his Attribute, the [Flame of Divinity].

Just like it had allowed him to enter the temple in his First Nightmare because his soul carried the [Mark of Divinity].

...Indeed, his Citadel was the very temple he had once used to sacrifice himself to the gods, Back then, Sunny had assumed that it was a temple of Shadow God, but now, he thought differently,

After all, the timing did not make sense. At the time when the slave caravan perished while trying to cross the mountains, the imperial soldiers were actively destroying shrines and monasteries of the Shadow God. And yet, the styglan edifice of the grand temple looked like it had been laying in ruins for countless years back then, already.

And then there were the words the Spell had spoken when he coughed up blood on the black altar. It did not say that he had offered himself as a sacrifice to Shadow God... instead, it said that he had offered himself as a sacrifice to all the gods. Shadow was just the only one who had listened.

So, now, Sunny suspected that the Nameless Temple was much more ancient than almost anything else he had seen in the Dream Realm. If he was correct, it had been built at the dawn of time, during the early days of the Age of Gods, and was meant to worship the entire pantheon... Including the seventh god, who had not yet been erased from existence and forgotten.

Perhaps that was why this temple, and all the other temples built for the Pantheon of Seven, had been abandoned and lost. They had been forgotten, just like Dream God had been forgotten.

As such, the Nameless Temple could as well have been the temple of the Forgotten God.

Perhaps it had always been, having been built by some heretics who worshiped the lost delty despite the will of the remaining gods.

Whatever the case, the Nameless Temple had already been empty for thousands of years during Sunny's First Nightmare, which took place at the very end of the Golden Age, just before the fleeting Age of Daemons came to doom the world to destruction.

In his First Nightmare, it stood on the peak of a black mountain, desolate and forsaken. The only creature who ever visited it was the Mountain King, who seemed to have possessed a spark of divinity in its soul, as well.

And yet, now, the Nameless Temple was somehow here in Godgrave.

The reason for this discrepancy... was the second Component of the Nameless Temple.

Out there, in the darkness of the underground hall, a vast mystical circle was carved into the wall opposite the towering gate. It was not comprised of runes, or elements of any other type of sorcery Sunny could recognize. The only thing he could think of that resembled the enchantment of the Nameless Temple were the knives Sun God had created alongside the Chain Lords... Perhaps it was divine sorcery, which followed no rules and bent the world to its will simply by virtue of existing. In that case, he wasn't sure that "sorcery" was the right word to describe it. A miracle fit such a feat much more.

In any case, that mystical circle was the heart of the enchantment that allowed his Citadel to wander freely across realms.

As long as the master of the Citadel flooded the ancient temple with an ocean of essence, it could vanish from one location and appear miraculously somewhere else.

That was how Sunny had put his Citadel in the very heart of Godgrave. He suspected that it had been wandering the realms long before being made into a Citadel by the Nightmare Spell, as well. The wandering temple had not been built on the peak of that dark mountain, but instead appeared there one day, already in ruin.

Sunny did not want anyone to know that his Citadel could travel, yet. He would only be able to share this secret with Nephis once she trusted him enough to keep that information from the King of Swords.

And so, they walked through the darkness until they reached the great gate. Nephis did not say anything, allowing Sunny to pull the heavy gate open.

Behind it... was a smooth surface of white bone.

At first glance, it seemed that the gate did not lead anywhere except a dead end. However, there was actually a narrow crack in the ancient bone, just wide enough for a person to pass.

The fissure was just as dark as the interior of the underground hall, and the wind blowing through it brought with it a sweet smell of rotting leaves.

Nephis frowned.

"That fracture... leads all the way to the Hollows?"

Sunny nodded.

"Indeed."

She hesitated for a moment.

"Won't your Citadel be invaded from below, then?"

He walked toward the dark fissure and turned slightly to fit through.

"It won't... you'll see."

Not satisfied with his answer but unwilling to ask further, Nephis sighed and followed him into the damp darkness.