1749 Leave It All Behind

The battle had just ended, and the Winter Beast was gone.

The dark ecstasy of having killed the butcher of Falcon Scott had washed over Sunny's heart and receded like a tide.

Leaving it cold and hollow. Dark and utterly devoid of light.

There was nothing binding him to the world anymore. He was banished from the Nightmare Spell, fate, and existence itself. In the whole world... two worlds, actually... not a single soul cared whether he lived or died. No one even remembered that he existed.

Facing the cruel truth of that loss was too painful, and so, Sunny longed to leave it behind.

...He opened his eyes in a familiar hall. Warm sunlight was pouring through the stained-glass windows, painting the ivory walls with vibrant colors. Heavy chains lay on the floor, arranged into a flawless circle. The sky was vast and blue outside.

The Ivory Island floated on the sea of clouds, enveloped by a peaceful silence.

Sunny had not wanted to come here. In fact, he wanted nothing more than to avoid this place at all costs, However, this was where his soul was anchored to the Dream Realm, and so, this was where he had arrived after giving up on the waking world.

Standing in the center of the chain circle, Sunny shifted slightly and dissolved into the shadows.

The Ivory Tower was mostly empty right now - most of the Fire Keepers were still lost in the depths of their Nightmares, while Nephis and the rest of the cohort were too busy to visit it often. Still... he didn't want to be seen by anyone.

They could not remember him even if he told them who he was, so there was no point.

Sunny glided across the floor as a shadow, hiding in the darkness near the gate. Then, he extended his shadow sense outward and froze. On the emerald grass outside the great pagoda, two people were walking toward its gate.

The sunlight suddenly seemed brighter.

He kept himself hidden when they entered the sunlit hall. Nephis was frowning, while Cassie followed her with a strangely lost expression on her delicate face.

Sunny remained motionless as he unwillingly eavesdropped on their conversation.

"...are you sure?"

Cassie nodded slowly.

"Yes, I.,, I think I am. The future has grown too... elusive to decipher"

Nephis halted and remained silent for a few moments.

"Can it be connected to your Transcendence? Or witnessing that thing in Verge?"

The blind girl hesitated briefly.

"That was what I thought, as well. However, I've reached out to several seers in confidence. They all seem to be having trouble glimpsing anything from the future, as well... all over the world."

Neph's scowl deepened.

"What can be the reason? An aftershock of the Dream Gates being open? The Chain of Nightmares itself?"

She shook her head and continued walking.

"We will have to investigate it later. Right now, there is too much to do... it is pure pandemonium out there, with so many people suddenly arriving in the Dream Realm. The refugee camp outside Bastion is lacking provisions and manpower, with too few Awakened to guard them against the Nightmare Creatures. At least there is no lack of water, but... all of it was too sudden. The situation can swiftly descend into a disaster."

Cassie sighed.

"I heard that they are going to build a city on the lake shore, And with the Sleepers of Antarctica having Awakened, there are much more capable warriors now than before..."

Nephis nodded.

"Still. I am going there to help.”

The blind girl remained silent for a moment

"I see. I'll go with you, then."

Sunny hid in the shadows, listening to the news about the tribulations of humanity without Interest. What did it have to do with him? Nothing at all... not anymore.

Nephis shook her head.

"Someone has to stay here to welcome our people once they return from the Nightmares. Plus... you have another important task to accomplish."

Cassie raised an eyebrow.

"You... you really want to do it?"

Nephis gave her another nod.

"It is time to abandon the Chained Isles. We are too far away from everything important here. I want you to fly the Ivory Island south, toward Bastion."

With that, she turned around and walked into the circle of chains.

Standing there, Nephis frowned and briefly touched her face. She remained motionless for a while, then said somberly:

"...Why do I feel like I'm forgetting something?"

Cassie did not answer, simply standing there with a confused expression.

Eventually, Nephis grimaced.

"That other issue... have you been able to discover anything?”

Cassie slowly shook her head.

"No. I talked with Effie and Kal again, Jet too. But it's hard to dispel the fog that's clouding some of our memories. I think... It must have been Torment who had done something to us. But what? And why? And when? There is no answer yet."

Nephis sighed.

"Keep digging. I'll do some research, too."

Soon, she was gone, returning to the waking world.

Cassie did not move for a while, standing there with her head lowered.

Eventually, she whispered quietly:

"What has she done to me?"

With that, she turned around and descended into the basement of the Ivory Tower, where the runic controls of the island were located.

Sunny was left alone.

He exhaled slowly and emerged from the shadows, looking in the direction where Cassie had gone.

Torment... did she really believe that her Defiled twin had been capable of doing something like that? The timeline didn't make sense, and Cassie knew it.

Well, it was a reasonable theory to make. Torment's power.., Cassie's power..., had to do with manipulating memories, after all.

For a moment, a desperate hope ignited in his heart. What if Cassie could restore the memories of him with her Transcendent Ability? What if he could make them remember?

But no... he knew that it was impossible. if it was, she would have already done so, restoring her own lost memories first.

‘...I'm sick of it'

He gritted his teeth and walked out of the Ivory Tower.

By now, the Crushing was of no threat to him. Sunny wasn't sure if he could endure its terrible pressure, but he also did not need to. The range of his shadow sense had grown enough to reach the distant islands, so he could simply step through the shadows to leave the Ivory Island behind.

He contemplated for a few moments, considering if he should.

What was he going to do, anyway? Live like a hermit in some godforsaken corner of the Dream Realm? Leave to travel the unexplored regions of this dreadful world, away from where any human could see him?

Jump into the Sky Below and try to reach its bottom out of curiosity?

Each alternative was as good as the next one.

Well, jumping into the Sky Below was probably a bit worse than the rest...

Sunny remained still for a while, thinking.

In the end, he did not use Shadow Step to reach the flying island far below.

Instead, he circled the great pagoda and headed toward the graceful gazebo, where the portal to the Ebony Tower stood.

If he remembered correctly, there was a chamber in Nether's scorched tower where the walls were engraved with countless runes.

Sunny had not been able to understand those runes before, or at least retain the understanding of the ancient daemon's words.

After his visit to the Estuary, however...

Who knew what he would be able to learn?