1756 Nothing Left

Once again, Sunny remembered the chilling encounter with the creature that had come to the Ashen Barrow from the mist. lust like in the dark maze on the precipice of the Underworld, he had survived that encounter by keeping his eyes shut on Cassie's advice. The creature had been insidious, though, trying to trick them into opening their eyes. That was the first of the very few times Sunny had encountered an abomination capable of human speech...

But now, looking back on that fearful night, Sunny couldn't help but doubt if it had really spoken. He went over each and every word the creature had said.

His expression slowly froze.

Now that he thought about it... was it not the case? Every word it used was one that Nephis, Cassie, or Sunny had spoken themselves.

The mist being had stolen their words, just like it had stolen Cassie's voice. Like a twisted reflection.

Was that because the creatures of nothingness did not possess voices of their own? Or for some other, unfathomable reason?

In any case...

'How the hell did the Carapace Demon chase it away, back into the depths of the Dark Sea?‘

The Nightmare Creatures populating the transient sea of the Forgotten Shore were all of the Corrupted Rank, at least. Soul Devourer's loyal thrall, however, was merely an Awakened Demon. Had it been because it served the tree, and was augmented by it in some way? Because the Soul Devourer attacked the invader alongside its guardian? Or simply because battling the mist creatures was different from battling other abominations?

Maybe the Carapace Demon had kept its eyes shut, as well.

'Don't I know another creature who makes me want to keep my eyes closed, though?Well, actually, he knew two.

The first one was Torment. But he was more interested in the second one... Mordret.

The self-proclaimed Prince of Nothing, who could enter a being‘s soul through the eyes. That title of his... was it simply an ironic moniker Mordret had invented because of being abandoned by his family, or something far more meaningful?

After all, the connection between him and nothingness did not stop there. in the Second Nightmare, the original body he had been sent into belonged to a mysterious mist creature. A mist creature who had descended from the Hollow Mountains and consumed every living soul in the northern reaches of the Kingdom of Hope.

Mordret had undergone some sort of transformation in the Ebony Tower, as well, making him almost impossible to sense through divination. The Ebony Tower, which had belonged to Nether... the Prince of the Underworld, who was closely tied to the white mist and nothingness, wearing it like a mantle.

Was it all a series of coincidences, or did Mordret possess some connection to nothing? U 'I just can't make sense of that guy.'

What was his Aspect? What was his Flaw? What had Asterion done to him, and why did he enter the First Nightmare as a child? What had happened to him in that Nightmare? Mordret carried the lineage of War God... the Goddess of Life, as well as progress, technology, craft, and intellect. The patron deity of humanity. The core of his Aspect seemed to be connected to reflections and mirrors, which didn't strike Sunny like something having to do with warfare, and was only tangentially connected to technology and crafting.

of course, Lineage and Aspect did not have to be directly connected. Sunny himself carried the lineage of Weaver, but possessed an Aspect tied to Shadow God. Nephis carried the lineage of Sun God, but her Aspect was not connected to any god at all, but rather to the mythical nephilim.

In any case, what did mirrors have to do with nothingness?

Sunny did not see a connection, but there had to be one.

'l'll ask the bastard the next time I see him. No... right. i won't see him ever again.‘

It was a bit of a relief.

After catching his breath — metaphorically speaking — Sunny sighed and continued on his way. However, this time, he took additional precautions. He closed his eyes and moved forward relying on nothing but his dampened shadow sense, sticking to shadows where he could.

The nothingness was oppressive.

But, at the same time... it was strangely healing.

Sunny was tormented by fatelessness. He was in pain because nobody remembered him, but here, ironically, his very life depended on being able to at least remember himself — and do it fiercely.

if no one else could acknowledge his existence, he had to do it himself.

And the more Sunny affirmed his existence, the duller his pain became.

'What a perverse situation.l

Moving stealthily through the. mist, Sunny smiled crookedly.

But then, he froze.

'...Crap.‘

He had grown so accustomed to the desolate silence of the Hollow Mountains that the sudden change sent him into a panic.

The ground had just trembled under his feet.

Alarmed, he dashed to the nearest outcropping of rocks and dissolved into the shadows cast by the overhanging stones. Remaining absolutely still, Sunny observed the world somberly.

The ground was shaking at short intervals, the tremors growing more violent with each minute. The silence was finally broken by the sound of rocks rolling noisily down the slopes. it echoed in the mist, distorted strangely.

'What...‘

It was then that it happened.

A twisted dark pillar descended from the sky and crashed into the mountain slope not far away from him. It remained motionless for a few moments, leaned, and then rose into the mist — only to fall down once more, dozens of meters away.

Further away, another pillar crashed into the stone. And then another, and another, and another...

Sunny suddenly felt very small.

'These are... legs.‘

In the next moment, an indescribable sound rolled through the mist, disturbing its flow. Distorted, it was like a deafening bellow of a war born, or a sorrowful wail of a gargantuan beast

The wail was full of fear and agony.

Avast shadow covered the area where Sunny was hiding, and then, dark liquid poured from above. Enormous waterfalls of something that resembled blood fell down and splattered on the rocks, turning into mountain rivers.

Hidden in the shadows, Sunny observed the terrible scene in silence.

The mist flowed above the rivers of dark blood, and as he watched... the blood slowly became transparent, already turning into wisps of fog.

A few moments later, the foaming rivers were gone, and all that was left...

Was nothing.

The towering pillars left the range of his perception, and the vast shadow pressing Sunny down disappeared with them.

The enormous creature, whatever it was, had moved on.

About a minute later, something crashed into the ground in the distance, causing one last, violent tremor.

Sunny hesitated for a while, then emerged from the shadows.

He stood motionless for a while, looking in the direction of where the enormous creature had gone.

Eventually, he gritted his teeth and followed.

'What the hell am I doing?’

He wasn‘t sure why he wanted to find the place where the creature had fallen, but something was pushing him forward. Perhaps it was the need to know what kind of enemies he would face in this eerie place. Perhaps it was simple curiosity. Perhaps it was something akin to the call of the void, the morbid desire to jump into the beckoning abyss. At some point, Sunny turned to a vertical slope and started climbing. The white mist was not uniform — it was thicker in some places and thinner in others. Usually, the closer to a peak one got, the further they would be able to see.

It took him some time to climb the tall cliff stealthily. Following along its edge, Sunny reached a narrow ledge and came into view of a vast mountain valley.

It was shrouded in mist, but he could still see the appalling shape of an immense, abhorrent creature that lay in the fog, its titanic body stretching as far as he could see. Shifting his gaze, Sunny paled when he saw an ocean of vile darkness permeating the being's soul, spreading from seven tumorous growths.

'A... a Great Titan.‘

His heart was suddenly cold.

Looking upon a Great Titan was already unnerving enough. What made Sunny truly tense, however... was the fact that the abomination's flesh was terribly torn and mutilated, as if it had barely escaped from a fearsome clash.

What could have mangled a Great Titan so badly?

The wounds were hideous and utterly dreadful, and yet, they did not seem grievous enough to kill a being such as this.

However...

They weakened it.

They weakened its body, they weakened its mind, they weakened its soul... and they weakened its will.

And that was much too dangerous in the Hollow Mountains.

Although the unfathomable abomination was still alive, the mist was already flowing over its endless shape.

Hiding in the shadows, stunned, Sunny remained motionless and watched...

As a Great Titan was devoured by nothingness, slowly dissolving into a milky fog.

Not long after, it was completely gone. It died just like that.

No, not even died.

The Titan was simply erased, as if it had never existed at all.