1810 Beautiful Gift

Sunny lingered for a few moments, then looked down and concentrated on setting the table.

However, he couldn't help but throw glances at Nephis, who was enjoying herself in the water. His gaze was a little heated, but he tried to control his emotions as best he could, knowing that she might sense the nature and intensity of his desire.

He was sure that she already had.

Maybe Nephis did not mind, though.

Sunny let out a quiet sigh.

His shadow sense had expanded to envelop a vast area, reaching far and wide. From the sky to the bottom of the river, nothing could escape him. He knew that Neph could handle any danger hiding underwater, but he still felt protective. Today was her day off, which was an exceedingly rare event. So, nothing was allowed to spoil it.

Many kilometers away, a hideous monster was stealthily moving through the woods. Before it could take another step, though, shadows suddenly came alive all around it. The beast did not have any time to react or to let out a roar - it was swiftly pulled into the darkness and disappeared from sight. A few moments later, a stream of blood flowed out of the shadows.

Sunny shook his head with reproach and continued pulling out snacks out of the picnic basket. There were all kinds of dishes for Nephis to choose from those she liked the most at the Brilliant Emporium. There was also a small brazier and a kettle to brew tea.

He had prepared well.

Eventually, Nephis had enough fun and swam back to the shore. Sunny was standing there peacefully, enjoying the breeze. Rising from the water, she swept her hair back and looked at him with an easy smile.

"Aren't you hot, Master Sunless? All alone there on the shore."

He hesitated for a moment.

"Not really. I've prepared the food. Would you like..."

Instead of answering, she looked at him for a moment, then moved her hand unhurriedly.

In the next moment, Sunny was splashed with water.

He froze.

‘Uh... what just happened?'

His brain refused to process the information.

Noticing his startled expression, Nephis couldn't help but laugh. Her melodious laughter, so rare and beautiful, was carried away by the wind, and then she looked at him with a hint of a mischievous smile.

Her tone was subtly teasing.

“...I feel a little cheated."

Sunny stared at her silently for a few moments, then sighed deeply and lowered his head.

Then, the Nebulous Mantle dissolved into shadows.

Immediately, the summer day seemed a little colder. The shadows hiding under the trees had grown deeper and darker. Their darkness, in turn, made sunlight more stark.

Not wasting any time, Sunny pulled off his clothes. He was wearing a pair of simple black swimming trunks underneath his trousers... finding them had given him a lot of trouble, actually, while he was preparing for the date.

Everything else was fine, but something like that would usually be imported from the waking world. Obviously, Sunny had to run around the city a little to procure a suitable pair.

The breeze caressed his naked skin, and at the same time, Nephis looked at him with a strange intensity in her calm grey eyes.

Sunny's body was not at all like what one would expect from a gallant and scholarly enchanter. It was lithe, with not a gram of fat covering the lean muscles. His figure looked like something chiseled from marble by an enamored sculptor.

His flawless porcelain skin made his raven-black hair and dark eyes seem even darker,

Most striking of all, though..., was an intricate tattoo of a great serpent that colled around his arms and torso. Contrasted against the fair skin, the black ink was like pure darkness.

Every onyx scale of the colling serpent was so vividly tattooed that it almost seemed alive.

Sunny had summoned the Serpent from Godgrave for a special purpose. He had not planned on revealing it in such a manner, though...

Well, all his plans had gone astray ever since this morning.

Nephis seemed a little startled by the sigh.

"You... you have a tattoo."

Sunny looked at his arms, then smiled pleasantly.

"That I do."

While she was gazing at him deeply, he sent a little essence into his muscles and jumped high into the air... then plummeted into the water like a cannonball, making sure that Nephis was in the splash zone.

"You..."

In the next moment, she was doused with water from head to toe.

Neph's eyes widened a little.

Laughing, Sunny surfaced and then swam away from the shore,

"You, get back here!"

The water was cool and clear, washing away the summer heat from his body.

'Coming to a beach... was Indeed a really great idea…’

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The two of them played in the water for a while. With her silver anklets, Nephis was like a mermaid... Sunny spent most of the time enjoying the sight of her moving gracefully underwater, so much so that he was starting to worry that he would be too distracted and accidentally drown.

The water was pleasantly cool and incredibly clear. The sun, which had been high above them on the way to the beach, was slowly rolling down the horizon.

At some point, Sunny left Nephis alone and swam far away from the shore, then held his breath and dove down.

Reaching the depths of the river, he noticed what he was looking for - a stealthy Nightmare Creature that looked like a massive boulder. Once he swam close to it, though, the boulder split apart, revealing a jagged line. The abomination was like a monstrous abalone, and what had seemed like stone was its shell.

Before the creature could swallow him, Sunny crushed the impregnable shell with his fist, and then spent some time thoroughly tearing the river beast apart, Eventually, he fished the soul shard out of its remains and pushed himself toward the surface.

Soon, thoroughly hungry, Sunny and Nephis returned to shore.

Pleasantly tired, they walked over to the picnic blanket and sat down. She looked at the food with glistening eyes.

Before Nephis could eat anything, however, Sunny reached outward and opened his palm.

The soul shard was laying on it. It was a bit different from how the usual rough crystals - this one was perfectly round and polished, glimmering with a beautiful nacre color.

Nephis looked at it with curiosity.

"What is this?"

Sunny smiled.

"Just... something beautiful. For you."

She hesitated for a moment, then took it and studied the glimmering pearl for a few moments.

Then, her face bloomed with a bright smile.

Bringing the pearl closer to her face, Nephis looked at Sunny with appreciation.

Then, she sighed.

"I don't have a gift for you, though."

Pushing a plate of sandwiches closer to her, Sunny laughed.

"You are here, That's the best gift”