1901 Falling Sun

Sunny was in the throes of the familiar state of merciless clarity. He was fighting Revel in the ruins of the dark hall, pushing his body and mind to the absolute limits, each breath searing his lungs like acid.

The devastating fury of their clash made the world quake. Everything around them was enveloped by flowing darkness and suffocating smoke, the air suffused with sweltering heat.

Neither Sunny nor Revel were armed, using nothing but their bodies to destroy each other. The rolling echoes of their crushing blows were like deafening thunderclaps, and both moved at a speed far greater than what a mundane human would have been able to perceive.

The battle was fierce, fearsome, and chillingly ruthless. Its frenetic pace was daunting. Its violent brutality was appalling...

Sunny was having a tough time.

Devoid of the ability to call upon his Aspect, he could only rely on his physical might and combat technique to fight Revel. The problem, however, was that her Transcendent form was more than twice his height, with much longer arms and legs, which gave her a tremendous advantage in reach... and that was not even counting her one remaining wing.

Sunny's disadvantage was only confounded by the fact that he was witnessing the battle through Saint's eyes, not his own. He was more used to seeing himself from the third perspective than most people due to long years of perceiving the world through the shadows, but it was still a disorienting experience to fight while only relying on someone else's sight.

Revel had figured out that he was somehow relying on Saint to guide him almost instantly and made several attempts to destroy the wounded Shadow. Sunny managed to block her from reaching Saint, but she methodically attacked him from positions where his own body blocked the living statue‘s view.

Worst of all, Lightslayer could still use her Aspect freely, which she did with great foresight and skill. At any moment, the beautiful demon could turn into a torrent of flowing darkness to escape, advance, circle around Sunny, or simply bypass his attack.

It was infuriating, reminding Sunny of the battle he had fought against Fiend in Falcon Scott. It felt as if he was fighting himself... which was not a pleasant feeling at all. Now that he was suffering at the hands of an enemy who possessed such an Ability, he learned painfully well just how much of a cheat his Shadow Step was.

He could not do anything against her Aspect Ability, but he could somewhat negate her advantage in size by manipulating his weight with the [Feather of Truth]. Sunny might have been smaller, but his mass was even greater than that of the towering demoness — as a result, his blows were especially devastating, and it was harder for her to throw him off balance.

His armor was shattered, and his body was hurting.

And yet...

So was hers.

Sunny was holding his ground while surrounded by true darkness, trading blow for blow with its Saint.

It was just that damned wing...

As Sunny blocked Revel's clawed hand, the obsidian talon stung his side, where the surface of the Onyx Mantle was already cracked. Feeling a pulse of sharp pain, he hissed and tried to grab the retreating wing — only to be sent stumbling back by a devastating kick

A thin crack crossed the surface of his mask.

Worse still, Revel was already turning into a torrent of darkness, rushing toward Saint...

'Damn it!‘

Sunny ignored the pain and dashed forward to intercept her.

But at that moment...

He felt the entire Citadel shudder, and a thunderous boom resounded from far above, followed by another a moment later... and then another, and then another, almost without pause.

It was as if something was tearing through the ancient castle, travelling toward the ground at terrible speed.

Then, the heat permeating the air seemed to grow ten times more intense, and Sunny was confused for a moment.

'What is that?‘

For a split second, he failed to recognize what was happening.

Then, he realized that he... he was actually seeing something with his own eyes. Something was glowing in the darkness, high above him.

The ceiling of the vast hall had long collapsed, and even higher still, several orange spots seemed to have revealed themselves on the ceiling of the higher floor of the ancient castle, expanding as they grew.

Suddenly able to see again, Sunny froze for a short moment.

...In that short moment, the burning ceiling exploded with a deafening roar, and a blinding radiance blinded him all over again. it was as if the sun had risen in the middle of the Citadel — or rather, fell down from the sky.

Surrounded by a sea of flames, an incandescent being plummeted from the burning inferno above, crashing into the floor between Sunny and Revel and instantly setting it on fire.

Covering his eyes, he staggered back.

Revel's darkness was vanquished, and he could finally sense the shadows again. There was a white silhouette standing in the middle of the raging conflagration, so beautiful and pure that it seemed out of place in this dirty and imperfect world.

Sunny's lips twisted into a smile behind his cracked mask.

'Nephis...‘

Nephis had arrived from whatever battle she had been fighting, practically bringing the entire Citadel down with her.

From the brief glimpse Sunny had got, it seemed as if every floor of the ancient castle above them was at least partially destroyed and set aflame. That certainly explained the smoke and the unbearable heat...

The radiant spirit of light slowly looked around, taking in the sight of the devastated hall. The broke walls, the hideous wounds littering Saint‘s body, Sunny's breached armor...

Finally, her gaze settled on the bloodied, but still breathtakingly beautiful figure of the creature of darkness staring at her with a grim expression.

Revel looked at Nephis, and then smiled coldly.

Her lips parted, and a single word escaped from her lips:

"...Crap."