1975 : The Incredible Adventures and Astonishing Deeds of Heroic Dreamer Sunless in the his Brave Disciple Rain, Abridged (Volume VIII)

Sunny had not planned to confess the truth of their bond to Rain today. He had only wanted to show her the spoils of his raid on the supply caravan, so that she could connect the dots and realize that her teacher and the Lord of Shadows were the same person.

The two armies were going to clash soon, so Sunny had judged that it was time to start slowly revealing the true nature of the war to Rain. She was directly involved in the conflict between the Sovereigns, after all, so he had to give her an opportunity to prepare herself for its resolution.

Because that resolution was not going to be what people on either side expected it to be.

However, Rain reacted in a way that forced Sunny to share more truth than he had wanted to… and although he could have avoided her poignant question despite the strict limitations of his Flaw, after thinking about it for a few fleeting moments, he chose not to.

Perhaps it was because of what had happened between him and Nephis. Sunny had already forsaken reason and given up on holding back, completely, abandoning caution to blindly follow his desires. And since he had already betrayed one inhibition, the rest of them did not seem as sensible and important anymore.

What did he have to lose? He had nothing.

"B… brother?"

Hearing that word from Rain's mouth made Sunny flinch.

It was such an emotional moment. It was something that he had been wanting to hear… hear again… ever since saying goodbye to his little sister in the rundown orphanage, almost two decades ago.

And yet, he had not flinched because of the powerful, almost overwhelming feeling that swelled in his heart because of that word.

Instead, he had flinched out of sheer embarrassment.

It felt so awkward!

Partially because Sunny was almost afraid to choke up, but mostly because he could not help but cringe a little at the same time. Hearing Rain call him "brother" after the last four years was just too... unnatural.

He coughed, struggling with the desire to hide his face.

After a few moments of silence, Sunny said:

"...I take it back. You can continue to call me Teacher."

Rain studied him with a cautious, vulnerable expression.

For a moment, he was worried that his answer had heard her feelings…

But then, a faint smile twisted her lips.

"Big brother?"

Sunny shuddered.

'Even worse!'

"Stop it."

Rain's smile widened.

"Why… big brother?"

A heavy sigh escaped from Sunny's lips.

'I have not thought this through…'

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Sunny led Rain out of the Brilliant Emporium. Both of them were silent, not quite sure how to treat each other now that the nature of their relationship was completely rewritten.

Sunny knew what his familial bond to Rain meant to him. She was the only family he had left in the world… for many years, she had been the only person he cared about in the world, as well. And even though there were other people he cared for deeply now, Rain still held a singular place in his heart.

But it was probably different for her.

What did the word "brother" even mean to his sister?

After all, she did not remember having him as a brother. As far as Rain was concerned, someone else was her family — people who had raised her, cared for her, and showered her with affection, never letting her feel alone or abandoned. Who had been with her for as long as she could remember herself. There was a lifetime of precious memories shared between them, unlike between her and Sunny.

Why would she long for something that she had never lacked?

Why would she miss someone she had never known?

So… Rain must have felt a little awkward and unsure of what to say, too.

However, she did speak soon after exiting the Brilliant Emporium.

That was because Sunny had moved the Marvelous Mimic while they were talking inside.

After ambushing the supply caravan, he had fled the battlefield with as much speed as he could muster, not sparing any essence. It was quite a prudent decision, considering that the battle had taken place within Ki Song's Domain — if he had not left swiftly, the Queen herself could have come to greet him.

As a result, Sunny had managed to return to the Nameless Temple in record time. He had not planned to bring Rain here again, yet, but changed his mind halfway through their conversation. Dismissing the Mimic from the Hollows below the warcamp of the Song Army, he summoned it again as the Lord of Shadows inside his Citadel.

So, Rain was quite surprised to see a vast underground chamber outside the Mimic's door instead of the ancient jungle of the Hollows.

She looked around with interest.

"...This is the Nameless Temple, then? The Citadel of the Lord of Shadows?"

Sunny nodded.

"Yes."

Rain took a deep breath.

"So you do have a Citadel, after all!"

He gave her an amused look.

"Didn't I say that I do?"

She lingered for a moment.

"Well, yeah… but you lie all the time, so I did not really believe it. I mean, you lived in my shadow for four… for four… for four years…"

Rain's voice slowly trailed off, as if she was starting to realize something.

Sunny scoffed.

"I never lie. Didn't I also tell you that I am the most honest person in the world? Two worlds, even."

His sister's eyes widened slowly.

He could guess what she was thinking about.

'The joke about being my brother turned out to be true. The story about ruling an ancient temple turned out to be true. Wait. Wait, wait, wait! If those are true… then what else is true?!'

Rain looked at him with a fearful expression.

A few moments later, she asked in a small voice:

"So… that story about killing an evil version of yourself?"

Sunny nodded.

"Ah, yes. That happened. He was such a hateful, odious, insufferable bastard! Good riddance."

Rain hesitated.

"What about sailing on a river of time that flows inside the corpse of an Unholy Titan?"

He shrugged.

"Sure. That was my Third Nightmare."

Her eyes shook a little.

Rain gulped, then took a deep breath.

"...What about being twenty-six years old, four years old, and several thousands of years old at the same time?"

Sunny glanced at her and smiled nonchalantly.

"River of time, remember? You would not believe the kind of shenanigans I survived there. It's also the reason why I am twenty-six years old despite having been born twenty-five years ago, and am five years older than you despite having been only four years older than you before. Oh, and the part about being four years old — that is the age of this incarnation of mine. I became a Saint during the Chain of Nightmares."

Rain just stared at him silently, dumbstruck.

"As if any of that nonsense makes any sense!"

Sunny smiled brightly.

"I'll give you that. The Tomb of Ariel was a little confusing…"

The young woman opened and closed her mouth several times, as if trying to force herself to ask the next question, but not daring to.

Eventually, she managed to squeeze out:

"What about being a celebrity, a war hero, and immensely rich?"

Sunny grinned.

"I used to be all of those at one point in time or another. Come to think about it, I am back to being all three now!"

Rain took a deep breath, remained silent for a while, and then asked weakly:

"Do you really... know someone who became a Saint as a baby?"

He raised an eyebrow.

'Huh. She remembers that, too?'

It seemed like his nagging had been quite memorable.

"Sure! You've heard of him too, actually… Little Ling, Saint Athena's son. Of course, you weren't there when he was born and did not feed him ice cream every week, unlike me. Oh, and I am also the only reason she met her husband…"

Rain remained silent for longer this time, then suddenly yelled:

"What about the blood of an ancient demon flowing in your veins?! What about devouring the bones of a nebulous deity?! What about ruling a fragment of a divine realm?!"

Sunny scratched the back of his head in embarrassment, then said humbly:

"...All true."

Rain staggered.

After a while, she asked in a quiet,, numb voice:

"Did Beastmaster really ask you to run away with her once?"

He laughed, which prompted Rain to glare at him angrily.

'I should probably tone it down…'

"Well… yeah. Technically, she offered to run away from a Great Nightmare Creature together — but there were other candidates, and she chose me. I guess she likes me... a little."

His sister closed her eyes and fell silent.

Eventually, though, she asked in a shaking voice:

"...Is Lady Nephis really your girlfriend?"

Sunny tripped.

He did not answer for a while, then coughed and said in a neutral tone:

"Don't start calling her Sister-in-Law just yet… but yeah, it's true."

He paused for a moment, and then added with a dreamy smile:

"In fact, I'm in her bedroom right now…"

In the next moment, Sunny was surprised to find a fist flying toward his face.