2031 : Blessings of the Cursed

Sunny quietly wondered what to do next.

He had hoped for a different conclusion — but of course, the actual issue just had to be the only thing that Cassie was unable to see. Nothing could ever be easy.

Rain's very own Flaw…

He sighed.

In and of itself, attaining a Flaw was not a bad thing. Sure, most people saw Flaws as curses bestowed upon them by the Nightmare Spell to balance out the awesome powers they received. But he had lived long enough, and had seen enough, to know that it was not entirely true.

Firstly, Flaws did not come from the Spell — it just helped Awakened find them, just like it helped Awakened unseal their Aspects.

Secondly, Flaws were the manifestation of one of the absolute laws of existence, the law of imperfection, which had been created by the gods as one of the weapons — perhaps the last weapon — in their war against the Void.

Albeit cruel, Flaws were meant to help those who accepted their burden grow. Life was a struggle, after all, and perfect things could never improve. They were still and unchanging, which was no different from being dead.

That was what Ananke had said, and despite wanting to protest these words, Sunny could not disagree due to his own experience.

So, Flaws were more benign than malignant in nature… or at least they were supposed to be.

They were still no different from a curse for people suffering their cruelty, though.

Sunny remembered a few of the more terrible Flaws he had encountered. Nephis, Cassie, and himself… these Flaws were terrible enough, and they weren't even the most appalling.

He remembered how Caster had looked right before dying. That Flaw was quite dire, albeit also quite easily avoided — all the person cursed by it had to do was to forsake their Aspect powers.

Of course, if Caster had been someone willing to abandon his pride and sense of duty to his clan, he would not have been given such a Flaw.

Sunny also remembered Dorn, whose continuously growing body would have eventually killed him, collapsing under its own weight.

He remembered Jet.

And many others...

His expression turned somber.

Yes, from the point of view of a god, a Flaw wasn't a curse. But from the point of view of a human, it could very well be.

So, knowing that Rain had unexpectedly found hers did nothing to calm his nerves.

'What can it be?'

Sunny tried not to let his imagination come up with terrifying answers and shifted his attention to something more important — finding a way to actually learn what Rain's Flaw was.

It was not unsolvable.

Flaws were never random, after all. They were also deeply connected to who the people cursed by them were, having to do with something fundamental about them.

Sometimes, a Flaw would be in direct opposition to the very core of a person's identity. Sometimes, it would take something they held dear and twist it in a hideous way. Sometimes, a Flaw had nothing to do with one's personality, but was instead connected to the nature of one's power, or even their fate…

In any case, it was not impossible to simply deduce a Flaw as long as you knew that person well enough.

And there were few people in the world who knew Rain better than Sunny did.

He studied her for a few moments, then said in a pensive tone:

"Tell me exactly what happened back then. How it happened from your point of view, I mean."

Rain suddenly seemed embarrassed. Her lively expression dimmed, and she looked away

"Well…"

Her voice sounded hesitant.

Eventually, Rain sighed and shrugged.

"It was all like a nightmare. I had never killed a person, you know? At least… I don't think I had. But then I clashed with that girl, Telle of White Feather, and it was either her or me."

She grew quiet and turned her face away.

"In the end, I managed to overpower her, and all that remained was to drive a knife into her neck. But I sort of… was a bit out of it, and could not really understand what for. Why must I kill her? That was what I thought. In fact, I felt deeply disgusted by… all of it."

Rain grimaced and shook her head.

"It was stupid and cowardly, I know. If I was in a better state, I would have remembered that sparing her life meant risking not only my own, but also that of Tamar… and others. But, well, I wasn't. All I knew was that I didn't want to kill her, and so, I made a choice not to."

She sighed again.

"And, to be honest… it felt like the right choice. It still does. Of course, that might just be because Lady Nephis arrived before I could pay for my mistake."

Sunny stared at her, thinking.

He had witnessed the fight between Rain and Telle, as well. More than that, he had been embracing Rain as a shadow throughout the battle, so he had felt everything she had.

So, he had his own impression of what had happened, too.

Sunny knew Rain. He knew what event had become the catalyst of her Flaw.

And he also knew how the world usually worked, as well.

So, if he imagined the worst possible outcome considering all that…

His gaze darkened.

There was a seed of a very uncomfortable idea taking root in his mind.

Sunny hesitated for a few moments, then glanced at Rain and said:

"Summon your bow."

She seemed confused, but outstretched her hand and called upon the Beast of Prey. Cassie tilted her head a little, as if confused by his request.

Meanwhile, the shadows at the edges of the clearing stirred.

Soon, there was the sound of buzzing, and an abominable insect that resembled an oversized mosquito flew into the clearing, as if trying to escape something.

However, it did not manage to fly far.

An inky-black hand rose from the ground, catching it between its fingers. Sharp claws cut the creature's wings and pierced its body — just deep enough to prevent the vermin from escaping, but not to kill it.

That was Rain's job.

Looking at her, Sunny lingered for a moment, then said:

"Go on, shoot it."

She studied the desperately struggling mosquito, then nocked an arrow on the string of her bow.

And froze, not doing anything.

Sunny frowned.

"What are you doing? Hurry up and kill it!"

But Rain remained motionless, simply holding her bow and looking at the abominable thing.

Eventually, she lowered her gaze.

"...I can't."

Sunny's frown deepened.

"What do you mean, you can't? Are you still out of sorts because of the battle? Listen, I can understand why you spared Telle… I'm glad that you did, actually. But that was a person. This is an abomination."

Rain looked at him, her face terrible pale.

"No, you don't get it. I can't."

She trembled.

"My hand won't move. I tell it to draw the string, but nothing happens."

A moment later, she moved the bow to the side, drew it, and sent the arrow flying — it whistled past the vermin without doing any damage to it and disappeared into the jungle.

Rain looked at her hand, frightened and confused.

Sunny stared at his sister with wide eyes.

Then, his face fell.

"...Crap."