2033 : Dire Flaw

Sunny and Rain returned to the temporary camp of the Song Army.

While Sunny and Cassie returned to the temporary camp of the Sword Army.

Of course, he had not forgotten to retrieve his shadows first.

He allowed the haughty shadow, which wore Weaver's Mask, to dissolve into darkness and manifested the naughty shadow instead.

This avatar wore a mask, as well — this one woven by Sunny himself.

'I guess I need to craft more of these…'

Now that his ability to control several incarnations was out in the open, he would have more chances to summon them. During the battle, he had simply covered their faces with the helmet of the Onyx Mantle and a layer of shadows — it should have hidden their features, especially considering the surrounding mayhem.

But he could not be entirely sure, since there were all kinds of watchers out there.

Even if his identity remained a complete mystery, Master Sunless would still be suspected by some. After all, he had entered Changing Star's circle around the same time as the Lord of Shadows — now that people knew that the Lord of Shadow could exist in several places at the same time, they would naturally become suspicious of the humble Memory merchant.

Luckily, Sunny had been quite meticulous in crafting the persona of Master Sunless, and making it the exact opposite of what one would expect a fearsome and mysterious Saint to be. As long as he remained cautious, the suspicions would remain just that.

All of it was going to lose meaning soon, anyway.

The conclusion of the war was not that far away now.

He shivered.

Sunny and Cassie were alone in the tent for the moment. Both remained silent for a while, contemplating the situation Rain had found herself in.

Eventually, he sighed.

"That… is quite a severe Flaw, don't you think?"

Calling that Flaw severe was an understatement of the century.

Cassie hesitated for a moment, then nodded.

"It is quite extraordinary, indeed. There are very few Flaws that are that harsh while being that broad."

It could very well be a death sentence. Being unable to kill anything while everything was able to kill you was, needless to say, extremely dangerous. Especially for an Awakened, and especially in the middle of a bloody war… which was happening in the middle of a damn Death Zone!

Sunny massaged his temples, feeling an approaching headache.

How was he supposed to protect Rain now?

He sighed.

"Still, it is not so bad."

There were ways to deal with a Flaw. Every Awakened had no choice but to find ways of coping with its burden, and many learned how to do it masterfully.

The only question was…

How would Rain go about it?

Would she cope with her Flaw by accommodating it and adapting to its demands? She could distance herself from bloodshed and killing, living a peaceful life somewhere safe… relatively safe, at least, since true safety did not exist anywhere in either of the worlds.

Sunny would be quite happy if she did, really. His sister... was unlike him. Despite her admirable strength and tough exterior, she was made from softer stuff. She was not a killer.

...Thank the gods. There were already enough killers in this dying world — like Sunny and Nephis. People like them were born to destroy, and hopefully, they would destroy everything that needed to be destroyed. So that people like Rain could rebuild a new world on the ruins.

But that was only one way of dealing with her Flaw Rain could choose.

She could also stay close to the battlefield while assuming a strictly supportive role — like her friend Fleur, but much more defenseless. She would have to put absolute trust in her companions, then, and rely on them to keep her safe. Like a living embodiment of the time-tested principle taught to Sunny by Jet.

That no one survived in the Dream Realm alone.

Or…

Would Rain cope with her Flaw by fighting and rebelling against it like Sunny had fought and rebelled against his?

He had become a master of deception despite being unable to lie, after all.

It was just that his treacherous ways had to turn much more refined and insidious because of the Flaw.

Would Rain become a ghastly and sinister slayer because of hers? A person who could not kill her enemies… at least not directly… but made them wish that they were dead?

Sunny closed his eyes for a moment, then cursed.

"No, I take it back. It is that bad."

Cassie patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't worry too much. She will be fine… better than fine, actually. She will face the challenge of her Flaw, overcome it, and become much stronger for it."

Sunny did not know if Cassie was speaking out of personal experience or simply trying to placate him, but he felt thankful either way.

He wanted to believe her, too.

She remained silent for a moment, and then sighed:

"Nevertheless, you are right. Her Flaw is extremely severe… which means that her Aspect will be extraordinary, as well. In fact, I am quite sure that it will be at least of the Supreme Rank — most likely Sacred."

Sunny froze, looking at her with a complicated expression.

An Aspect of the Sacred Rank… was almost as rare as one of the Divine Rank.

In fact, ironically enough, Sunny knew of more Awakened wielding a Divine Aspect — Nephis, Mordret, and himself — than Awakened wielding a Sacred Aspect.

He only knew of one, actually… Cassie herself.

Of course, there could have been others… among the members of Broken Sword's cohort, for example, or among the daughters of Ki Song. But the fact still remained — a Sacred Aspect would be unique, mystical, and exceedingly powerful by its very nature.

And his sister could come to possess one of those?

Sunny lingered for a few moments, then sat down and said somberly:

"Tell me more about what you saw."

Cassie remained silent for a while, as if trying to find the correct words.

In the end, she sighed.

"It was quite unusual. I had to decipher what I saw myself… I still do, really. It is not really difficult, just takes time. Like… like following your intuition to the answer you already know to be true, or remembering something that you had already known once. We will be able to decipher the True Name shortly, I believe. The Attributes responsible for her affinity to shadows and sorcery are also quite clear…"

Her tone changed a little.

"...It's the third Attribute that gives me pause."

Cassie grew quiet for a moment, then faced Sunny and asked cautiously:

"Sunny, tell me… have you noticed anything strange about your sister?"