1983. Besieged

In any case, Mordret could not eradicate them without resorting to extreme measures that would not only put him at great risk, but also result in dire losses among his vessels.

And it was not time yet for that.

So, eventually, he chose to retreat.

Watching the grotesque leviathans resurface and swim away, Morgan exhaled tiredly and leaned on her sword.

They had not won, exactly... but had not lost, either.

It was a reason to celebrate, and yet she was not in a festive mood.

She knew that this first battle was merely the beginning.

The battle for Bastion had not ended, it was just starting... of course, its nature would change after tonight's bloodshed.

It would become a war of attrition.

...And it had.

There had been many battles since then. Morgan and her Saints held the ruins of the castle, while Mordret settled in the forest. He had to battle the Nightmare Creatures dwelling there constantly — which was a boon for Morgan, since his vessels had already been damaged during the assaults on the ruins, and were now being worn down further by the endless onslaught of abominations.

But it was also a curse, because the same Nightmare Creatures would be then taken by her brother and sent to wear the defenders of the castle down, in turn.

If there was one mercy, it was that he seemed reluctant to control more bodies than he already controlled. Therefore, if the Nightmare Creatures attacked, the Transcendent vessels of the Prince of Nothing were absent, and vice versa.

Morgan just hoped that her brother was being drained and ground to dust by having to survive all these soul duels, just like the rest of them were being slowly battered to the ground.

Athena's prodigious strength and Nightingale's startling archery skill were of immense help in the battles against the taken forest dwellers, while Soul Reaper and the Saints of Night were indispensable when battling the human vessels of her brother.

Morgan herself had long abandoned caution and went all- out in every battle as well. Her Aspect was both formidable and versatile, as was her Transcendent Ability. Therefore, she was a devastating presence on the battlefield no matter what enemies they faced.

Somehow, they survived a week of the siege, and then another.

In the process, her brother had attempted to sneakily circle around Bastion and stage an attack on the Citadels of the Sword Domain located deeper inland.

In response, Morgan and Saint Kai launch an attack on Night Garden, almost managing to claim it before falling into a trap set for them there by Mordret.

That trap was the being he had left to guard the beached Great Citadel... a single Reflection of his, Citadel... a single Reflection of his, which would not usually pose a real threat to two Saints as powerful as Morgan and Kai were...

If not for the fact that this Reflection was a Supreme Titan.

In the end, they did not manage to conquer the Night Garden, barely escaping with their lives. However, they did manage to dissuade Mordret from trying to move past Bastion without eliminating its defenders first.

The siege continued, with both sides slowly studying the enemy and searching for a way to destroy them. It was intense, grueling, and often full of dread.

However, the most dreadful part of it all was the Others.

Morgan did not know how her brother, who was much more susceptible to their sinister influence, was managing to stay alive and sane. But it was definitely a challenge for her and her Saints.

The Others were so eerie and frightening because they were alien, unknown, and unknowable. Their origin was a mystery, and so was their nature. Morgan did not even know if they were truly beings, in the full sense of that word, let alone living beings. The Others moved and acted like creatures that possessed will and even an eerie form of sentience, but she could not be sure.

They could have been mere manifestations of some mysterious force or process that simply reflected what was in front of them, thus creating a false impression of intent and intelligence.

The worst part of it all was that, unlike the Nightmare Creatures, the Others were not even necessarily malicious. The harrowing evil they perpetrated was nothing but a result of their inherently alien nature.

These beings did not seem to know or be able to fathom the natural concepts like a person's desire to stay alive, the fear of pain, the terror of having one's body and soul stolen, maimed, torn apart, or consumed. At least that was the opinion that Morgan and her Saints shared now, after witnessing the Others, and even clashing with them, several times.

But they simply could not be sure of anything, which made the sinister guests from the Mirror Real so much more frightening.

On top of that, even fighting them was a dreadful ordeal, because the Others did not follow the conventions of power that both Awakened and the Nightmare Creatures shared.

They were neither divine nor profane. They did not seem to possess Ranks and Classes. They were not beholden to a single Aspect or a set of unholy powers. Instead, they were entirely unfathomable and unpredictable, making every battle with them a chilling affair.

Some of the Others were surprisingly weak, and were easily destroyed by the Saints. Some, however, possessed a harrowing power that made them utterly lethal, while their bizarre nature made obliterating them a dangerous and difficult undertaking.

Morgan had almost lost Saint Aether that way during the early days of the siege... which would have been quite a disaster, considering that he was the closest thing she had to a healer.

Luckily, the Nightwalker had survived in the end, even if his eyes seemed a little haunted to this day.

'Poor guy.’

Morgan herself had grown up knowing about the Others and brushing against the eerie mystery of their existence from time to time, so these dreadful encounters were nothing new to her.

The government Saints were taking it surprisingly well, too, but the Saints of Night were rattled.

'How much longer?'

Letting out a sigh, she shivered in the cold, looked at her bloodied tunic in disgust, and walked toward the lake to take a plunge.

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“These extra chapters are brought to you by the valiant Song Army! :]” - Guiltythree