1984. Beneath the Surface

The Mirror Lake hid unspeakable horrors, so very few people would have dared to bathe in it.

But Morgan did not care.

She had no choice but to come to this dark place, and for her, there was no escape from the war. The siege was not going to end any time soon, but she could at least endeavor to not spend the rest of it feeling dirty.

It was her home, anyway.

The black water was deceptively tranquil and still, reflecting the moonlit heavens. Stepping into it was like stepping into the night sky, and bathing in it was like bathing in stars.

Enjoying the cold embrace of the lake, Morgan sighed in contentment and studied her reflection.

It was important to know that her reflection was not doing anything strange, like tracing her movements with its gaze or trying to speak. Morgan was safer than most from being preyed on by the Others, since she had killed her reflection many years ago... but she still had to be careful.

Her reflection was prim and proper, staring at her back with two vibrant vermilion eyes, which seemed to glow softly in the darkness.

Sending it a smile, Morgan cautiously pulled off her bloodied tunic.

She knew that Saint Kai was probably blushing and hurriedly turning away somewhere in the ruins, but she did not care. That dirty thing was disgusting, and she was determined to give it a good wash...

The only problem was that the frayed fabric parted under her fingers, and several new cuts appeared on its surface.

Morgan cursed her Flaw quietly. Her tunic was made from mystical cloth and could usually withstand her touch, but now, it had become tattered and fragile. Feeling a bit dejected, she crouched to wash the blood off the black fabric.

She should have packed more thoroughly before sending the illusory Bastion into the Great Mirror. Sure, there were supplies in the real castle, and she even had her own living quarters here... but that part of the ruin crumbled in one of the countless battles, burying her wardrobe under the rubble.

That had been a painful loss.

Morgan rinsed her tunic swiftly, then walked deeper into the cold water to wash the blood off her body.

At that moment, there was a subtle movement under the surface, and something slippery wrapped itself around her shin.

Instead of pulling her into the depths, however, the flesh of the Nightmare Creature parted and bled, as if it had wrapped around a sharp blade.

Morgan raised her hand indifferently. A split second later, it rippled like liquid metal and turned into a long spear, which extended downward with terrible speed and pierced the surface of the lake.

The Spell whispered softly into her ear, announcing the death of a Corrupted Monster.

Morgan smiled.

'I guess we have dinner.’

At that moment, someone coughed behind her.

Morgan retracted her monstrously long javelin, allowed it to turn back into a human hand, and unhurriedly pulled the wet tunic back onto her pale body.

This time, there were no new cuts.

'Good!'

Feeling clean and refreshed, she turned around and walked back to the shore.

Speak of the devil... there was Nightingale, standing at the edge of the water and looking at the sky politely. She had not heard his steps, so he must have descended from above.

Morgan had once assumed that Saint Kai would be quite accustomed to these kinds of situations as a former entertainment star, but he was strangely shy. His sense of decorum was also better than that of most noble Legacies, which was both funny and disheartening to see as the noblest of them.

...And that bastard somehow managed to look cleaner and more put-together than her despite the fact that Morgan had literally just bathed!

Walking out of the water, she swept her hair back and tried to hide her irritation.

"What is it?"

Nightingale finally looked down.

"I saw movement in the forest, Lady Morgan. It appears that there is going to be another attack soon."

Morgan frowned.

The timing was... unfortunate.

Both Naeve and Bloodwave were yet to recover from the wounds they had received several days ago, even with Aether's help — that was why she had held them back yesterday.

Soul Reaper was strangely inefficient as of late, as well, for whatever reason... strangely enough, she had been diving into the lake to hunt Nightmare Creatures despite her weakened state.

'Why is he in such a hurry?'

Mordret used to space out his assaults, but now, they were becoming more frequent.

Morgan contemplated the issue for a moment.

'Something must have changed in Godgrave.'

They received news of how the war was going from time to time. The last thing she heard was that Nephis, Gilead, and the Lord of Shadows had clashed with the daughters of Ki Song in the Hollows, and that Seishan had finally conquered a Citadel for the Song Domain.

Which meant that the Queen herself must have arrived to Godgrave, already.

The two armies were going to clash soon.

Was that what lit a fire under her brother?

'Is he worried that she will kill our father before he can do it himself?'

That was a delusional fear to harbor, but then again, that man was not known for having a sound mind.

Letting out a quiet sigh, Morgan glanced at the lake, knowing that her plans of fishing out the Transcendent Monster she had killed and roasting it were ruined.

"Thank you for letting me know, Saint Kai. Please gather the rest and prepare for battle. Oh... and don't stare at the sky too much. Especially at the shards of the moon."

She summoned her armor back, even though it would not have had any time to repair itself. The vermilion cloak weaved itself from scarlet sparks, draped around her shoulders.

A nicked sword appeared in her hand.

Morgan smiled.

The uncle and nephew pair were indeed wounded, but several of Mordret's vessels had been shredded quite thoroughly when they last appeared, as well.

If things went well today, she stood a good chance of reducing the number of Transcendent shells her brother possessed.

Of course, there was also the chance of losing a couple of her own Saints.

That would be a real shame.

But still...

'How many of his vessels do I need to destroy, and how dire the situation in Godgrave must become for him to grow desperate enough to jump into my soul?'

Her scarlet eyes glistened with sharp light.

Morgan lingered for a moment, and then sighed.

'I hope it happens before my tunic completely falls apart…’