2229 Great Citаdels  
  
Ravenheart was not undefended, of course.  
  
However, every Saint of the Song Domain was out there, on the battlefield — and even if some of them could return to the seat of the Queen's power in mere minutes by traversing the waking world, they had nоt done so yet.  
  
Perhaps something that prevented them from returning was happening in Godgrave at the moment. The news Morgan received from the battlefront was usually a few days old, and if Cassia was involved, Nightingale could very well be better informed about the current situation now than she was.  
  
The moment of attack would not have been chosen randomly.  
  
In any case, what met them at the gates of the magnificent black palace was a force consisting of mere Awakened warriors led by Ascended commanders — much like the rear garrisons that had protected Rivergate and Bastion before Morgan and her six Saints… formerly her Saints, rather… showed up.  
  
And the Queen's puppets, of course.  
  
Nightingale was well-known in Ravenheart, so while the human defenders of the black palace were surprised by his impactful arrival, they were not immediately hostile.   
Until they noticed Morgan, that was.  
  
The puppets, on the other hand, were hostile from the very first moment.  
  
Strangely enough, the gates of the black palace were open, and the Dream Gate that was supposed to be standing on the slope of the volcano was now towering above the stone bridge itself, behind Morgan and Nightingale, its immense silhouette obscured by the snowstorm.  
  
The two of them had nowhere to retreat.  
  
As the puppets rushed onto the great bridge and the human defenders readied their weapons, Nightingale's voice drowned out the howling of the wind, full of irresistible authority.  
  
He only said one word:  
  
"Stop."  
  
The humans froze, turning into motionless sculptures. Morgan felt a faint pang of compassion for their humiliating plight, but she did not have time to dwell on that unexpected emotion.  
  
Because the puppets ignored the Dragonslayer's command,continuing to rush at them like a tide of murderous corpses. Well, it made sense — after all, the pilgrims were merely extensions of the Queen's power. Nightingale's Aspect might have paralyzed Morgan in a moment of weakness, but she doubted that Ki Song would succumb to its insidious compulsion.  
  
He looked at Morgan earnestly.  
  
"Lady Morgan... if you will…"  
  
She stared at him for a moment, still unsure what to do… was she supposed to kill him? Or help him?  
  
Morgan felt a little exasperated.  
  
Finally, she turned toward the rushing puppets and muttered a curse. As she dashed forward, scarlet sparks swirled around her hand, forming a vague silhouette of a sword.  
  
"Curses!"  
  
Her sword was still manifesting itself when the first of the pilgrims reached her. So, Morgan cut the corpse apart with her bare hand — it fell easily, hinting that the Queen was not paying close attention to these particular puppets.  
  
For now.  
  
Looking up through the snow, she regarded the motionless figures of the garrison soldiers for a split second. They were not going to offer any resistance.  
  
'...He's not planning to conquer Ravenheart without spilling a single drop of human blood, is he?'  
  
Perhaps he was.  
  
A moment later, the tide of puppets was upon them, and Morgan had no time to think anymore.  
  
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Far away, near the misty shoгe of the Stormsea, Jet came into view of the Night Garden.  
  
The colossal ship was still beached, laying tilted on the shattered ground where Mordret had left it.  
  
…Of course, he had not left it unguarded.  
  
Somewhere out there, on one of the countless decks of the city-sized vessel, a Reflection was laying in wait, ready to slay those who would dare to covet the Great Citadel. And a powerful one at that — a being equal in strength to a Supreme Titan.  
  
Jet had to defeat it and conquer the Night Garden.  
  
Exhaling slowly, she headed toward the gargantuan ship with a dark smile blooming on her lips. As she walked, a cold mist surrounded her figure,turning into a sinister war scythe.  
  
'Can I defeat a Supreme Titan?'  
  
Probably not. However, there was a reason why she was here, and not in Ravenheart or Bastion.  
  
It was because Jet had a unique advantage in the battle against this particular   
Supreme Titan. It was a Reflection, after all.  
  
And a Reflection could only reflect what was in front of it.  
  
Once the two of them clashed, the creature would most likely mirror Jet — which meant that it would suffer the curse of her Flaw, as well. Its soul would shatter and start leaking essence, and eventually, it would die on its own. All she had to do was force the Reflection to waste its essence while rationing her own... something Jet was a great master of, by now.  
  
She also had her Aspect Legacy and the souls contained within it, which she could consume if needed.  
  
And the hourglass Memory, as well.  
  
Even if Jet lost once, she would get a second chance to destroy the Reflection. That time, she would already be familiar with the flow and pattern of the battle.  
  
'Ah… I really hate ships…'  
  
Reaching the hull of the Night Garden, which seemed to extend into the distance like an endless plain, she turned into a stream of icy mist and rushed up its towering slope.  
  
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Effie was still leaning on her spear when Mordret arrived. She knew he was coming because of how the ground trembled under the heavy footsteps of his vessels… Typhaon, Knossos, and all the rest.  
  
She had battled them all at some point or another during the siege of Bastion. Apparently, she even destroyed most of them at least once inside the loop… that time was gone now, of course, erased forever, and she retained no memories of these legendarу battles.  
  
Which was a bit of a shame, since Effie would have really loved to remember striking down that ugly behemoth, Typhaon. Or rather, striking down Mordret while the bastard was wearing Typhaon's corpse.  
  
Soon enough, gargantuan silhouettes rose above the ruins,and the Prince of Nothing jumped down into the desolate courtyard from the rubble of the castle's wall.  
He walked toward Effie with an amused smile on his lips.  
  
"Saint Athena…"  
  
Mordret looked behind her, lingered for a moment, and raised an eyebrow.  
  
"Would you be so kind as to point me to where my sister is? We have some unfinished business, she and I."  
  
Effie studied him for a bit, then shrugged.  
  
"Please accept my sincerest apologies, Your Highness, but I regrettably cannot. She is indisposed. Oh, but you can talk to me instead."  
  
Mordret laughed.  
  
"Don't tell me that she ran away? Gods… must I chase her like one would a frightened rabbit? Well, honestly, that can be quite entertaining as well. Nevertheless, I can't help but feel a bit disappointed."  
  
He looked at Effie with a pleasant, chilling smile.  
  
"I must admit that I am curious, though… if Morgan is gone, then why do you remain?"