1528 New Eden

Mordret studied him with a neutral expression. Then, he smiled pleasantly.

"How should I know? Am I a Sovereign?"

Sunny stared at him silently for a few moments. Eventually, he shook his head.

"No... but you are a son of one, was raised by another, and currently serve the third. If you don't know, then who would?"

Mordret laughed.

"Well, if you put it like that, it does sound like I should know. However, Sunless, you seem to be mistaken about something. The thing is... I don't care to know. Why should I care about the waking world? Whatever happens to it has little to do with me."

Sunny frowned.

Indeed, Mordret had spent most of his childhood in the Dream Realm, so he had little attachment to Earth. More than that, he was not someone who would care about the lives of hundreds of millions of innocent people, let alone feel inclined to do something to save them.

All Mordret cared about was his revenge against the Great Clan Valor.

A faint smile appeared on Sunny's face.

"Sure, you might not care about the waking world. But you do care about your father's plans — at least as far as to be able to try and ruin them better. So cut the crap and just tell me what you know. If you don't mind."

Mordret stared at him with amusement for a while, then sighed and shook his head.

"Well, why not? But I'm afraid that you are overestimating me. I really do not know what my father and the Queen of Worms are planning. I am not exactly on speaking terms with the former, and the latter does not trust me enough to share such secrets. All I know is that they are serious about having a war with each other. That was why I joined Ki Song."

He lingered for a moment and added, his voice losing its usual lightheartedness:

"I'll warn you, though. Don't presume to understand the Sovereigns, Sunless. You might think that you have them figured out, but you don't. They are far older than we are, and far more powerful. They are also not some cardboard villains. My father, Ki Song, and the third one... are the most exceptional individuals of their generation, or maybe even of all generations. They did not end up on their thrones by accident."

Sunny looked at him somberly.

"What are you trying to say?"

Mordret shrugged with a smile.

"I'm just saying that you might find it hard to understand their plans. Abandoning the waking world? Well, that surely sounds like something they would do. But if you think about it, why would they do that? Even if the Sovereigns only care about the Dream Realm, they still need Awakened to populate it. And Awakened cannot exist without mundane people. You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, and you can't get a stable supply of eggs without a poultry farm. Something like that."

Sunny remained silent for a while, thinking about what Mordret had said. Although the terms he used were very cynical, the underlying message held true. Indeed, there had to be an immense population of mundane people for a comparatively small amount of Awakened to emerge.

If the waking world was indeed destined to be consumed by the Dream Realm, the Sovereigns could not allow themselves to abandon it completely before that happened.

Which went against what Sunny had learned about them before.

He frowned, feeling confused.

Eventually, Sunny shook his head and asked, his voice somber:

"What about the third one? Asterion, what does he want?"

As soon as those words were spoken, Mordret's smile dimmed, growing strangely... forced. He leaned forward slightly.

"Sunless... do me a favor, try not to speak that name aloud. Otherwise, he might actually hear you."

Sunny blinked a couple of times, staring at him incredulously.

"Come on. Really?"

Mordret let out a long sigh, then shook his head reproachfully.

"I'm not saying that to scare you, I'm just telling the truth. The old man... his powers are a bit beyond comprehension. If you feel threatened by Ki Song or my father, wait till you meet him. Better yet, hope that you never will."

Sunny leaned back, crossing his arms.

"What's so scary about him? If he's so powerful, why isn't he participating in this war Song and Valor started? Where is he? Come to think of it, where does he come from? There is almost nothing written about him in the history books. Is he a Legacy? Does he have a clan? An army?"

Mordret shrugged.

"The thing you need to understand about him... is that his Domain is different from those of the other two. Yes, Domains can be different in nature. Most are like what my father and Ki Song possess, territorial. That is why Valor and Song are fighting over territory. But not his... his is more of an idea than a place."

He remained silent for a few moments, then said somberly:

"You must have realized by now that the Great Clans were built by those who inherited the Divine Lineages. Valor was born from the Lineage of War, Immortal Flame from the Lineage of Sun, House of Night from the Lineage of Storm. Clan Song rose to prominence later, after Ki Song discovered the Lineage of Beast. The old man is the one who has the Lineage of Heart... however, there is no clan he belongs to. Do you know why that is?"

Sunny shook his head.

'The lineage of Heart God...'

Heart God was also the god of souls, as well as emotions, memory, hunger, and growth. What kind of Aspect could Asterion possess, then? What powers did he wield? What was the nature of his Domain?

Mordret took a deep breath, then smiled.

"Well... it's because he does not come from the Legacy Clans. Legacy Clans have been in power since before we were born, so we are conditioned to assume that it has always been like that. But, in fact, there were many powers competing for the right to shape the world as they saw fit, back in the chaotic time after the Spell first descended. Some more terrible than others. The old man is the last remnant of one of those vanquished powers."

Sunny remembered hearing about that. From what he knew, the current system — with the government and the Legacy Clans maintaining the world order together — was established after several other, fringe factions had been defeated by the first Legacies. Even with all the sins of the current regime, the ones that could have been would have been much more terrifying.

At least that was what he had been told by Professor Obel.

Mordret lingered for a moment.

"Ah, by the way... the old man is not that old, actually. It's just what I call him. The faction he comes from, you see, was a small group of the Path of Ascension zealots. Real fanatics, far more extreme than anyone you could have met among the Legacies. Now, those people... they were really in favor of abandoning the waking world completely, believing that the Nightmare Spell was meant to pave the way for a new beginning. That the Dream Realm was a wild garden meant for a new breed of humans."

He shook his head.

"And they did abandon the waking world, establishing an isolated colony in the Dream Realm not long after the first Masters Ascended. The man who would one day become the third Sovereign... was actually born there. In fact, he was the first human child born in the Dream Realm. The original Dreamspawn."

Mordret smiled.

"Well, in any case. Those reclusive extremists did not last long. Their colony was eventually overtaken by Nightmare Creatures, and he was the only one who survived. In the end, he found his way to Bastion, met my father, was brought back to the waking world, and joined Broken Sword's cohort."

The Prince of Nothing looked at Sunny with a strange expression, then frowned.

"I hope that satisfied your curiosity. Ah, all this talking made me thirsty. I think I'll go find myself something to drink..."

He rose and moved to walk away, but then lingered for a moment.

Looking back, Mordret said in a friendly tone:

"Oh, by the way. I said before that you'd better hope to never meet that guy. Sorry... I don't think you'll have a choice. The old man, you see, is very interested in people with divine bloodlines. Considering your connection to Shadow, the only missing Lineage, he'll probably come find you someday. Your precious Changing Star, as well, since there might not be another Dreamspawn anywhere in the two worlds."

With that, he smiled pleasantly and walked away, leaving Sunny alone.

The Chain Breaker continued moving west, the leaves of the sacred tree rustling gently in the wind.

Sunny stared silently at the vast expanse of the Great River, his head full of dark thoughts.

'...Goddammit.'

It was really unfair. He did not even have the Lineage of Shadow God — Blood Weave had greedily devoured it a long time ago.

Why did he have to deal with a mysterious and sinister Sovereign?

It was not as if Sunny did not have a host of other terrible problems he had to deal with already.

'Mordret might have been lying, as well.'

It was only then that Sunny thought back on their conversation and uttered a quiet curse.

The Prince of Nothing had talked for so long, but did not give a straight answer to a single question!

'That bastard...'