1623 Dark Colossus

As the ground trembled, the lively atmosphere in the camp instantly turned cold and professional. The Fire Keepers, who had been enjoying a late supper just moments ago, instantly rose to their feet and picked up their weapons. A moment later, they were standing in a defensive formation, ready to repel any kind of attack.

Nephis had stood up, as well. The white flames burning in her eyes grew more intense, and the fire behind her grew taller, chasing the darkness further away.

"What is it?'

Was there a Nightmare Creature approaching them from afar, or had the master of the ancient temple decided to betray them?

She was going to find out soon.

As they stood motionlessly, preparing for battle, the ground shuddered again. A cold wind rose, bringing with it a strong smell of rotting leaves and humid jungle. A tense silence settled over the world.

A moment later, Nephis felt a new presence beside her, Turning her head slightly, she saw the Lord of Shadows standing at the edge of the camp, peering into the darkness calmly. He had appeared out of nowhere without making any noise, as if the shadows themselves had risen up to spawn him.

He seemed to have discarded his mask, but since Nephis was behind him, she couldn't see his face.

The Fire Keepers flinched, startled by his sudden appearance. Each was an experienced Master, and many carried Memories that enhanced their senses. It wasn't easy to sneak up on them...

And yet, the Lord of Shadow had done it effortlessly.

Nephis frowned, realizing just how vulnerable her subordinates were in front of him.

"What is happening?"

Her voice remained calm, addressing the mysterious Saint with sufficient decorum.

He remained silent for a few moments, then sighed.

"It's nothing much. One of the Great sleepers has awoken, that's all. "

Shadow lingered for a second, then added:

"I usually keep them asleep to avoid trouble, but the most feisty ones sometimes escape their slumber."

'A Great Nightmare Creature? Keep them asleep?’

Nephis frowned slightly.

"Should we fight it together, then?"

Still facing away from her, the master of the ancient temple shook his head.

"No need. It's merely a Beast"

With that, he took a step forward.

The darkness surged, enveloping him like a vast mantle. The figure of Lord Shadow dissolved into it, becoming one with the lightless vold.

And then, the void exploded upward.

As Nephis watched, secretly startled, a colossus built of shadows slowly rose above the bone plain.

His body was a perfect replica of the Lord of Shadows. The titanic torso was formed first, followed by two immense arms. At first, the giant seemed to be kneeling, but then he slowly rose to his feet, coming to stand as tall as the ancient temple. The shadows rippled and solidified, repeating the contours of his back. She saw lean muscles rolling under the obsidian skin.

A moment later, a layer of glossy onyx covered the dark colossus, encasing him in a suit of impregnable armor. His head was too far away now, the light of the enchanted lanterns unable to dispel the veil of darkness hiding his face.

When the giant took a step, the whole plain quaked.

‘...A Transformation Ability?'

The size of the shadow colossus was nowhere near Effie when she assumed her Transcendent form, but it was still awe-inspiring.

But that was not the end of it.

There was a rustle from behind them, and a dreadful hiss. Turning around, the Fire Keepers saw the head of an enormous serpent appearing from the entrance of the temple. The creature was massive enough to easily swallow the entire cohort in one bite, Its scales the same color as the tenebrous armor of the Lord of Shadows.

The obsidian serpent slithered out of the Citadel, its long body flowing lie a river of darkness, seemingly endless. It must have been colled around the entire great hall of the ancient temple, surrounding them from every side the moment they stepped inside.

Nephis watched carefully.

"The Terror?"

The colossal serpent slithered across the bone plain, passing the frozen Fire Keepers and approaching the giant made of shadows. Its neck rose high into the air, and it nimbly coiled around the leg of the Lord of Shadows, crawling up his body like a tree snake.

The creature reached the shoulder of the giant, and then slithered along his outstretched arm.

Then, it... changed.

Where a serpentine head was before, the sharp tip of a gargantuan sword suddenly appeared. Slowly, but also too fast to notice, the body of the Transcendent Terror rippled, and turned into an inconceivable odachi, its hilt and curving blade as long as the shadow giant was tall.

Finally, a dark titan was standing on the bone plain, his body encased in a suit of fearsome onyx armor, wielding a giant obsidian sword.

He looked like an ancient delty that had descended to the mortal realm from the heavens... or maybe crawled out of the lightless depths of the abyss.

Not paying the Fire Keepers any attention, the shadow giant took another step.

Something lunged at him from the darkness... a grotesque monstrosity that towered above the ground, its mottled fur wreathing with a swarm of pale maggots. Its misshapen head was crowned with sharp horns, and its maw was wide open, revealing a wall of massive fangs.

Its limbs were a mess of claws, chitinous scythes, and pulsating tentacles.

A chill spread through the hearts of the Fire Keepers at the sight of the hideous abomination.

However, the towering sword of the dark colossus only fell once.

One strike, and the neck of the Great Beast was cleanly severed, its head rolling to the ground.

The massive body toppled and crashed into the bone surface of the dead god's breastbone, causing it to tremble once again.

The Great Beast... was dead. Just like that.

The dark colossus peered at it with disdain, then shook his head and crumbled on itself, turning into a tide of shadows.

A mornent later, all that was left was the corpse of the hideous monstrosity, and the deep groove left in the white bone by the tip of the obsidian odachi.

Silence settled over Godgrave once again.

Nephis stared at the corpse of the abomination, her expression unreadable.

Eventually, she tilted her head a little.

'One strike. '

Suddenly, she was glad to have made a pact with the man who called himself Shadow.

....It was much better to be his ally than his enemy.