1723 The Flight of the Wraiths

Being carried around on the palm of a militant giantess was perhaps the world's most exciting amusement ride in the world... losing only to being tossed into the sky by the said giantess, or maybe riding on the back of a dragon.

Today, Jet had the opportunity to experience all three. Who would have thought that a neglected girl from the outskirts would one day be living such an exciting life?

However, she wasn't really having fun.

Nor was she living, if one wanted to be technical.

Clad in a black leather armor, Jet soared across the sky. Her raven-black hair fluttered in the wind as her figure tore apart the towering pillars of smoke, the landscape of the ruined city streaking beneath her like a blur. Her icy blue eyes were burning with murderous intent.

Perhaps it was for the best that she was moving much too fast to see the scenes of devastation clearly.

The terrible loss of life was aggravating enough, but the irreparable damage done to the crucial infrastructure would frustrate her even more. At the end of the day, the two were one of the same - cities could not function without people, while people could not survive in this poisoned world without the protection of the cities.

So, the losses humanity had suffered today were doubly great.

Even if they were to win the battle and slaughtered the Nightmare Creatures, rebuilding the city was out of the question. Not with the focus of humanity slowly shifting toward the Dream Realm, and not in the aftermath of Antarctica.

After today, there would be one less human city on Earth. The survivors could be relocated to other population centers, and in time, the population would grow to replenish the lost lives... but the number of cities would only dwindled. Too many of them had been swallowed by the Chain of Nightmares, and in the years that followed, two more fell to the Skinwalker.

This city would be the third the government lost in the last four years.

To Jet, losing a city felt like being robbed of her personal belongings. It was sad, humiliating, and deeply distasteful.

She had a commitment to work for the government a long time ago, and as such, any defeat that the mission of the government suffered was a personal sleight.

"Those bastards...'

Jet was really sure who she was referring to - the Nightmare Creatures, or the people who had pushed back against her desire to allocate more precious resources to the waking world.

It was not like she did not understand the inevitable future. The waking world... their world... was not ending yet, but its trajectory was already clear. There were already more Nightmare Gates opening each year than ever before, and the median Category of those Gates was slowly climbing toward a complete disaster.

Most importantly, the Sovereigns were in the Dream Realm. Not only because they chose to be there, but also because it was hard for them to enter the waking world... as if their very existence was denied by it. So, even if a new Supreme was born in the future, they wouldn't be able to remain here continuously and protect the cradle of humanity. Therefore, a single Category Five Gate would spell doom to all who remained.

Which... wasn't that bad, actually. Jet wasn't a reactionary hellbent on remaining on Earth simply because that was where she had been born. In fact, she understood better than most that adaptability was humanity's greatest weapon.

Why wouldn't they resettle into a new world if their own was dying?

In fact... for every city that had been destroyed in the waking world, several were founded in the Dream Realm. The government would have to relocate their efforts there, as well.

It was just that, in her opinion, even the best of her colleagues were panicking. The trauma delivered by the Chain of Nightmare was too great, even if few people acknowledged it. And since they were panicking, they were rushing too much.

So, she was forced to clean up their messes.

Because of the rush, the government forces were too late to prevent this city's destruction.

'How ironic…’

Sometimes, she regretted that there wasn't anyone else among the people wielding power who had come from the outskirts. If there had been just one person who shared her mindset...

Ah, but wasn't it a pipe dream, for someone from the outskirts to survive the gauntlet of the Nightmare Spell? Even she could not claim to have truly survived it.

...Streaking across the sky like a deadly missile, Jet kept her gaze trained on the Great Devil and gritted her teeth.

A split second later, she activated her Transformation Ability. Her flesh turned into a ghostly mist, and a few moments later, there was a spectral wraith in the sky above the dying city.

The wraith form had many advantages in battle...

But it was also quite handy if one had been tossed like a dart by an unreasonably strong giantess, since being a ghost could prevent them from turning into thin film splattered across several kilometers of ragged terrain upon landing.

Not that Jet would. With her special physique, she could strike the ground like a meteor and climb out of the crater in one piece, if a little battered.

Still, a soft landing was better…

This time, sadly, the landing was not going to be particularly soft. She was dropping right on top of a Great Devil, after all.

Effie's aim was Immaculate.

In the last few moments before plummeting to the ground, Jet snarled coldly and turned her scythe into a khopesh.

By now, her Legacy Relic had reaped countless souls. The strongest of them had belonged to a Great Monster, and so, it was equal to a Supreme weapon of the Second Tier.

Of those countless souls, five were currently bound by the Relic, one for each of the five forms it could turn into. Jet could consume them to replenish her essence if her own reserves ran dry. Apart from that, each of the bound souls granted a mystical effect to the corresponding weapon, akin to an enchantment.

The soul dwelling in the black khopesh had belonged to a Corrupted Terror once, and a dreadful one at that. The effect granted by its soul to the sickle sword was that anyone cut by it would fall into a debilitating lethargy, losing the motivation to fight, move... and eventually even breathe.

Of course, powerful enemies could resist the insidious lethargy, somewhat, but would still be weakened a little with each strike.

As such, the khopesh was the most suitable of the mist blade's forms when dealing with an overwhelmingly powerful enemy.

And that was what Jet was dealing with now.

A Great Devil...

At that moment, a soft voice resounded in her ears:

[He is the Great Devil, Heart of Kanakht.]

[The remnant of a cursed king.]

[His power is to command the souls of the dead. He also wields the power of curses, and is a wraith himself. His body is made of sand and is all but immune to physical damage.]

[Worst of all... his soul can't be destroyed until all the souls he commands are scattered. And they are legion. I am... sorry, Jet. It's a bad match.]

Jet grinned.

[...Thank you.]

'How fitting'

The Great Devil she was about to face was also of the undead tribe. A fellow wraith.

His powers did not exactly counter her own, but rather rendered them futile. It was, indeed, a bad match.

Or maybe the best, considering that few people except her had even a tiny chance of destroying him.

In any case, her determination to slay the abominations only grew stronger.

Because as much as the Heart of Kanakht was a bad match for her Aspect, he was a perfect match for her Legacy Relic. Absorbing his soul would not only elevate its overall power by two Tiers, but also grant one of the mist blade's forms a powerful effect that had a good chance of having synergy with her Aspect.

Now, then...

All that remained was to actually kill this Great Devil.

Or at least survive long enough for Effie and Kai to arrive.

Jet slowed down her descent and glided gracefully to the shattered ground. Her ghostly khopesh pointed forward...

There, in front of her, a towering figure was slowly walking through the burning ruins, surrounded by a haze of screaming souls.