1724 Nightsinger

"Press forward!"

"They are flanking us!"

"Second company, fall back!"

"We need an Ascended here!"

Across the wide stretch of burning ruins, the Western Quadrant army was fighting against the disorganized horde of Nightmare Creatures. The tide of abominations continuously crashed into the phalanx of the Awakened warriors, quenching the flames that burned all around them with their fetid blood.

The mundane soldiers followed behind, supporting the Awakened and sweating inside their powered armor suits. The heavy artillery had remained in the riverbed, waiting for precise targeting data they didn't dare to fire after the initial salvos, afraid to implicate the civilians who might have still been alive somewhere out there, among the smoke-filled streets.

However, the MWPs still pushed forward. The influence of the Nightmare Gates was messing with their electronics, but after the rich experience of dealing with it in Antarctica, the scientists of humanity had made leaps in shielding technology. So, the lumbering war machines could fully exert their overwhelming firepower, for now.

It was a heroic sight... but usually, even such a large expedition force would have been Ill-prepared to face the vast horde of Nightmare Creatures, especially in the hellish conditions of urban warfare.

Nevertheless, today, the soldiers of the Western Quadrant were vallantly pushing into the depths of the city and eradicating the Nightmare Creatures at a startling pace.

There were two reasons for that.

One reason was the shining silhouette of Saint Athena, who towered above the burning city in the distance.

The sight of her not only lifted the spirits of the soldiers, but also imbued their bodies with ferocious power. Awakened were affected more, but even the mundane fighters showcased inhuman strength, speed, and endurance. What would not have been possible on any other day was possible today.

The other reason...

"FALL!"

A deep, thunderous, chilling voice rolled across the burning ruins, crashing into the horde of abominations like a tidal wave, Countless Nightmare Creatures staggered and toppled to the ground, others pressed forward despite its domineering power - however, their movements were drowsy and weak, as if they were struggling against an overwhelming compulsion.

That was the moment when the soldiers of the Western Quadrant army advanced, cutting into the mass of dazed Nightmare Creatures like a sharp knife.

The human warriors were strengthened by the War Beast, while their enemy was weakened by the Nightsinger.

Together, the powers of the two Saints reigned on the battlefield.

Kai folded his wings and plummeted down. His great maw opened, and an eerie, melodious, otherworldly sound escaped from it, akin to a haunting song.

That song made all the other sounds of the ruined city - the roaring of flames, the groans of crumbling buildings, the clangor of steel, the howls of monstrous creatures, the thunderous drums of the cannonade - dissolve into background noise.

A moment later, the song crashed into a swarm of Nightmare Creatures led by a hulking behemoth, causing their bodies to explode into gruesome fountains of crimson liquid. It was as if they were torn apart by an invisible blast.

A Transcendent sonic attack was an insidious thing.

Rushing along the stretched battle line with tremendous speed, Kai flew through the expanding cloud of crimson haze and wasted a split second to observe the ruins.

His vision spread far and wide, piercing through soil, concrete, and alloy. There was nowhere it couldn't reach, and instantly, the whole city was perceived by him.

What he saw... was gruesome and sickening.

Countless human corpses. Countless people dying as he watched. Frightened civilians hiding in their homes or underground shelters, fear and sorrow written on their faces. Ashes, flames, and loss on a scale that the human mind could not comprehend.

And, of course, the Nightmare Creatures.

The Wolf Army was pushing abominations back in the heart of the city. Effie was moving to intercept the approaching Titans. Jet had just reached the sinister figure of the Great Devil.

And, closest of all, the Corrupted Tyrant barreling in the direction of the Western Quadrant soldiers.

'I need to kill it quick'

The Wolves were holding up well, but that was temporary. If the reinforcements did not arrive on time, the casualties would start to mount. Worse still, Effie would have to fight against two Titans alone, and Jet would have to face the Great Devil alone.

The more time he wasted, the more people would die.

Just at that moment, like a lifeline, Cassie's calming voice resounded in his mind, whispering the secrets of his enemy.

Kai spread his wings and rushed forward.

As he flew above the carnage, his song shattered the most threatening of the abominations advancing on the Awakened phalanx, while his words made the rest stagger and lose strength.

"DESPAIR!"

"FEAR!"

"KNEEL!"

His essence was evaporating like morning dew.

There were countless winged Nightmare Creatures clamoring to rip into his flesh, as well. He tore them apart with his talons, shredded their flesh with his fangs, and broke their bones with his tail.

Leaving the Western Quadrant army behind, Kai remained alone above a sea of abominations. A hail of attacks enveloped him, coming both from the ground and from the air. He shrugged them off, evaded some of the abominations, and killed others.

And all that time...

He could see scattered survivors looking at the sky all across the city.

Some of them were numb and terrified, thinking that the midnight dragon was another dreadful abomination, Some seemed to recognize him, looking up with desperate hope.

The expressions of the latter hurt him more. Because he knew that, for many of them... maybe most of them... there would be no salvation.

Because in this world, weakness was a sin, and they were sinners. Kai was no stranger to that sin, either.

True, the days when he considered himself weak and unworthy to be in the company of his friends were long gone. After years of leading soldiers and surviving the most terrible hells, Kai wasn't shameless enough to proclaim that he lacked strength. No, he was strong...

But his strength was still lacking.

If he was stronger, more people would survive, and his friends would return from the battle with fewer scars.

Sadly, he was already close to the pinnacle of what a human could achieve. It was so strange... who could have thought that someone like him, a gentle and shy kid overly interested in music and fashion, would end up this way?

Still... there were ways to gain greater strength.

Opening his maw, Kai spoke:

"Be stronger!"

This time, he was speaking to himself.

"Be faster!"

His mighty, winged body was suddenly overcome by a surge of energy.

"Be sharper!"

A moment later, he sent a destructive sonic wave spreading outward in a wide cone.

Countless Nightmare Creatures were swept away by the invisible power of his song. A vast cloud of dust and debris instantly flew into the sky, which was suddenly void of suffocating smoke.

In the middle of the devastated cone, the Corrupted Tyrant staggered as the sound blast crashed into it. The dreadful abomination was not killed, of course, or even seriously wounded.

But that was not what Kai had wanted.

All he had wanted was to distract the enemy for a moment.

Knowing that his commands would not have a strong and immediate effect on an enemy of that Class and Rank, he simply rushed to the ground and opened his maw.

In the next second, his sharp fangs bit into the Tyrant's neck.