1743 A Small Group of Commited Citizens

Sunny was surprised to see Jet here. She was one of the executive leaders of the government now, after all. Someone like her was not supposed to visit members of a Great Clan unannounced...

Not that he wasn't happy to see her.

Jet was exactly like she had been before. Her ivory skin, raven-black hair, and icy blue eyes made for a striking sight. Despite the fact that she had risen much higher in the government hierarchy by now, her uniform was pretty much the same - it was just that there were four stars on the insignia instead of three.

If anything had changed, it was that she seemed even more sleep-deprived than usual. If that was even possible.

Sunny found himself staring at her without meaning to... but for a very different reason than he had during their first meeting.

It was just good to see her, after all that time...

Jet stared back at him.

"You must be the Lord of Shadows."

He nodded and answered evenly:

"You must be Soul Reaper Jet."

She studied him for a moment, then raised an eyebrow.

"What's up with the Halloween costume?"

‘Huh.’

Sunny tilted his head, contemplated her question, and asked seriously:

"What is Halloween?"

Jet blinked a couple of times. Eventually, she waved a hand at him.

"Never mind. I've heard a lot about you, Shadow. It's nice to finally put a face to the name. Well... sort of."

'So, no one is going to explain to me who this Halloween is? Rude.’

Sunny frowned behind the mask.

"Only the good things, I hope."

Jet grinned.

"Well. They say that you rule a Death Zone, eat Cursed Nightmare Creatures for breakfast, wrestle Titans for fun, and can turn into all kinds of terrible monsters on a full moon."

He stared at her somberly.

"That is preposterous."

She nodded and wanted to respond, but before she could, Sunny added in an even tone:

"I can turn into all kinds of terrible monsters any time I want. What does the moon have to do with it?”

Jet seemed to forget what she was supposed to say.

Standing beside her, Kal suddenly choked on thin air.

Sunny smiled silently.

Looking at Nephis, he asked:

"Lady Nephis, you mentioned that you would be honest with me. I wonder what you were about to say."

She lingered for a moment, but it was Jet who answered instead:

"Officially, I am here to placate Nephis on behalf of the government. To tell you the truth, this assassination attempt saved me a lot of trouble otherwise, I would have had to come secretly. Actually, I am here to meet you, Shadow."

Sunny studied the two of them, having a few guesses about what was about to happen.

Nephis nodded.

"We are waiting for a couple more people, as well."

Almost as soon as she said it, Sunny became aware that someone else was in the room. He shifted his gaze, noticing that Cassie had appeared at some point, standing quietly beside a wall.

The darkness nestling in the eyes of his mask seemed to grow even more impenetrable.

"Song of the Fallen"

She bowed lightly.

"Lord Shadow."

It wasn't that strange that he had not sensed her approach - Sunny could still feel the underlying fabric of existence rippling around them subtly, somewhat akin to the shockwave of an opening Nightmare Gate. It was a strange sensation that only Saints could feel, denouncing that someone had crossed over from another realm nearby.

Cassie must have arrived directly from Bastion.

But then, Sunny sensed something else... A terrible premonition!

In the next moment, there was the sound of energetic footsteps, and Effie entered the room gingerly.

She looked around, and her gaze settled on Sunny.

He tensed immediately.

'Gods. What is that woman going to say now?!'

Effie stared at him for a few moments, then smiled.

"Hey."

With that, she turned to Nephis:

"Way inferior to Master Sunless. I bet he can't even cook. Stay strong, Princess!"

Nephis closed her eyes.

Sunny, meanwhile, opened them wide.

'What the hell do you mean, way inferior?! How can I be inferior to that lazy bastard?! I mean… we're the same person!’

Cassie had a very strange expression on her face. Nephis exhaled slowly, remained motionless for a moment, and opened her eyes again.

"Lord Shadow. Meet Saint Athena, Raised by Wolves."

Sunny stared at Effie, lamenting the fact that looks could not kill.

Or rather, his looks could not. There had to be an Awakened out there somewhere with such Aspect, and definitely more than a few Nightmare Creatures.

He said emotionlessly:

"...She's loud."

Effie gave him a dirty look and grinned.

"Wanna arm-wrestle? If you win, I'll shut up."

Scowling behind the mask, Sunny tilted his head and stared at her some more. He was tempted, but did not wish to destroy the table.

"I don't."

She laughed.

"Good choice!"

With that, she finally sat down.

Now, there were six of them, sitting around a table. Which, coincidentally, was round,

Changing Star of the Immortal Flame clan, Saint Cassia, Song of the Fallen, Nightsinger Kai, the Dragonislayer. Saint Athena, Raised by Wolves... the War Beast. Soul Reaper Jet.

And a mysterious Transcendent known as the Lord of Shadows.

The five Saints looked at him, while Sunny stared back at them silently.

‘...The cohort is all here.’

He secretly looked around.

The room where they had gathered was not exactly opulent... but someone told him that history was going to be made here today.

He could practically sense it in the air. The omen of ruinous change.

Sunny sighed and said evenly:

"It seems that I've found myself in illustrious company."

Nephis remained silent for a while, then sighed.

"I told you that the nature of our partnership would depend on your answers, Lord Shadow. Your answers were satisfactory, so... I've decided to trust you. Enough so, at least, to bring you into the inner circle. These people are my closest confidants."

She paused, then added after some deliberation:

"Usually, I would not have been so quick to trust someone, But time is not on our side, and my instincts tell me that you deserve it. I've asked Saint Kai to help me confirm this feeling... I hope you won't take offense. Saint Cassia advised me to take this step, as well."

Sunny remained silent for a moment, then said in an aloof tone:

"What a strange group. Two renowned Transcendent warriors of the Sword Domain. Three exalted champions of the government. And me... a stray that has no master. Why, exactly, are the six of us gathered here together?"

Nephis looked at each of the gathered people slowly.

Then, she shrugged and answered in her usual even tone:

"Because the six of us are going to destroy the Sovereigns.”