1782 Heirs of War

Even Rain was stunned to hear that

It was news to her that someone had tried to kill Lady Nephis. Was there really such an idiot in the world? That woman had survived the Forgotten Shore, conquered the Second Nightmare as a Sleeper, Transcendent during the Chain of Nightmares, fought against Great abominations side by side with the King of Swords, and triumphed in countless terrible battles as a Saint.

There were literally only two people in two worlds who were harder to kill than her.

But the fact that Clan Valor was trying to openly accuse Clan Song of the assassination attempt was even crazier. Not only that, but they were asking the Queen to surrender one of her daughters and a Master from a vassal clan. There was no way that she would agree... what were the rulers of the

Sword Domain thinking?

The whole situation seemed... incongruous. Rain had a feeling that she was dreaming, since reality simply couldn't be like that. It was just too irrational.

Then, a spark of anger ignited in her heart.

'Just which bastard tried to harm Lady Nephis? And who do these Valor people think they are, accusing the Song Domain of something that terrible?’

However, that spark of anger was quickly extinguished. She knew how rumors and propaganda worked, so she wouldn't allow her feelings to be manipulated that easily without knowing all the facts.

There was an unpleasant residue left in its wake, though. Rain was quite fond of Ravenheart and the people she knew there. Even though she was a little distant from most because of her government family and the secret she was keeping, they were still her friends and neighbours. She felt like a part of a wonderful community... it didn't feel nice to see that community being falsely accused of something appalling and dirty.

The rest of the laborers were even less composed. Their gazes grew darker.

"Those Valor bastards have lost their minds. How dare they try to take Lady Silent Stalker?"

"They've been trying to suppress our Song Domain from the very start. Do they think that we'll just roll over?"

"Gods, I never took those rumors seriously, but what if they had really been taken over by the Skinwalker?"

"Maybe Changing Star staged the whole thing herself..."

"No way! Lady Nephis would never participate in such a vile scheme!"

"But.., but what if Skinwalker took her, too…”

"Silencel"

That last shout did not come from the laborers.

Turning slightly, Rain saw young Lady Tamar standing a few meters away, looking at them with a grim expression. Her eyes were so dark that it was a little scary.

The healer, Fleur, was standing behind her, trying to pull her away.

"Tamar, calm down... they didn't mean it."

But the Legacy simply ignored her attempts to discharge the situation and took a step forward.

Coming closer to their fire, Tamar studied them with a heavy look. Her gaze lingered for a moment on the empty bottle of alcohol, and then, she shook her head.

"Do you think that you can just run your mouths freely?"

Her tone was harsh.

"You are people of the Song Domain. Everything you say reflects on the dignity of the Queen. Is it fun to slander people who selflessly fight for the safety and prosperity of humanity? Who gave you the right to throw baseless accusations?"

Pill, who had caused the entire outburst, coughed awkwardly.

"We... we are sorry, my lady, But the Sword Domain, they really went too far! It's not just us who feel that way. Everyone in Ravenheart is… well, people are offended."

Tamar stared at him silently for a moment, then scowled.

"You can have an opinion about Clan Valor, However... Lady Changing Star would have never done something like that. She is not a vessel of Skinwalker, elther! So don't go around saying dirty things about her. Understand?"

The laborers seemed to shrink under her scathing gaze.

"Y-yes, my lady... we were wrong."

Fleur finally managed to drag Tamar away, and they relaxed a little.

After a bit of silence, one of them said:

"Still. Lady Changing Star is indeed righteous and honorable. But, hell... she might very well be the only decent person in the Sword Domain..."

"Yeah. Those people... damn, are they even people? I bet they were the ones who tried to kill her, to begin with."

"How terrible..."

Rain frowned and concentrating on roasting the meat,

Some time later, she crawled into her tent and lay silently in the darkness for a while, mustering mental strength to continue forming the soul core.

After a while, she asked quietly:

"Teacher,.,, do you think Lady Nephis is alright?”

A subdued chuckle came from the darkness.

"Is she alright? You bet. Why, I just saw her recently... we went for a picnic, watched a play, and shared tender moments at sunset..."

Rain scoffed. She had no energy to react to his nonsense, though.

Eventually, she said:

"I... don't like where this is going. It has always been a bit strange how eagerly people villainized the Sword Domain. But, how can I put it? Now, it doesn't seem like simple talk. It's like they all forget that both Domains are made of people, not just one."

Her teacher remained silent for a while.

Rain thought that he wasn't going to answer, but then the darkness asked suddenly:

"Where do you think this road is going?"

She was confused.

'Huh?’

"...East?"

He sighed.

"And what is east of here?"

Rain frowned.

Nothing. There was nothing east of here, only the Death Zones,

But, beyond them…

Her eyes widened a little.

"The Sword Domain?"

Her teacher spoke in a light tone, his voice barely audible in the small tent.

"That's right. You've been admiring the road construction, haven't you? Going on and on about roads, infrastructure, civilization, and so on. 1 agree, actually, it's kind of neat. The funny thing is, the technology Clan Song is using to build roads is based on how people in the waking world used to do it a long time ago, before the Dark Times."

Rain raised an eyebrow.

"Really? I didn't know."

Well, it made sense. A lot of modern technology did not work in the Dream Realm. So, the actual ways things were built here was a strange mixture of adapted modern engineering, Awakened powers, and dated methods from the ancient times.

It was a bit like reverse spelltech.

Her teacher sighed.

"Yeah. There was an empire once that excelled in building roads. But, Rain... the main reason they built such excellent roads was not for trade, transportation of goods, or development of civilization,"

His voice grew a little wistful:

"They built them to speed up the deployment of troops. Because soldiers could march faster on paved roads than they would on dirt roads, or across wilderness. The main engine of progress, technology, and craft has always been war

Rain lay in the darkness, suddenly feeling cold.

"Are... are you trying to say... that there will be a war? Between Song and Valor?"

Her teacher lingered with an answer.

However, in the end, she heard exactly what she was afraid to hear:

"The war between Song and Valor has already begun. Back in Antarctica, during the Chain of Nightmares. It's just that now... now, it is going to start in earnest. That is why Ki Song is in such a hurry to finish the Eastern Road."

He chuckled.

"...Why, it's quite fitting, if you think about it. We come from the realm of War, after all. So, now that we are leaving that realm behind, the first thing we do in a new world is wage a war. To see who is fit to sit on its throne."

Rain did not answer, stunned by what he had said. The revelation was too vast and too dire to comprehend. A storm of fragmented thoughts raged in her mind, but none came to its surface.

Then, the darkness spoke in a soft voice:

"What are you doing? Come one, start circulating your essence, The sooner you start, the sooner you'll be able to get some rest. And you really need to rest."

Rain flinched, then turned on her back and stared at the roof of the tent.

“...Is that why you've been hurrying me? So that 1 Awakened before the war starts?"

Her teacher answered quietly:

"Yes. You have to Awaken soon. Otherwise, it will be hard for me to protect you."

He remained silent for a few moments, and then added smugly:

"But if you don't, that's not a problem either. Your teacher is awesome enough to protect you anyway... hard is hard, not impossible."

Rain knew that he had a habit of inventing outrageous lies. So, taking his claims seriously was probably unwise...

And yet, for some reason, his boastful words calmed her, dousing the anxious flames that burned in her heart.

Letting out a sigh, she closed her eyes and concentrated on controlling essence.