1793 Soft Hand

Nephis had judged that the only way to defeat the Sovereigns was to become Supreme.

However, Sunny had held a different opinion. He had been fully prepared to face them as a Saint- just as he had faced countless adversaries of a higher Rank than him in the past. People like him were forged by bringing down creatures more powerful than them, so in principle, there wasn't much difference.

All he had to do was study the enemy, ensnare them in a net of deceit and treachery, and then put his life on the line. Wait for them to break themselves against each other, and then deliver a fatal strike to finish off the battered foes.

That was why he had made the Nameless Temple into a trap, and sent Nightmare to assemble a swarm of slumbering horrors.

The Dream Curse... was a frightening power. It spread unseen, infecting those unfortunate enough to contract it one after another. Its influence was subtle and insidious, and by the time the curse was ready to pull its victim into the maze of nightmares, it was already too late to resist it.

Of course, the Great Nightmare Creatures slumbering under the temple still tried. They struck against the walls of the dream prison, just like Sunny had done in the Kingdom of Hope - the nightmares subjugated by his Shadow were continuously destroyed, breaking apart under the onslaught.

However, at the same time, Nightmare conquered more of them... the new dreams he collected belonged to abominations of vast and terrifying power, and so, the walls of the dream maze grew stronger and stronger. As did the dark destrier himself.

Still, it was a daunting task for Nightmare to lull a Cursed being to sleep.

Sunny's steed had been at it for many months already. The Nightmare Creatures populating the area of the Hollows around the Cursed One's lair had succumbed to slumber one after the other. Then, the fallen deity itself was slowly infected, one drop of insidious poison at a time.

The Cursed One had resisted for a long time, but eventually, the Dream Curse seeped into its mind, body, and soul. At first, it would grow sluggish sometimes, then it would doze off for a minute or two before recovering. Finally, it fell asleep.

Its slumber was still restless and shallow, but Sunny was certain that he would be able to pull it Into the underground hall of the Nameless Temple before the Sovereigns came.

Of course... his preparations were flawed, as well.

He had started on this plan not long after returning to civilization, still disoriented by the changes that had happened in his absence and badly informed.

Sunny sighed.

It was not that Nephis was incapable of constructing a plan to clash with the Sovereigns as a Saint. She was experienced in slaying overwhelming foes, as well. It was just that it was not an option for her - because after the Chain of Nightmares, the two Domains were holding the equivalent of an entire Quadrant's population hostage.

If the Sovereigns were eliminated without a new Supreme taking their place, the Dream Realm would drown in human blood. And Nephis had made it clear in the Crimson Spire that she did not only care about reaching her goal, but also about reaching it the way she wanted.

So... as Sunny saw it, both of their plans had to succeed if they wanted to achieve an acceptable outcome.

'What are the chances that nothing will go wrong?’

There were many unpredictable factors. Mordret was a wild card... so were the Sovereigns themselves. There was also the third Supreme, Asterion, who was mysteriously missing.

But they had no choice but to try.

He looked at Cassie.

"That is the gist of it. I think that we stand a chance, if things go right for us. If things go wrong - which they will, I'm sure - then, well, I guess we'll have to improvise.”

She remained silent for a while, still stunned by the brazen audacity of his simple, but simply unbelievable plan.

Who would place a Citadel in the middle of a Death Zone, fill it with sleeping Great Nightmare Creatures, kidnap a Cursed One, and then bait the Sovereigns Into causing the swarm of horrors to wake up?

A thing like that was nothing short of unthinkable, and yet, the Lord of Shadows had not only thought it, but also made it true.

She shook her head slowly.

"Improvisation... yes..."

Then, Cassie took a deep breath and composed herself.

"The key to good improvisation is being prepared." Sunny smiled.

"I expected you to have a contingency."

Cassie was someone who had mastered the art of guiding events in a desired direction with a soft hand. A rigid plan was destined to fail, but if one was flexible enough, no unpredictable event could become an insurmountable obstacle. The success of the astonishing web of schemes she had woven to give him a chance to be free was proof that her approach worked.

So, she would have had something in mind for the Inevitable clash with the Sovereigns.

The young woman sighed.

"It is nothing revolutionary. You should know well as an experienced hunter.. one should study the enemy before confronting them. The Sovereigns are shrouded in mystery. But if we want to strike them down, we need to know them... their upbringing, the environment in which they were formed into people they are, their youth. How the Broken Sword's cohort was formed, how it rose to glory. How it fell apart. All of that, and more."

A somber expression appeared on her face.

"Needless to say, most of that information is either erased or twisted to such a degree that learning anything truthful from it is impossible. I've been... trying to uncover as much as I can. But it hasn't been easy, and most of all, I've been very cautious, afraid to attract attention. The King of Sword still doesn't trust Nephis that much, after all. Being discovered would mean certain death."

She remained silent for a few moments, then added:

"But that is about to change. Once the war starts, everything would be thrown into chaos. That is when we'll be able to act more boldly. With my ability to read memories and perceive many things, and your versatile arsenal of stealth and infiltration #abilities... if the two of us put our minds together, I'm sure that we can uncover a great number of secrets under the cover of the mayhem."

Cassie took a deep breath.

"Including the most important one!"

Sunny gave her a long look.

"What do you think is the most important secret?"

Cassie hesitated for a while, then faced him and said quietly:

"...You are right. Our battle plan is too vague. But there is something that can make the odds much more favorable a piece of information that is as important as it is tightly sealed. At the end of it all... I suspect that the success of our entire endeavor will be decided by whether we manage to solve that mystery or not."

Her beautiful eyes grew cold.

"The single most important thing we must learn... are the Flaws of the Sovereigns. If we grasp their Flaws, victory will be ours. If not, all that awaits us are the flames of hell."

Sunny looked at her silently for a while.

Eventually, he said:

"You want to steal the secret of their Flaws?"

Cassie lingered for a bit, then smiled.

"Yes, And I want you to help me steal it, Sunny.”