1841 Evil Minds That Plot Destruction

Sunny was standing on the edge of the Ivory Island, looking at the sky above. The Marvelous Mimic was behind him, still pretending to be a quaint brick cottage — the cottage stood between the grove and the lake, on the empty stretch of emerald grass to the side of the great pagoda.

The area was quite peaceful, and the view from his window was usually no less spectacular than it had been in Bastion.

…Of course, that peacefulness was deceiving.

The Ivory Island was high in the air. Far below it, the arm of the dead god lay heavily on the ashen ground. A long bridge was connecting the humerus and the radius, which had broken off eons ago... the bridge had been recently built, and currently, a vast column of warriors was marching across it, ready to enter Godgrave. A sea of vermilion banners fluttered above like blood.

The sight of the great army of the Sword Domain was quite daunting.

There were hundreds of thousands of Awakened, numerous Masters, and dozens of exalted Saints. Such a force had never been gathered in the history of humankind — or of the waking world, at least. There were countless mundane humans too, following the warriors in the vast train of the army.

Funnily enough, this great force had not been assembled to fight against Nightmare Creatures or other horrors of the Dream Realm. It had been assembled to wage war against a similar human army that was currently somewhere far away, on the other side of the titanic skeleton, scaling its right arm.

In any case, Sunny was not looking down, on the Sword Army. Instead, he was looking at the sky.

The sky had been blue and clear not too long ago, but now, it was being slowly devoured by grey clouds. They were finally crossing the realm boundary — soon, an annihilating white radiance would suffuse the incandescent heavens and spell fiery doom for anyone caught directly in its light.

He sighed.

It did not feel safe at all, to be invading Godgrave atop a flying island. No matter how powerful its enchantments were, the Ivory Island was enormous and immensely heavy — due to inertia, it would not be able to stop instantly should the veil of clouds break. Which meant that all of them would become ash.

'What a way to start a war.'

Technically, the war had already begun. The official declaration had happened soon after the Ivory Island left Bastion, almost a month ago. Back then, Nephis and Cassie had been summoned to the waking world... Sunny had been invited, as well, albeit as the Lord of Shadows, not the Memory Purveyor of the Fire Keepers.

There was a historic meeting in the stronghold of Clan Valor in NQSC. All the Saints of the Sword Domain were present, as well as the heads of those vassal clans that did not possess a Transcendent member at the moment.

What made it historic, though, was not the illustrious company. It was the fact that the King of Swords himself attended.

Sunny was quite shocked when the doors opened and a heavy presence suddenly settled in the opulent hall, forcing even the most powerful Saints to grow stiff and quiet. Of course, his face was hidden behind Weaver's Mask, so no one was the wiser.

They were seated around a vast round table — which, it seemed, had been carved from the trunk of a single enormous tree. The table held some significance, without a doubt... perhaps it was that tree in particular that had been the source of the abominable forest slain by Anvil of Valor in the past.

In any case, there was an empty seat next to Morgan. Sunny guessed that, maybe, it had been left empty in honor of Saint Madoc, her uncle — but he was proven wrong.

As the vast presence enveloped the hall, there was the sound of heavy steps, and a tall man in dark armor entered, a vermilion cloak draped around his shoulders.

The man was naturally imposing in a way that made others cower. He was tall, with broad shoulders and a mighty build. His eyes were grey and cold like tempered steel, their gaze oppressive enough to make one shudder. His hair was black, and a full beard obscured the lower part of his austere face.

Despite that, it was impossible to miss how noble and distinguished it was.

The man was supposed to be close to fifty, but did not look a day older than thirty.

However, the most striking thing about him was not his height, his build, and his cold grey eyes. It was not even the oppressive force of his unfathomable, boundless presence.

It was something invisible and intangible. An otherworldly quality that forced one to look at him, pay attention to him... and want to kneel in front of him.

This was Anvil, the King of Swords.

Sunny had only seen him once before, from afar. He was still unsure what barriers there were that prevented the Sovereigns from visiting the waking world often, and what was the cost of breaking them. All he knew was that, today, the king had decided to descend into the mortal world.

The rest of the meeting was like a blur.

Anvil did not waste a lot of time, speaking in a calm and concise manner — as if the very concept of wasting words was offensive to him. It did not seem like he was trying to explain something to the gathered powerhouses or wished to persuade them... instead, he was simply stating his will.

His message was clear. The rulers of the Song Domain had conspired to kill his daughter, and therefore, to harm the Sword Domain. Therefore, he would assemble an army to march on Ravenheart and tear down Ki Song‘s throne.

And those present, as his vassals, would become that army.

Sunny was so caught up in the solemn atmosphere and the irresistible authority hiding in Anvil's deep voice that he almost missed how ironic the whole thing was.

After all, the representative of the Han Li clan was also at the table. That was the clan from which Caster, who had been sent to the Forgotten Shore to kill Nephis, hailed from. The orders to eliminate her in the Dream Realm had most likely come from the King of Swords.

But now, the very same king was proclaiming war on the pretense of punishing someone else for trying to assassinate her.

Sunny glanced at Nephis, wondering if she would show any reaction.

And, indeed, she did.

While everyone remained silent, either in agreement with the king or too wary of his power to raise a futile objection, she was the only one who spoke.

Nephis advocated against the war.

Her voice was even, and her expression was poised. She calmly listed all the reasons why a war would be disastrous for both Domains and asked her adopted father to reconsider.

Morgan seemed amused by the whole sequence of events, while the rest of those gathered in the hall kept their faces neutral.

In the end, Neph's words were meaningless. Anvil dismissed her objection with one glance and a few cold sentences.

Everyone here knew that there was no point in trying to defy the Sovereign's will. Nephis, of course, knew it best of all.

The reason she had spoken out was not a sincere hope that the war could be avoided. Instead, it was important to do so for an entirely different reason — there had to be a record of her objecting to Anvil's decision.

There had to be rumors that Changing Star of the Immortal Flame clan had been against the bloodshed, the waste of human life, and the ghastly ugliness of the civil war between humans from the very start. Even if it was all to avenge her against those who had conspired to kill her.

Those rumors were needed to pave a way for her to slay both her adopted father and Ki Song, and then usurp their thrones without being branded as a tyrant. When the time came, She had to be welcomed as a savior instead.

Sunny smiled behind his mask.

'What a treacherous world we live in…’

Not long after that, the Sword Domain declared war on the Song Domain.

The news were broadcasted in the waking world, as well as announced by heralds in the cities of the Dream Realm.

Both worlds seemed to explode.

Sunny was far away from civilization and too busy to observe the immediate reaction of the people, but it must have been intense. In an instant, the very foundation of the world was shaken. The government tried to handle the situation, somehow, but it was powerless against the influence of the Great Clans.

People in the waking world were terrified and paralyzed by shock. So were many in the Dream Realm.

There were plenty of those who welcomed the news, though, having been prepared by meticulous propaganda to feel exactly that way. On both sides, many were burning with militant zeal, and thirsting to punish the enemy.

And so, two great armies were gathered and marched to war.

It did not happen in a day, but it also did not take a lot of time. The preparations of the two Sovereigns had been extensive.

…Today, finally, the Sword Army was ready to enter Godgrave.