1858 Precipice

Princess Hel had not spoken after whispering something in Lightslayer's ear. She took her seat and remained silent, the blood continuing to drip from her hands to the floor.

The war council continued for a while, since there were a lot of minor issues that had to be relayed, considered, and ironed out. Rain listened with rapt attention, knowing that what was being discussed in the command pavilion would directly impact, and maybe even decide, her fate.

And, in a way, it did.

It really seemed like the Sword Army was on a sure path to overwhelming the forces of Song — the aggressor that had initiated this vile conflict was far ahead, and widening the gap with each day. Which hardly seemed fair.

However, the queen's daughters were strangely calm about the entire situation. Instead of maintaining caution and employing a conservative strategy, like one would when dealing with a superior enemy, they chose to act with an unsettling boldness.

Eventually, the meeting was over, and everyone who had gathered in the command pavilion hurried outside. There was a lot for them to do.

Dar of the Maharana clan left with a dark smile on his lips. The Saint of Sorrow spared his daughter a glance, nodded curtly, and walked outside with the same bleak expression. The daughters of Ki Song soon followed.

However, Lady Seishan remained motionless. So did Beastmaster and Lightslayer.

Eventually, the three sisters were the only ones left in the command pavilion — not counting Rain, Tamar, and the wraiths hovering behind Beastmaster.

It seemed like they wanted to discuss something in private.

Tamar cleared her throat.

"Should we give you privacy, Lady Seishan?"

Their commander looked back and smiled.

"No need, young Tamar. Just make sure to stay quiet."

She didn't specify whether they were meant to stay quiet during the following discussion or about it. In any case, Rain wasn't going to talk.

She had already been forced to flee Ravenheart because of knowing too much.

Lightslayer looked at Tamar, then reached back and pulled up the hood of her dark mantle. A moment later, her eyes were hidden in deep shadow, and a small sigh escaped from her lips.

"Will you two be able to handle what needs to be done?"

The three sisters would soon be in command of the split army.

Beastmaster would remain in the warcamp with a part of Song forces. Her task was to finish the construction of the fortress while defending it from the onslaught of Nightmare Creatures.

Saint Seishan, meanwhile, would lead an expedition force toward the location where one of the Citadels of Godgrave was supposedly located. Death Singer, the diviner, would lead them across the surface of the ancient bone until they reached a broad area above their target.

From there, the elites of the expedition force would venture into the Hollows and conquer the Citadel. The task seemed absolutely lethal, and victory was not certain. However, Lady Seishan remained calm and poised, not showing even the smallest hint of hesitation.

It was as if there was no question whether she would take the Citadel, only how soon, and at what cost.

If she did prevail, however… Queen Song would be able to manifest her Domain in Godgrave, and their position would not seem so hopeless anymore.

The last sister, Lightslayer, would neither remain in the camp nor join the expedition force. Instead, she would attempt to do… something.

Rain wasn't quite sure what, because the details had not been shared with anyone. All that the Dark Dancer had said was that she would venture to slow down the enemy's progress. She was not going to command any troops, but she would take a few Saints with her.

As Rain was wondering what, exactly, Lightslayer was planning to do, Saint Seishan answered her question:

"It's alright, Revel. We'll be fine. You don't have to worry."

The raven-haired beauty looked at her and smiled darkly.

"When have I ever worried? Ask anyone. In the ten years that you were missing, I haven't worried once."

Beastmaster laughed.

"How callous."

Lady Seishan shook her head.

"If you want to be worried about someone, worry about yourself. Out of the three of us, your task is the most uncertain."

Lightslayer looked at her from beneath her hood.

"What's uncertain about it? Howl, Silence, and Moon are coming with. So is the Saint of Sorrow. You know that we are prepared."

Lady Seishan lingered for a moment.

"Everything else is fine, but the Lord of Shadows is an unknown. We don't know much about him. There are no traces… it is as if he conjured himself out of thin air, like a daemon."

Her sister smiled darkly.

"Then he can disappear into thin air as well."

Rain was staring forward, pretending to be a dutiful guard.

There was a lot on her mind, though.

'Appeared out of thin air…'

Wasn't that how her teacher had appeared a few years ago?

She tried not to frown.

She did not know a lot about the Lord of Shadows, but he and her teacher were strangely alike. They both commanded shadows, for one… there were other similarities, too. She was half-convinced that they were the same person, even.

However, her teacher had been by her side every day for the last four years, while the Lord of Shadows had been in Godgrave all that time. Well, at least he had been there for two winter solstices in a row, rescuing stray Sleepers. Her teacher had never left her side, and they had been together on those solstices as well.

So… what?

Was the Lord of Shadows a similar existence to her teacher? A disembodied shadow that possessed great and strange powers, pursuing mysterious goals? Were they, perhaps, comrades? Or at least had come from the same source?

'I should ask Teacher.'

He would probably answer with some ridiculous nonsense, though.

At that moment, Beastmaster shifted, looked at Lady Seishan, and asked somberly:

"What about the other? Has the Prince of Nothing sent any news?"

Lady Seishan lingered for a while, then smiled elegantly.

"Oh, yes."

For some reason, her elegant smile suddenly looked rather sinister.

Her pleasant, velvet voice resounded softly in the empty command pavilion:

"…He is about to start."