1863 Repercussions

Naeve had not finished his tale yet when Anvil finally showed a reaction. Before, he sat motionlessly, looking at the kneeling Saint with a cold and heavy expression. His steely eyes remained calm — Sunny expected the king to display some kind of emotion at the mention of his son, but there was no change.

Now, however, he finally moved. All Anvil did was give Morgan a glance, but she suddenly cursed and dashed out of the room.

For a few moments, the stone chamber was enveloped by silence. Naeve looked at the king tensely, not sure what was going on.

Anvil studied him for a bit before saying evenly:

"That is enough. I understand what happened now."

Sunny was leaning on a wall with his arms crossed. He did not turn his head to look at Cassie, but spoke in his mind:

[There are no mirrors on the Ivory Island, are there?]

Her response came a few moments later.

[There are. However, the entire island is protected against that man with special enchantments. The royals themselves set them up… Valor has been preparing to deal with Mordret for a long time, so they have developed many measures.]

Sunny was somewhat relieved. However, he knew that those measures could not be universal — since the members of the royal clan had to be personally involved, inscribing the warding enchantments had to be an expensive and intricate endeavor.

[Make sure that those Fire Keepers that are in the camp remain on the island, then. Those of them who had been with Nephis in the jungle should not try to come back for now, either.]

His original body was already making sure that Aiko did not leave the Marvelous Mimic.

Sunny knew Mordret too well, so he had a good idea about what would happen next.

And indeed, before too long, they heard a cacophony of screams.

The king did not give any of them permission to leave, and Sunny did not want to expose how vast the reach of his shadow sense was. So, none of them moved.

Only Naeve seemed to flinch.

"Your Majesty, what is…"

However, Anvil silenced him with a heavy gaze.

Finally, there was a hint of emotion in his eyes…

That emotion was cold, smoldering wrath.

"You don't need to be concerned, Saint Naeve. It is just a minor inconvenience."

Sunny was not sure if the inconvenience was really that minor. He commended Naeve for being able to sense Mordret's machinations when no one else had… however, the Nightwalker was too naive to think that his attempts to assemble allies to resist him would have escaped the Prince of Nothing.

There was only one explanation for why Naeve had been allowed to survive.

It was that one of his trusted allies — or a few — were Mordret's vessels. He had used Naeve and other asylum-seekers to carry him across the Dream Gate and bring him to the encampment of the Sword Army.

The extent of damage he would deal depended on how invested Mordret was in wreaking havoc in Godgrave.

Sunny shifted slightly.

'This shouldn't be his main goal.'

And, indeed, the screams grew silent soon.

A minute or two later, the doors opened, and Morgan walked in. Her hands were wet with blood… and she was carrying a severed head in one of them, her expression dark.

Naeve paled.

"W—why…"

Morgan spared him a short glance, then looked at her father.

"It was just one Ascended vessel. That man simply felt mischievous, it seems. The damage was… minimal. The watchers did not fail — it was just that the screening took too long. Those who remain in the waking world are already being checked, as well."

She lingered for a few moments, then added stiffly:

"He did have a lot to say, though."

With that, Morgan dropped the severed head on the floor near Naeve. The Nightwalker gritted his teeth, but did not recoil.

He studied the dead face silently, a hint of pain evident on his own. Then, he bowed his head.

"I apologize, Your Majesty."

'So they have some kind of way to tell which bodies are taken by Mordret. Unsurprising.'

Sunny felt a little apprehensive, because he did not.

Valor must have also possessed a method to if not destroy Mordret, then at least imprison him. The Prince of Nothing was nearly immortal — at the very least, Sunny knew of no way to extinguish his existence except for defeating him in a soul duel, like what Nephis had done to Soul Stealer.

But that boon could very easily become a curse. Those who could not die ran the risk of ending up suffering eternal torment. While beings like Mordret — and Nephis to a lesser extent — could fear death less than most people, they also had a good reason to fear being caught by enemies much more.

Every strength could be exploited to become a weakness.

Sitting on the throne, Anvil sighed and leaned back. He seemed to be contemplating something.

Sunny, meanwhile, was considering the implications of Mordret's entering the board. Which were honestly quite shocking... he had expected some kind of diabolical stunt from the banished prince, but the bastard still managed to exceed his expectations.

The more Sunny thought, the more somber his expression grew.

The impact of the war in Godgrave was already bad enough. The Sword Army would be inevitably weakened, making things harder for him, Nephis, and Cassie. However, it was still a beneficial development overall — they needed Anvil and Ki Song to grind each other down in a prolonged conflict, after all. It wouldn't do for the King of Swords to gain an easy victory early on.

What concerned him much more were the repercussions that Mordret's actions would have for those who were not participating in the war.

The House of Night was… had been instrumental in guiding naval convoys across the ocean, for example. Without the Nightwalkers, the connections between the Quadrants would become much more tenuous. How was the government going to deliver Sleepers to the Awakened Academy next year? How would resources be shared between the continents?

More than that, what was the government going to do now that the demise of the House of Night had demonstrated the kind of fate that awaited those who wished to remain neutral in the war between the two Domains?

There were more questions like that.

He sighed quietly and looked at Anvil.

Was the King of Swords contemplating the same problems Sunny was?

Somehow, he doubted it.

Eventually, Anvil shifted his gaze and looked at Morgan.

Everyone in the chamber held their breaths, feeling that his next words could very well change the flow of history.

The King of Swords considered his daughter for a few moments, and then said evenly:

"Return to Bastion. Stop him at all costs."

Morgan smiled faintly, then bowed.

"How many Saints can I take with me?"

Anvil simply raised an eyebrow.

"He is one man. You alone should be enough."

Morgan's lips trembled slightly. She straightened and looked at her father with the same faint smile.

"That man has the company of a dozen taken Saints. Am I supposed to stop him — all of him — alone? That hardly seems fair."

The King of Swords looked away from her and shrugged.

"If you think that it's unfair, go and find Saints of your own."

Sunny was listening to their dialogue with a feeling of incongruity. Why was Anvil so nonchalant? Why wasn't he sending more forces back to Bastion with Morgan? Was the progress in Godgrave really that important, or did he simply not care about losing control of more Citadels to Mordret?

If so, why?

Either the King of Swords had lost his mind, or there was something Sunny was failing to understand.

Morgan remained silent for a while, then bowed again.

"As you command."

She straightened, and then suddenly pointed at Naeve.

"Oh, look. I found a Saint. Can I take him?"

Anvil waved his head dismissively.

"Do with the remnant Nightwalkers as you wish."

He turned his heavy gaze back to her, studied her face closely, and then added in a cold tone:

"...Don't lose to that creature again, Morgan."