1891 Negative Power

Earlier…

On the highest floor of the ancient Citadel, Nephis was standing in the middle of a blooming garden. All around her, heavy branches leaned under the weight of scarlet flowers, and a sweet fragrance permeated the air.

Three women surrounded her — one of them was Moonveil, the Princess of Song. The other two were most likely Reflections created by Mordret, the estranged son of the King of Swords.

Drops of blood were falling from the cut on her cheek.

Nephis looked at her fingers, which were smeared in blood, with a frown.

'They prepared well.'

The current situation was troubling enough, but what dismayed her more was how thoroughly the daughters of Ki Song seemed to be informed about Godgrave and the movements of the Sword Army.

Venturing into the Hollows should not have been an easy task — otherwise, she would not have needed an army of Awakened soldiers to carve a path through the scarlet jungle. She could have simply led a team of Saints on a clandestine excursion.

But she had not. That was because while Saints could brave the perils of the Hollows, they could not do it for long. Sooner or later, they would meet something that they could not defeat or escape from — and even if they didn't, their essence would run out, leaving them stranded in the heart of the ancient jungle. Then, they would die.

Even with a guide like the Lord of Shadows, her own forces had only dared to descend into the Hollows after reaching the vicinity of the Second Rib — and that was already a much more dangerous plan than the initial one.

Knowing where exactly the Citadels were located was supposed to be an advantage of the Sword Domain.

However, Lightslayer and her sisters had reached this Citadel first, and without an army. Gods only knew how they had managed that, but they had… was it because of the Beast lineage? Or something else entirely?

Worse than that, they seem to know too much about the champions of the Sword Army. Song definitely had spies among the warriors of Valor, but were they that capable? Or was it all due to Death Singer, the blood oracle? After all, although the future could not be glimpsed anymore, the same could not be said about the present.

Or was it all the fault of the Prince of Nothing? Had he done more than just fight his way to the Nameless Temple when visiting the Lord of Shadows before the war?

Nephis did not know, but she did know that the Sword Army — her army — had failed to outmaneuver the enemy.

Now,her Saints were being slaughtered down below. The Lord of Shadows was fighting Dark Dancer Revel, whose powers seemed to directly counter his.

And she herself was cornered by Moonveil, somehow robbed of her powers.

The situation was dire. Not only had Song managed to take control of the Citadel, but they could very well deal a fatal blow to the Sword Army by eliminating fourteen of its Saint, including two of its strongest champions — herself and Sunny.

Sunny…

The image of him bleeding on Revel's sword flashed in Neph's mind.

He did not really bleed, but still…

The corner of her mouth curved downward, and her gaze grew cold.

She looked at Moonveil and said in an even tone:

"Your power is to negate the Aspects of others."

The princess of Song just smiled silently.

'What a potent Ability…'

Nephis strained against the imperceptible barrier that prevented her from summoning her flames, but it was all for naught. It was as if her Aspect did not exist at all… or rather, was subdued. She did feel a sense of resistance, but the force of suppression was too great to overcome.

Even her Memories seemed to be weakened. Perhaps that was why the moonlight arrow had pierced the armor of Saint Sagramore so easily.

Perhaps if Moonveil was alone, Nephis could have broken through — her Aspect was of the Divine Rank, after all, and she was of divine lineage. Her soul was that of a Titan. But the power of two Reflections seemed to have been added to the geas, making it nearly indestructible.

Lightslayer's power directly countered that of the Lord of Shadows. The Saint of Sorrow could prevent Sir Jest from playing with the minds of Ki Song's daughters.

And Nephis herself was countered by Moonveil — or rather, Moonveil was a natural counter to any Awakened. That delicate woman, with her slender build and soft features…

Was probably the most dreadful foe any Awakened could face.

There had to be some limitations to her power, certainly. Otherwise, she would not have transported Nephis away from the rest of the Saints — she would have simply negated all their powers, turning them defenseless.

Nephis looked at her bloodied fingers once again.

'The arrow.'

She had only discovered that her Aspect was sealed after the moonlight arrow cut her cheek, and some of its radiance seemed to linger in the cut.

Nephis remained motionless for a moment, then turned her gaze back to Moonveil.

"You said that the name Black Moon suits you better."

The Princess of Song smiled softly."Indeed."

Nephis took a deep sigh and circulated her essence.

Her Aspect was sealed, but her essence could still move.

Therefore, the situation was not too dire.

It could still be salvaged.

Because she had noticed that Moonveil… Black Moon… was not using any of her Aspect Abilities, either. So, suppressing someone else's powers must have come at the cost of suppressing her own.

Which meant that Nephis was still a Transcendent Titan facing three Transcendent Beasts. Although her body was still that of a human, she was stronger and faster than most other Saints. She would not lose to anyone in a conquest of pure physicality and skill.

No…

Those Reflections could have been mirroring a Transcendent being, but she could feel that they were much more powerful than Moonveil herself. Supreme Beasts, then.

It was still not impossible for her to win.

And even if it had been impossible…

She would win somehow, anyway, because defeat was not an option.

"Thank you for telling me, Black Moon."

Saying that, Nephis dashed toward the daughter of Ki Song without wasting another breath.

And as she did, she burned her essence and spoke the Names, channeling them into a crude Phrase.

In that Phrase, the name of Black Moon was woven together with the name of destruction.