1896 Divide and Conquer

Serpent pushed himself forward with his powerful legs, while his long arms stretched toward Revel.

Or rather, toward where Revel had been a moment ago.

In the shape of a sword, Serpent had no way to see, hear, or sense. In the shape of Dire Fang, it was blinded by the darkness — and so was Sunny.

Of course, they weren't entirely aimless.

One of Dire Fang's Aspect Abilities could tremendously enhance his senses, after all. They were so sharp that Sunny could hear the smallest of sounds, discern a myriad of smells, and even feel the vibrations of the floor intricately enough to pinpoint the movement of his enemies.

So, they had a good chance of reaching Revel.

Sadly, they also had zero chance of defeating her in a brawl. As someone who had fought Dire Fang, Sunny knew perfectly well what the bestial body of the savage Saint was capable of — and it fell way short of what Lightslayer could do.

Worse still, Dire F ang's Awakened Ability, which augmented his physical might in proportion to the depth of wrath he felt, was all but useless when used by Serpent. The original Saint had a brutal personality and an eerie measure of control over his emotions, but Serpent was not very wrathful. In fact, Sunny did not know if that Shadow of his could even feel anger.

Serpent had not inherited the Transcendent battle art of the dead Saint, either. In short, they would not be able to rip Revel apart with Dire Fang's claws.

But they did not need to, luckily. Because their goal was different...

All they had to do was stall the princess of Song long enough to give Saint a little room to breathe.

And for that purpose, the shape of Dire Fang was perfect.

Revel was strong enough, swift enough, and ruthless enough to kill another Saint in a moment — especially in the depths of her whirlwind of darkness, after assuming her Transcendent form. So, Sunny was not going to compete with her in strength, speed, or skill.

Well, technically, he was not going to make Serpent compete.

Instead, he was going to hit her with a mental attack. Not the mystical kind, but entirely mundane — which did not make it any less impactful.

The fact of the matter was that even someone as powerful as Revel would be momentarily stunned if a person who had died years ago suddenly appeared in front of them. Especially if that person was someone they knew, and knew well... like a loyal retainer who had served their clan for decades.

And just as Sunny expected, he heard a shaken whisper in the darkness — almost inaudible if not for the incredible hearing of Serpent's current form. "...Fang?"

Revel might have only lingered for a moment, but that moment was all that Sunny and Serpent needed.

Before their bestial body could be pierced by the deadly obsidian talon or cut down by the sharp blade, they reached the enemy.

Fighting Revel while blind was not something that Serpent could do. But wrestling her at close distance? That was much easier to achieve.

Sunny felt his powerful arms wrap around the body of the beautiful demoness, his claws sinking into her leather armor and piercing her skin. Then, Dire Fang's massive body collided with her, sending them both crashing to the ground. Serpent opened its maw and bit down blindly, aiming for Revel‘s throat. However, before its sharp fangs could rip it open, two powerful hands caught its jaws like a vice, preventing them from closing.

For a moment, the two of them were entangled on the floor. Lightslayer was much stronger, but Serpent managed to hold on... for now.

Sunny wasn‘t sure how much longer it would be able to resist, though.

He wasn't sure that Lightslayer's obsidian talon would not pierce his Shadow a split second later, either. Her remaining wing seemed to be trapped under her body, but the situation could change swiftly.

Serpent was trying to tear open Revel's heart, while Revel was calmly ripping off its lower jaw. Sunny felt harrowing pain, and sensed hot blood flowing down his neck.

Behind them, meanwhile...

The moment Saint let go of the dark sword, she ignored her debilitating wounds and dashed toward the Reflection.

The creature hesitated for a short moment, surprised by the sudden appearance of the bestial monster and its immediate lunge at Revel — the Reflection was a mere Beast, after all, and although the intelligence of these creatures followed a different set of laws than that of Nightmare Creatures, it did not seem as smart as a human, or as the original Mirror Beast had been.

The situation would have been even more desperate if the Reflection was a Demon... or worse yet, a Devil. Then, it would not have been limited to mirroring Revel herself — instead, it could have mirrored Saint, or even Fiend.

In any case, it missed the chance to intercept the graceful stone knight in time. A moment later, Saint attacked it in cold silence. She had not tried to manifest a sword of darkness once again, since that would have taken more time than she had — instead, she simply used the onyx spikes protruding from the knuckles of her armored gauntlets.

Her first blow shattered the damaged blade of the Reflection.

Saint did not need a sword to kill an enemy — after all, she was a master of all weapons, and that included her own body. She was the one who had taught Fiend hand-to—hand combat, and the student did not surpass the master yet. The Reflection finally reacted, moving its wings to finish off the living statue with its obsidian talons. But Saint had fought this demonic form for long enough to learn its strengths and weaknesses — she closed in, coming almost face-to-face with the beautiful creature.

Revel's wings were utterly deadly, but their structure dictated a certain effective range — once someone was too close to the princess of Valor, hiding behind her body, the lethal talons could not reach them anymore.

While Serpent and the true Lightslayer were crashing into the ground, Saint dodged the Reflections claws, calmly caught its second hand between her right arm and her body...

And then sent her left hand flying forward.

Her aim was the creature's abdomen, which she had pierced with her sword before.

There, the armor was broken. The skin of the Reflection was cut, as well, and so were the adamantine muscles beneath.

Saint looked up at the stolen face of the Supreme Beast with cold indifference. The crimson flames burning in her eyes flashed menacingly, turning deeper and darker.

In the next moment, her armored gauntlet penetrated the terrible wound. Awash in blood and flowing darkness, she mercilessly thrust her arm deep into the body of the creature, bending it at the elbow to reach into its ribcage.

Her armored fist closed on what should have been the Reflection's heart.

In the next moment, there was a quiet, melodious sound...

As if an immense pane of glass was shattering somewhere close, but also far away.