1911 Untamed Chaos

Morgan gazed at the ancient fortress below her. The Knights of Valor and the warriors of the Dagonet clan were preparing for battle — they had protected the river for decades, not letting a single abomination from the Stormsea reach the Mirror Lake.

Of course, the best of them were in Godgrave now... and the guest who had come from the sea this time was a much more dreadful creature than the abominable dwellers of the depths.

She winced.

The river passed the series of great locks and flowed south, disappearing beyond the horizon. The Stormsea was somewhere out there, as well, a few days away.

In truth, Morgan did not need to destroy Rivergate...

Because it was already doomed.

The warriors crowding the walls of the fortress did not know it, and the six Saints she had recruited did not know it either. But in truth, there was no way to stop her brother here. He would destroy Rivergate himself — everything except for the Gateway — and unleash the caged river, washing away all signs of the destructive battle.

The warriors would die. The civilians living in the young city that had grown upstream of Rivergate would most likely become collateral damage in the Transcendent clash.

Morgan's goal here was not to save the ancestral home of clan Dagonet, but to get a measure of the enemy's strength, and hopefully destroy a couple of his Transcendent vessels.

Still, still...

Fighting a losing battle did not feel pleasant.

Morgan had inherited the lineage of War God, and so, she was often called the Princess of War. She had been fighting against Nightmare Creatures since before she was an Awakened — in fact, Morgan had barely finished middle school when she was sent into an arena to face a Dormant Beast for the first time.

Her First Nightmare had been a ruthless one, and she had undergone the trial of the winter solstice like any ordinary Sleeper would. As an Awakened, she led countless warriors into battles to protect the lands controlled by her father, as well as various cities in the waking world.

She had conquered the Second Nightmare without losing a single member of her cohort, and excelled in every duty entrusted to her as a Master...

Until Antarctica.

In the four years since, Morgan's renown had only grown. She had challenged the Third Nightmare alone, attained Transcendence, and took her rightful place as the general of the Valor army.

Changing Star might have shone brighter on the battlefield, but it was Morgan who governed the powerful war machine of the Sword Domain, making sure that the blossoming kingdom suffered no setbacks.

Today, many people called her a genius strategist...

Of course, most of those people had no idea about what that word really meant.

In truth, there was no strategy to a war of Awakened.

There was only chaos.

On a battlefield where Saints and Devils fought, chaos reigned supreme. There were too many strange Aspects, too many bizarre powers, too inconceivable variables. Most lessons taught by the history of warfare went out of the window, leaving only mayhem and carnage in their wake.

So, the only thing a strategist could do was rein in the chaos, tame it, and make it serve their goals.

...Take Rivergate, for example.

It was a mighty fortress — one that should have been nearly impregnable for any enemy coming from the south.

But what did it matter if the enemy possessed the Ability to connect two reflections through his small, personal Mirror Realm and travel between them, bringing his army with along?

The warriors on the walls were preparing to repel an attack from the south, the siege weapons were aimed downstream, and even Morgan herself was looking there. But her brother could easily attack from the north, taking the city behind the fortress hostage first.

In fact, he could just bypass Rivergate entirely and go directly to Bastion.

Only he wouldn't.

Because Morgan was here, taming the chaos.

Mordret's goal was Bastion, but he did not know what traps his father and Clan Valor had set up for him there. So, he would not attack it recklessly — conquering the Great Citadel was a time-consuming affair.

And if he left Morgan behind to advance north...

She would simply go south and take the Night Garden, instead.

That was also the reason why Mordret could not spread his vessels thin and attack the cities of the Sword Domain situated further inland — not only would he have to surrender the Citadels of the Stormsea to place new tethers, but the former Great Citadel of the House of Night would be left defenseless.

...Of course, Morgan was sure that her brother actually wanted her to attack Night Garden. Otherwise, he wouldn't have run it ashore, turning it into an almost irresistible bait. Who knew what kind of trap he had prepared for her there?

After all, Mordret — that thing pretending to be her brother — was an heir of War, as well, no matter how much her father wanted to deny it.

Mordret knew how to tame chaos, too.

Between the two of them, the one who could do it better would survive, and the other one would die.

'Funny.'

Morgan smiled, enjoying the warm breeze.

She did not really have memories of her brother from early childhood. He had already been gone by the time she grew old enough to remember anything. Morgan's mother had died giving birth to her, and her father was a distant presence at best — he was more of a teacher than a parent, full of demanding expectation, but devoid of warmth.

She was mostly raised by the elders of Clan Valor. But there was a distance between her and the members of branch families, as well as the children from the vassal clans. Growing up, the closest thing she had to friends her age were the daughters of Ki Song... who were now her enemies, funnily enough.

Still, it had not been an unhappy childhood.

...Until the brother she did not remember returned.

Morgan had been ten or eleven when he showed up in Bastion, having already conquered the First Nightmare. She was happy at first, but then... then, she quickly learned that there was something wrong about the eerie boy who called himself Mordret.

Mordret had taught her what fear was, all the way back then.

And now, standing on the wall of Rivergate, Morgan felt it again.

She hated to admit it, but she was a little afraid. An amused smile appeared on her face.

'How refreshing.'

It was such a nostalgic emotion. She had not felt it in a long, long while.

Turning to her six Transcendent companions, Morgan lingered for a moment, and then said:

"What are you waiting for? Get to business."

Nightingale gave her a confused look.

...Even his confusion looked elegant and dashing. He was so annoying.

"What business?"

Morgan raised an eyebrow.

"What do you mean? Command the soldiers to retreat, get them off the walls, start evacuating the city. Put everyone on boats and send them up the river, to Bastion."

Rivergate might have been doomed, but that did not mean that everyone here had to die or become a hostage to the Prince of Nothing. Even though there was some strategic value in using the garrison as cannon fodder to stall his vessels,

Morgan decided to forego the most rational path this one time.

She shook her head.

"Stop staring and start moving. Go! I want the city to be empty by evening..."