1914 Floodgates Open

Morgan raised her sword and pointed it at the man who called himself her brother.

"...I've collected a few other enchantments in preparation for meeting you one day, brother. Would you like to see?"

Slowly, a dangerous light ignited in his mirror—like eyes, and his thin lips twisted into a cold smile.

"Sure, why not? Ah... I do wonder how long your essence will last. If I cut off both of your arms this time, would you have to spend more? No, actually, I think I'll take your eyes. I remember losing one to your blade once, so it will only be fair."

Morgan pierced him with a burning gaze, wishing that she could destroy this monster here and now.

Then, she gritted her teeth and called upon another enchantment.

There were all kinds of Memories in the world, and Morgan's Ascended Ability allowed her to assimilate their enchantments into her body. There were limits to that power, of course, and a price that had to be paid for using it.

However, it granted her a unique level of versatility, made her supremely unpredictable in battle, and most of all, granted her great power.

If he wished so and had enough time to prepare, she could fly like Nightingale, become a colossus like Raised by Wolves, cut souls like Soul Reaper Jet, command darkness like the Lord of Shadows... even unleash incinerating flames like Changing Star.

Sadly, nothing of what she could do — at least currently — could allow her to defeat her monstrous brother and his thirteen Transcendent vessels alone.

So, she did not try.

Her goal at Rivergate had been accomplished, anyway.

The enchantment she called upon was powerful, but simple — it allowed her to travel across great distances in an instant, as long as she had established an anchor point in advance.

Morgan had placed an enchanted anchor on the shore of the river while traveling to Rivergate from Bastion, and now, it was as if she was being pulled back to it by a force overwhelming enough to pierce space itself.

As Mordret and his vessels readied themselves to repel Morgan's trump-card attack...

She simply vanished into thin air, leaving no trace behind.

Mordret froze for a moment, staring at where his sister had been a split second ago in disbelief. His gaze became unfocused for a moment, traveling across the myriad reflections in the vast area around Rivergate.

Morgan was nowhere to be found.

Suddenly, a wry chuckle escaped from his lips, and he threw an amused look north.

His eyes glistened with dark, mad killing intent.

"...l'll see you in Bastion, then."

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A moment later, Morgan found herself on the shore of the river, flying through the air at terrible speed. She hit the ground roughly and rolled several times, smashing a couple of boulders into dust with her steel body. Eventually, she came to a halt in a cloud of dust, just a few meters from the edge of the water. It was a less than graceful entrance, to say the least.

Grimacing in annoyance, she flipped onto her back and slowly sat up.

The desolate ruins of Rivergate were gone, replaced by the picturesque view of the Sword Domain's heartland. The clear water of the river glistened in the golden light of dawn, and ancient trees swayed in the light breeze, their emerald leaves rustling like a sea.

Of course, there were all kinds of horrors hiding beneath the surface of the water, and the tall trees could pull you under the ground with their roots to serve as nourishment for the rustling leaves. The Dream Realm could often be beautiful, but it was never kind.

Today, however, everything was peaceful and quiet, as if the river and the forest were afraid to make a sound.

And for a good reason.

There was a majestic dragon laying on the shore of the river, his midnight-blue scale almost turning black in the sunlight. A woman with icy-blue eyes was leaning on his side, emanating a feeling of chilling cold. Another woman, this one seemingly cast of polished steel, was gnawing on a bone of a slain abomination near a fire nearby.

Two great shadows were hiding under the water, and a young man in a suit of damaged armor was sitting on the shore, staring into the water with a bleak expression.

As she appeared, everyone turned in her direction.

They were battered and bloodied, but alive.

The young man was the first one to speak:

"Lady Morgan! You... you have survived."

She spared him a short glance, then turned away.

"...It's quite insulting to see you acting so surprised, Lord Aether. Of course, I did."

Morgan couldn't help but treat the young man coldly.

Aether used to be one of the most promising young Saints of the House of Night... when it still existed. He was strong, talented, valiant, and excellent in all regards. In fact, back when Clan Valor had been in talks with the House of Night to forge an alliance through marriage, it was Saint Aether who was supposed to become her fiancé.

The negotiations had fallen through, of course, and although Morgan knew that it was for a political reason... she couldn't help but feel personally slighted by the man. Which was ironic, honestly, considering that she had not really wanted negotiations to succeed, feeling ambivalent about the whole affair.

Still...

'Look who crawled back to beg me for help after rejecting me so firmly...'

Of course, she did not let these childish thoughts show on her face.

At that moment, the surface of the water broke, and the head of an enormous sea serpent rose above the water, looking at her with two giant indigo eyes. Saint Naeve assumed his human form and walked onto the shore, looking slightly worse for wear after the tough battle.

He gave her a bow.

"Lady Morgan."

The older Nightwalker hesitated for a few moments, and then shook his head. "It is good that you are unharmed. However, the enemy... I simply can't understand how an individual can be that strong. What kind of monster has your clan created?"

She gave him a bleak look.

"First of all... it wasn't us who created him. If anything, my clan had been protecting the world from that thing for many years. Secondly — he is that strong because he is the first human in the history of our world who has attained a Divine Aspect. Yes, those do exist. But actually... we are in luck."

Naeve scowled.

"You call that luck?"

Morgan let out a tired sigh and smiled at him.

Unlike Aether, she quite liked Saint Naeve. That was because she had met his daughter briefly while arranging for the survivors of the House of Night to be taken care of, and the little girl was positively sweet.

"Indeed. Because what you have witnessed at Rivergate is merely half of that monster's strength. He did not even bring out his Reflections... given the circumstances, we might very well assume that he is unable to do so at the moment, for whatever reason. So, yes. Count yourself lucky."

The dragon raised its head and looked at her, which made Morgan's shiver.

A moment later, a deep, melodious voice resounded in her ears:

"We lost Rivergate. What now?"

Morgan hesitated for a few moments.

She could evacuate the modest town that had grown around the Citadel of House Dagonet, but there were tens of millions of people living in Bastion. They would not be able to flee anywhere when the war came knocking on their door.

Of course...

Bastion was not just any Citadel, but a Great one. It had a power of its own, and if she used that power well, the outcome of her battle against Mordret would be...

Less set in stone than it seemed, at the moment.

Rising to her feet, Morgan shrugged.

"Now, we rush back to Bastion and prepare for a siege."

A pale smile twisted her bloodied lips.

"If I can have my way, that siege is going to be a long one..."