2072: Fragments of War (9)

As Kai was slowly digesting the meaning of what Morgan had said, the three Saints of Night looked at Effie with various degrees of surprise on their faces.

Eventually, it was Naeve who asked in a subdued tone:

"...Second time?"

Effie let out a dejected sigh, covered her face with a palm, and nodded.

"Yeah… happened in our Third Nightmare. Kai was elsewhere, but Jet and I got stuck on an island where the same day was repeating itself endlessly. For us, just a few hours had passed… but in fact, it was more than a year. If not for Cassie — ah, that is Saint Song of the Fallen — eventually learning to retain her memories of the previous loops, somehow, we would have probably still been on that damned island."

Jet scoffed.

"What are you complaining about? It's not like we remember any of the previous days. In fact, that whole Nightmare is hard to remember."

The Nightwalker just stared at them silently.

Every Nightmare was a darkly wondrous experience, especially so the Third Nightmare… but an island where time endlessly repeated itself? That sounded a little bit too fantastical, even for Saints.

Effie raised an eyebrow.

"What? You guys would have loved it there. Our whole Third Nightmare happened in a place where there was nothing but water… literally, not land whatsoever anywhere around!"

With that, she grinned and looked at Morgan.

"That said…there is something I don't understand. Isn't the hourglass supposed to be a one-time thing?"

The princess of Valor shrugged indifferently.

"It is."

Then, a sharp, dangerous smile twisted her crimson lips.

"But you forget about my Ascended Ability, Raised by Wolves. I can embody enchantments of various Memories, remember? So, that was what I did. The first time Soul Reaper suggested using the hourglass, I engraved its enchantment onto my body and used it. The engraving was erased after one use, but the hourglass remained intact. The second time, I used the hourglass — it was destroyed, but when I returned to the past,the engraving was intact. So, by alternating between the two, I was able to make this day repeat itself over and over again."

Kai paled a little.

It was a strange thing, to know that time flowed differently for most of the world than it did for him… again. And that he did not remember who knew how many days spent side by side with Morgan.

'I hope… I didn't make a fool out of myself.'

He might have abandoned his idol persona a long time ago, but old habits died hard. Kai was still deathly afraid of behaving inappropriately in front of people.

Especially in front of actual royalty!

He coughed.

"How long has it been, exactly?"

Morgan yawned.

"It's already summer in the outside world. We've been here for months… oh, right. The Lord of Shadows massacred a dozen Song Saints. The Sword Army had won a glorious victory at Godheart, and the enemy is now in full retreat. What else? The walking world has become a secondary battlefield of the war, my sister has been punished for insubordination. That pretty much covers it, I think."

She lingered for a moment, and then added:

"But none of that concerns us, really. All we have to do is keep keeping my brother here."

Her voice sounded listless.

Kai, Effie, and Jet shared a dark glance. The news of so many things changing while they were unaware was highly unwelcome. After all, they had to follow their own plans, and that required coordination with the other members of the cohort.

'The Lord of Shadows… seems even more powerful than any of us has anticipated.'

Kai wasn't really surprised at the fact. That man... was really something else entirely. Talking to him made Kai feel like he was losing his mind, one impossible truth at a time.

What was it? A custody dispute with a Cursed Terror?

Kai shuddered, and shook his head a little to get rid of unnecessary thoughts.

Knowing that he would have to talk to Jet and Effie later, he then shifted his attention to Morgan.

Now that he knew why the proud princess of Valor did not look like her usual composed self… he was still concerned about her bleak and exhausted state.

This listlessness was not at all like Morgan.

Kai lingered for a moment.

"Excuse me for being blunt, Lady Morgan… but can I assume that you have not been able to repel today's attack even after trying it dozens of times?"

Morgan nodded solemnly.

"...Yes. You were right — he is going to go all out today. We tried many things to stop him, but each time, we failed. Worse still, that guy seemed to have managed to become aware of the hourglass, somehow. I think he is retaining his memories of the previous attempts now."

A cold gust of wind blew across the ruins, making their defenders shiver.

Jet leaned on her boulder, crossed her legs, and asked in a curious tone:

"So, what are you planning to do now, princess?"

Morgan looked at her tiredly.

Then, a dark smile twisted her lips.

"What else? I am going to continue doing the same thing — fighting him and turning the time back — over and over again. As many times as it takes."

Jet chuckled.

"Isn't that the definition of madness?"

Morgan shrugged.

"So what if it is? War does not have anything to do with sanity. All that matters is accomplishing your goals, and although we have not been able to beat Mordret, losing to him miserably every time we tried… beating him has never been our goal, to begin with."

She looked at them and raised an eyebrow.

"You seem to have forgotten, but we were not sent here to defeat my brother. We were sent here to prevent him from taking control of Bastion — until the Sovereigns conclude the war in Godgrave. And that is what we have been doing successfully all this time. In fact… we performed quite remarkably, if I do say so myself."

Her dark smile widened into an even darker grin.

"Sure, he has slaughtered us repeatedly, but he is still stuck on the other shore of the lake, is he not?"

The six Saints glanced at each other,then nodded slowly.

If seen that way, it did indeed make sense.

Kai sighed.

"So, what do we do today?"

Morgan lingered for a moment, then let out a bitter, joyless laugh.

Her crimson eyes flashed with fury and resentment.

And fatigue.

She sneered coldly.

"What else? We go and get slaughtered… one more time."