2176 Precipice of the End  
  
After Cassie ran out of essence and their conversation was interrupted, Sunny remained motionless, staring into the distance with a lost expression on his face.  
  
After a while, he looked down at his cup.  
  
"...My tea has turned cold."  
  
His voice was even.  
  
With a sigh, he brought the cup to his lips and took a leisurely sip, enjoying the darkly beautiful view of Godgrave and the vibrant, idyllic tranquility of the Ivory Island with a smile.  
  
Cassie's news was unexpected enough, but the momentary feeling of being lost Sunny had experienced was not because of it. Rather, it was because of what the news signified.  
  
The resolution of this dreadful, appalling war had been drawing near for a while...  
  
But now, it was here.   
  
The end had arrived.  
  
So, this was probably the last moment of peace he would get to experience until everything was over... quite possibly the last moment of peace he would get to experience for the rest of his life, since his life could very well end in a matter of days.  
  
Still, if he thought about...  
  
Sunny felt satisfied.  
  
It was far too soon, true. And they did not quite manage to accomplish everything they had set out to accomplish before the war started... but they did their best.  
  
From the day Sunny had chosen to return from the frigid ruins of L049, out there in the northernmost reaches of the Dream Realm, and until today, he had never once stopped working doggedly toward his bold and defiant goal. His determination to vanquish the Sovereigns, subjugate the world, and bend existence to his will had never wavered.  
  
So, he was ready.  
  
He was ready to win... but he was preрared to lose, too. After all, despite it all, the treacherous scheme he and Nephis had woven was at its core a gamble.  
  
The future was unclear... who knew what the future held?  
  
Sunny certainly did not.  
  
But whatever happened, he would have no regrets.  
  
At least that was what he told himself while enjoying his tea in peace.  
  
Eventually, the bottom of the cup revealed itself, and he put it down with a hint of regret. Letting out a long sigh, Sunny rose from his seat and left the gazebo.  
  
There were a lot of things he had to do.  
  
'This girl... I think I've been a bad influence on her.'  
  
Sunny had felt something strange while talking to Cassie. It was as if he had found himself on the wrong end of a conversation with himself!  
  
No, but really. What sane person opened a conversation by announcing their death?  
  
As Sunny walked across the emerald grass, his eyes turned chilly with murderous cold.  
  
'...Jest.'  
  
So the affable old mad had decided to show initiative and kill Cassie after luring her into the woods. Cassie had left him alive... but Sunny was not that forgiving.  
  
He was in the mood to tear the bastard limb from limb, feed his corpse to the Nightmare Creatures, and eradicate his entire clan.  
  
It took quite a lot of composure not to send the Lord of Shadows to intercept Jest and end him like the vermin he was before the old man reached Vanishing Lake.  
  
That vile piece of trash had dared to set his sights on Cassie?  
  
Sunny gritted his teeth in anger.  
  
'Calm... calm down.'  
  
Cassie knew what she was doing. If she had thought that she would be in serious danger, she would have asked him for help. But she did not, which meant that she had known about Jest's intentions in advance and felt confident that she could deal with him herself.  
  
And she had.  
  
Not only had Cassie defeated the old Saint —Sunny should not have expected anything less from her — but she also learned quite a lot of secrets from his memories.  
  
For example, Anvil's Flaw.  
  
Exhaling slowly, Sunny smothered his anger and began to think.  
  
Jest could keep drawing breath for a bit longer.  
  
'That Flaw... is a harsh one.'  
  
Sadly, it was not something one could use against the King of Swords in a battle. It gave context to the decisions Anvil made and provided deep insight into his character, explaining a lot both about his rise to power and about his downfall as a human being. Knowing your enemy was a great advantage, and Sunny was glad to have gained the knowledge of Anvil's Flaw...  
  
But it was not exactly a fatal vulnerability he had hoped to find.  
  
The same went for Ki Song. Although Cassie had not glimpsed the secret of her Flaw directly, both of them strongly suspеcted that the Queen's Flaw made her incapable of bearing children. Therefore, her vulnerability was the affection she felt for her adopted daughters.  
  
Anvil's lack of familiar love could be exploited, and Ki Song's love for her daughters could be exploited, as well.  
  
But not in the narrow timeframe they were left with, most likely... at least not effectively.  
  
That whole endeavor had led them to a dead end.  
  
Sunny sighed.  
  
'Well, when have things ever been easy?'  
  
Most of the time, things were as hard as they could get. So, he had never really expected to find an easy way to defeat the Sovereigns.  
  
They had gained plenty of useful knowledge about the past, regardless. New information about Asterion and Mordret, among other things — two people who would become big problems in the future, without a doubt.  
  
If there even was a future for Sunny, Nephis, and Cassie.  
  
Entering the Ivory Tower, Sunny frowned.  
  
There was something else that Cassie had learned, but chose not to tell him — she did mention it briefly, but did not go into details. It was partially because they had been pressed for time, and partially because she seemed to want to gather her thoughts before sharing this new information.  
  
The secret had something to do with Broken Sword and the downfall of the Immortal Flame clan... no wonder Cassie was reluctant to speak on this topic rashly. It was probably the very reason why she had contacted Sunny instead of speaking directly to Nephis, unwilling to have that conversation with her yet.  
  
The information did not seem immediately relevant to the conclusion of the war, regardless.  
  
And there were too many things they had to do before the end came — especially because Cassie could very well become unable to contact any of her allies soon.  
  
Who knew what kind of restrictions Song Clan would put on her once she was in their hands?  
  
This was why Sunny had to hurry.  
  
'I really hope Nightmare has finished his task well...'