2177 Dire Choice  
  
Far away, near the ruined Citadel at Vanishing Lake, the Lord of Shadows was observing the troops coldly. The soldiers were getting ready for the final stage of the clandestine assault — some were leaving to clear the last stretch of the path to the surface, others were preparing to receive the additional forces from the siege camp.  
  
The attack on the Lesser Crossing would most likely happen in a matter of days... actually, now that Jest had gone and made a mess, the plan wоuld most likely be accelerated.  
  
The Lesser Crossing would fall, and the Song Army would retreat to the edges of the Collarbone Plain. The territory of the Song Domain in Godgrave would dwindle, and the territory of the Sword Domain would spread, enveloping it from all sides.  
  
Ki Song would be faced with an uncomfortable choice. She would have to either abandon the main camp of her army and retreat to the sole Citadel in Godgrave that was under her control, abandon the Citadel to make her last stand at the fortified camp, or split her forces to try and protect both.  
  
The disadvantage of splitting her forces was obvious enough. Abandoning the Citadel would only diminish her power further, while at the same time giving Anvil an opportunity to expand his. The main camp of the Song Army seemed like the least painful sacrifice... but only at first glance.  
  
The main camp was not only the logistical hub where all the supply chains came together, but also the gateway to the Song Domain. If it was abandoned, nothing would prevent Anvil from simply descending from Godgrave into the western reaches of the Dream Realm and wreaking havoc in the basin of the River of Tears, where most of Ki Song's Citadels were located.  
  
So, Sunny thought that she would most likely concentrate her forces in the main camp.  
  
After the Two Crossings fell, the camp would be surrounded in a day or two.  
  
And once it was surrounded, the Sovereigns would clash directly. Ki Song would have no other choice but to enter the fray herself, driven into the corner as she was.  
  
...And at that time, Sunny and Nephis would have to enter the fray, as well, finally facing the Sovereigns in battle.  
  
Of course, ideally, that would only happen once both Anvil and Ki Song had exhausted each other's powers, dealt each other countless wounds, and one of them was on the verge of being killed.  
  
Sunny's face grew somber behind Weaver's Mask.  
  
'...But would Nephis be willing to go through with it?'  
  
Neither of them had attained Supremacy yet, after all.  
  
Of course, there was a good chance that at least one of them would become Supreme during or in the aftermath of the battle. Freeing themselves from the clutches of the Sovereigns, who held the entire world in an iron grip, and slaying them was one hell of an act of defiance, after all.  
  
Usurping the throne of humanity — or, in Sunny's case, putting the person he had chosen on it — was, as well.  
  
But if the Sovereigns fell and no new Supreme emerged, the result would be catastrophic. Because nothing would protect the mundane inhabitants of the Dream Realm from becoming carriers of the Nightmare Spell.  
  
Hundreds of millions of people in both Domains would probably die, plunged into the depths of their First Nightmares.  
  
...But then again, a comparable amount of new Awakened would emerge.  
  
Dozens of millions of Awakened — imagining such a tremendous force was frightening.  
  
But not as frightening as the cost humanity would have to pay to come into possession of such force.  
  
Sunny was horrified by the mere thought of having to make this choice.  
  
Of course, missing their chance to defeat the Sovereigns would not really save any of those people, either. If either the King of Swords or the Queen of Worms vanquished their adversary and became the sole ruler оf the world, their already astonishing power would become simply inconceivable... defeating them already seemed impossible, and it would become unthinkable then.  
  
For Sunny and Nephis, that was.  
  
However, that was not at all true for the true rulers of the Dream Realm... the Cursed and Unholy Nightmare Creatures that dwelled in the dark expanses of the Death Zones, and could very well consume all of humanity once the waking world was swallowed by the Rеalm of the Forgotten God.  
  
The corrupted deities that had already consumed the populations of all the previous Divine Realms infected by the Nightmare Spell.  
  
This whole mess had started because neither Nephis nor Sunny believed that the Sovereigns could face the future trials of the Nightmare Spell. The Sovereigns were great and mighty, and their feats were truly legendary... or had been, once. But they had also grown reticent and complacent, wasting decades doing little more than suffocating the emerging power of humanity and preparing to abandon most of the waking world's population in the coming calamity.  
  
Perhaps they had their reasons, perhaps they believed that theirs was the only way... but their reasons were not good еnough, and the path they had chosen would only lead to doom.  
  
So, missing the chance to eliminate them now, while saving countless lives at the moment... could very well doom all lives in the future.  
  
That was why the choice was so agonizing.  
  
Sunny could not imagine making it... but Nephis had to.  
  
She would have to make it in just a few days.  
  
They still had some time left — time to watch the Two Crossing fall, the Song Army retreat, and the Sword Army surround its camp.  
  
Sunny did not think that either of them would manage to attain Supremacy at that time, so he was preparing to fight the Sovereigns as a Saint.  
  
The three of them — Sunny, Nephis, and Cassie —had planned for this battle for a long time.  
  
However, the plan had to change a little recently.  
  
So, while the Lord of Shadows was observing the   
  
troops, one of his shadows stealthily snuck away.  
  
A few moments later, it was on its way to the Nameless Temple... or rather, to the Hollows below it.  
  
It was time to prepare his slumbering army of monsters for war.  
  
As well as take care of its general.