2192 Circle of Responsibility   
  
The dead boy let out a quiet laugh.   
  
The Queen shook her head.   
  
"Whatever it is that thе Dreamspawn needs from the descendants of the gods, he can only get it once their blood Awakens. Nephis is the last descendant of the Sun God lineage, and so, he prevented us from trying to eliminate her before she came of age... or rather, prevented us from trying to eliminate her too hard. The methods we could use without alerting him and provoking his ire were limited, and that was why she managed to survive. Even as a child, Nephie proved to be quite tenacious."   
  
Cassie smiled darkly.  
  
"...You have my sympathy. How inconvenient."  
  
Ki Song shrugged.   
  
"Why, thank you. It really was. However, young Nephis was really the least of our concerns. Because, as you can imagine, the mutual responsibility between us three did not last long."  
  
Cassie inhaled deeply.  
  
"Was there something particular that caused you to grow openly hostile to each other?"   
  
The Queen remained silent for a bit, then smiled wryly.   
  
"Yes? No? It was a gradual process. At first, we were busy establishing our Domains, subjugating neighboring regions of the Dream Realm, and stabilizing our territories. But once we reached the ceiling of what we could achieve without encroaching on each other's lands, things turned much more tenuous between us. Both Anvil and I wanted to swallow the Stormsea, but neither could move without provoking the other. The Dreamspawn, meanwhile, was growing stranger with each year. The tension continued to build, until one day... we saw a chance."   
  
Cassie raised an eyebrow.   
  
"What chance?"   
  
One of the youths chuckled.  
  
"The chance to get rid of the Dreamspawn, of course. That guy, you see, aimed his attention at the moon."   
  
Cassie blinked.   
  
"The... moon?"   
  
Did Ki Song mean a metaphorical moon? She carried the lineage of Beast God, after all, and one of Beast God's epithets was the Goddess of the Moon. Had Asterion shown interest in her daughters, perhaps? They would have already reached the age of becoming susceptible to the Spell by then. Some would have even Awakened.   
  
The Queen nodded.   
  
"Yes, the moon. Earth's moon, to be precise — Luna. Well, not the moon itself, of course... rather, what is hidden on the moon."   
  
'Huh...'  
  
Cassie tried to suppress her curiosity, but failed.  
  
"...And what, exactly, is hidden on the moon?"  
  
The dead girl laughed melodiously.  
  
Ki Song smiled.   
  
"That was precisely what the Dreamspawn wanted to learn. The Nightmare Spell first infected the Lunar Colonies, you know... it was only later that it spread from the moon to the planet's surface. What had they unearthed there, on the dark side of Luna? Nobody knows. Oh, we had theories, of course. By then, it was already clear that an Unholy Nightmare Creature had made the moon its nest — that is why it is so dangerous to fly too high on Earth and why any manner of lunar observation had been forbidden. It is also one of the reasons why aviation fell into sharp decline as soon as the Nightmare Spell descended."   
  
She lingered for a few moments.  
  
"It is also highly likely that a Nightmare Gate is situated there... the First Gate, maybe. Since looking at the moon too closely is a recipe for disaster, we couldn't build an analog of the Obel Scale to study it. But there was still a sort of consensus about the Category of that Gate. Most of those who know believe it to be a Category Six Gate."   
  
As Cassie drew a sharp breath, Ki Song looked up and smiled.   
  
"If so, it is connected to a Seed of the Sixth Nightmare... the final Nightmare. One that would turn those who conquer it Divine, thus giving birth to gods. Not lesser deities of the Sacred Rank, but true gods — no different from those great beings who once ruled all existence."   
  
She hesitated for a moment, then added in a more reserved tone:   
  
"Of course, there is a smaller group that holds a different opinion. They believe that the Lunar Gate leads to a Seed that is even more special. Not just a Seed of Nightmare, no... instead, they believe it to be the Seed of the Nightmare Spell. The source of its invasion into our reality."  
  
Cassie exhaled slowly.  
  
'The world still holds so many mysteries...'   
  
An Unholy One was dwelling on the moon, guarding the Gate to the Final Nightmare... or the source of the Nightmare Spell itself. Who would have thought? The magnitude of this revelation had left her breathless.   
  
Cassie was too tiny and insignificant for that information to have any direct importance to her, just like an ant was too tiny and short-lived to worry about the movement of tectonic plates.   
  
But still, still...   
  
She could not help but shiver, knowing that the moon had been there, high above her, throughout countless nights.  
  
Ki Song smiled softly.  
  
"If you live long enough to become Supremes yourselves one day, you'll hear it... on a quiet night, under the familiar sky, you'll hear the distant, alluring, irresistible call of that Nightmare. Its Call is another reason why we don't return to the waking world that often."  
  
She remained silent for a little while, then sighed.  
  
"In any case... the Dreamspawn grew intrigued by the moon, and so, he endeavored to visit it. And using the chance, Anvil and I made sure that he never returned. We massacred his followers and erased his name from the network, from the culture, from the annals of history, forbade the government to ever mention him again, and killed everyone who had ever met him face-to-face — well, most of them, at least."   
  
A wicked smile twisted her alluring lips.   
  
"There were no Citadels under his control, and we had hidden our existence — the existence of the Sovereigns — from the very beginning to limit the spread of his fame, and therefore of his Domain... even if it forced all three of us into the shadows. So, his Domain crumbled in an instant, and he was stranded on the moon, his power severely diminished. We had hoped that he would die there, but of course, we weren't that lucky. That fiend still draws breath out there, in the coldness of space, looking at us from above. He can even exert his influence somewhat, sometimes, albeit not too much of it."  
  
Her smile widened.   
  
"And with the Dreamspawn mostly removed from the picture, the circle of mutual responsibility was broken. Anvil's sword pierced my heart... but, of course, I refused to die. That was how our clandestine clash began. From that day forward, we were gathering forces, positioning valuable game pieces, and preparing for the war — for the final confrontation to see which one of us was the most vicious, and therefore worthy of becoming the sole ruler of the world."