2261 Keeping a Promise  
  
A dark, desolate expanse of black dunes rested under a lightless heaven, their obsidian slopes illuminated only by the distant radiance of transient essence storms. Buried in the dust, a graveyard of serpents lay like an ivory maze, its forlorn walls awash in darkness.  
  
The silence of the dead land was suddenly broken by the sound of light footsteps. A young man with a jade face and onyx eyes was walking across the obsidian dust, his body encased in a suit of intricate black armor.  
  
Wherever he passed, the darkness grew deeper, and the winds turned colder.  
  
He was calm and at ease, as if walking across the pastures of his own domain instead of the desolate reaches of the Realm of Death.  
  
And in a sense, he was.  
  
The young man was Sunless, the Lord of Shadows... the Sovereign of Death.  
  
Reaching the heart of the graveyard, the terrifying demigod stopped and looked down, at the badly damaged human skeleton that lay among the dead serpents, staring at the lightless sky with empty eyes.  
  
After a while, the skeleton spoke:  
  
"My, oh my! Look whom we have here... I see you have survived, boy."  
  
Sunny stared at Eurys some more, then sighed and summoned the Shadow Chair. Placing it near the mangled skeleton, he sat down, leaned back comfortably, and crossed his legs.  
  
"Well, about that... you'd be surprised."  
  
Eurys turned his skull to stare at him.  
  
"I am not sure I can be surprised by anything anymore... no, I take it back! I am surprised right now!"  
  
He grinned.  
  
Of course, being a skeleton, Eurys was stuck with a perpetual grin, so he did not have much choice in the matter.  
  
"Look at you. You really did go and become Supreme. How remarkable!"  
  
He clicked his jaws, showing how impressed he was.  
  
"I hope my humble advice was helpful. So, how did you do it? What was your act of defiance, evil boy? Did you go against your vicious nature and spare someone? Or did you kill some great, powerful being instead?"  
  
Sunny chuckled.  
  
"Oh, I did have to kill someone. Not sure about the great and powerful part, though. You see... I killed myself."  
  
Eurys remained silent for a while.  
  
"My, oh my... that's one way to go about it, I suppose!"  
  
He paused for a few moments, and then added neutrally:  
  
"Breaking the absolute law of death is no simple feat. Few ever managed. So... congratulations!"  
  
Sunny smiled.  
  
"It is odd to be congratulated on managing to commit suicide. But it is even stranger to be alive while being congratulated, I guess."  
  
He laughed.  
  
"To be honest, it wasn't that difficult. A bit painful, at most."  
  
Eurys ground his teeth against each other.  
  
"Now you're just mocking me, boy. Saying such hurtful things... you do remember that I can't die no matter how hard I try, right? Why don't you rub the salt in my wounds and tell me more about how easily it was for you to die, huh?"  
  
Sunny coughed.  
  
"Well, when you put it that way, it does sound hurtful."  
  
Eurys let out a creaky laugh.  
  
"Ah, don't bother. I am already thankful that you remembered your promise and came back to try and kill me. Oh. But it took you long enough..."  
  
Sunny shrugged  
  
"Sorry. I've been pretty busy lately... we saw each other last what, a little over a year ago? So many things have happened in that year."  
  
The Realm War had ended around a year ago, by now. Sunny was currently twenty-seven, a little shy of turning twenty-eight. Rain was already twenty-two.  
  
'Gods. How swift the time flies...'  
  
Actually, that was not true at all. If anything, it felt like for each yeаr that he lived, ten years passed.  
  
The last year in particular was quite eventful.  
  
Sunny contemplated for a bit.  
  
"Let's see... first, the war between the Sword Domain and the Song Domain ended. That was when I attained Supremacy, actually, during the final battle — Nephis, too. We defeated Anvil and Ki Song, the previous Sovereigns of humanity, immediately after becoming Supreme."  
  
Sunny lingered for a few moments, then added:  
  
"It is so strange. Their shadow loomed over us for so long — unfathomable, inescapable. Insurmountable. But in the end, it only took a few minutes for them to fall. I guess there were mere mortals, after all... even if they were demigods."  
  
He shook his head.  
  
"Of course, those few minutes were the result of many long years of meticulous planning and arduous preparation. We really went above and beyond... our conspiracy was quite thorough. I was just surprised that everything had gone according to plan, for once — well, mostly. I did not foresee having to kill myself, obviously."  
  
He smiled.  
  
"In any case, I had to disappear after our victory. Nephis, meanwhile, became the hegemon of humanity."  
  
Eurys stared at him in amusement.  
  
"That horrid girl? Goodness gracious! It feels like she was Dormant only a day ago. I blinked once, and the next thing you know, that brat is a Supreme. You monstrous kids are really something, you know? Good for her!"  
  
Sunny smiled dangerously.  
  
"You can't really blink though. You don't have eyelids. And also... did I not promise to break your remaining arm if you called her an abomination again?"  
  
Eurys stared at him for a moment.  
  
"Did I say 'abominable'? Oh, my! I must have misspoke. What I meant to say was adorable, that adorable girl!"  
  
Sunny glared at him for a while, then nodded.  
  
"Well, it's true. She is adorable."  
  
Then, he sighed.  
  
"I'll let it slide this once. Regardless, as you can imagine, we were a little dazed after attaining Supremacy and defeating the Sovereigns in one fell swoop. And we weren't the only ones —everyone in Godgrave was stunned. Ah, right, I forgot to mention... right there at the end, I staged a betrayal and died by Neph's blade while trying to usurp the throne. It had not been that long since most people learned of the existence of Supremes, but in the course of a single battle, three Supremes died. Imagine their shock."  
  
Eurys clicked his jaw.  
  
"You know I have no context to understand the meaning of these events, and on top of that, I don't understand half of the words you speak. Sword Domain, Song Domain, Anvil, Ki Song, Godgrave... I have no idea what these are. So why are you telling me all this?"  
  
Sunny looked at him and smiled.  
  
"Because I want to tell someone, and you can't run away. You have no feet."  
  
The skull's lower jaw fell open.  
  
Eurys remained silent for a bit, then grumbled:  
  
"Well... fair enough."  
  
Sunny laughed.  
  
"So, we spent a few days on the battlefield — and by we', and I mean 'them, since I was busy hiding in the shadows while pretending to be dead. Usually, the healers would have been tending to the wounded, but Nephis had already healed everyone, so all that was left was to bury the fallen. The soldiers assembled the pyres while the officers spent these days in council. And by the end of the council... it was proclaimed that the Immortal Flame clan would be restored, and that Nephis would become the ruler of a new Domain... the Human Domain."  
  
He shook his head in amusement.  
  
"Of course, things went so smoothly because we had prepared for the immediate outcome of the war, as well. Nephis had won the loyalty of the Saints during the war. Oh... and it was not like they had a lot of choice. She is considered to be the only Supreme in existence now, after all. So who could defy her?"  
  
Sunny let out a wistful sigh.  
  
"It was very poetic, really. The war for the throne had begun because of an attempt on her life, she was the only one who opposed it... and she was the one who ended it, thus becoming the new ruler of humanity instead of the tyrants who had started the war. People were elated and happy — it seemed like divine will, for the most benevolent and righteous person to receive the crown."  
  
His smile dimmed.  
  
"Of course, no one knew that it was all a meticulously crafted performance. That Nephis and I had been prepared to sacrifice hundreds of millions of lives to achieve our goal, and that all those people were only saved by luck. That we were neither benevolent nor righteous, just... stronger than our enemies. Strength is the only virtue in this godforsaken world, after all. And weakness is the only sin. Still — history will never know the truth, and therefore, it will remember Changing Star of the Immortal Flame clan as the noblest of heroes. While I will be remembered as a villainous traitor who died by her blade... if at all."  
  
Sunny laughed.  
  
"Right, I am officially dead now. Again. So, I took my Citadel and returned to the Forgotten Shore. It is kind of fitting, don't you think, Eurys? The Nameless Temple is now standing on the Forgotten Shore, sheltering its nameless master, who must be forgotten..."  
  
Eurys stared at him silently for a while, then offered words of consolation:  
  
"I have no idea what Forgotten Shore is. Actually, I understood very little of this entire tirade. But if you think that it's fitting, then I'm sure it is!"  
  
Sunny looked at him resentfully.  
  
"I'm going to enjoy killing you, you know?"  
  
The ancient skeleton stared at him with a grin.  
  
"I'm going to enjoy being killed!"  
  
Sunny sighed and cursed quietly.