2275 Shadow Boss  
  
The insides of the Transcendent Devil were oddly no different from the interior of an actual castle. The place did not even seem haunted or especially sinister - in fact, it was clean and neat, almost cozy. Naturally, that was only because Awakened Kim had granted June the ability to see through the darkness that drowned the spacious corridors.  
  
He would not have wanted to wander them alone while carrying something as unreliable as a lantern.  
  
Overall, everything he had seen so far - the abyssal chasm of the hidden Dream Gate, the crumbling city resting under the dark expanse of a starless sky, the silent shadows populating its ancient streets, the black edifice of the magnificent temple, the towering black castle that possessed a malevolent life of its own - was more than worthy of being the domain of a dark deity.  
  
And June was about to meet that deity.  
  
Naturally, he knew that Supremes were not really gods. However, from the point of view of a mundane human or a mere Awakened, for that matter they might as well have been. The King of Swords and the Queen of Worms had mostly kept their power hidden, but the Lady of the Ivory Tower was far more generous with her grace. She was rarely seen, but there was hardly a person in the world who had not felt the presence of her radiant power. Those of them who had fought in that fateful last battle of the Realm War knew how miraculous it was especially well.  
  
The power to nurture, the power to destroy.  
  
June had no doubt that, if Changing Star wanted to, she could annihilate the entire world in the luminous inferno of her flames. She could also embrace all оf humanity and carry them all to salvation.  
  
If that was not a god, then he did not know what was.  
  
The Lord of Shadows was a comparable existence.  
So…  
  
June, who more or less had ice flowing through his veins, found himself struggling to remain calm. His composure was crumbling with each step he took.  
  
'It's going to be alright. After all, I've already met the Lord of Shadows. Right?'  
  
Out there in Godgrave, he had seen the fearsome Saint countless times. Granted, June had been creeped out by him even then.  
  
Who wouldn't be?  
  
That fearsome black armor, the sinister mask, the cold and insidious presence, the oppressive force of his dreadful killing intent… the frightening mystery of it all.  
  
The thought of looking directly at that hideous mask made June shiver.  
  
People had speculated that there was something inhuman hiding behind it even when the Lord of Shadow was merely a Saint. No one had ever seen him bleed, after all.  
  
He was not a Saint anymore.  
  
How much more frightening had he become after attaining Supremacy?  
  
'Penny for your thoughts.'  
  
June flinched slightly and glanced at Awakened Kim. He hesitated for a few seconds, then said:  
  
'I'm a bit nervous to meet my new employer, to be honest.'  
  
She smiled faintly.  
  
'I was too the first time I met him.'  
  
He raised an eyebrow.  
  
'If I may ask, what is he like?'  
  
Awakened Kim remained silent for a bit, then said with a neutral expression:  
  
'Well his waffles are to die for.'  
  
The corner of June's eye twitched.  
  
'What in the world?'  
  
What did she mean?  
  
Before he could continue the conversation, though, they reached tall wooden gates. The heavy doors opened by themselves, and Awakened Kim ushered him into the throne room of the Dark Castle.  
  
The great hall was grandiose and majestic in appearance, its vast expanse drowning in impenetrable darkness. The walls were decorated with intricate carvings that spanned dozens of meters like a regal tapestry, depicting scenes of fearsome battles and fantastical landscapes. At the far end of the hall, a set of stairs led to a dark alcove. And there, on a raised dais, stood a black throne.  
  
Sitting on that throne…  
  
June stumbled, momentarily stunned.  
  
All this time, he had been mentally preparing himself to face the Lord of Shadows - the fearsome figure encased in an intricate suit of dark armor, wearing an eerie mask that depicted the face of a snarling demon, with long white hair cascading down its back.  
  
Reality, however, was very different from his imagination.  
  
Instead of the familiar, if deeply frightening, visage of the Lord of Shadows… a slender young man was sitting on the throne in a relaxed pose, wearing a easy black tunic.  
  
The young man had skin as pale as flawless white jade, silky black hair, and eyes that were like two onyx gems. His delicate gorgeousness was almost sublime, making June feel like he was looking at a piece of art, not a human being.  
  
What was more, he could not sense the cold indifference, disdainful arrogance, and dreadful bloodthirst that people had associated with the Lord of Shadows. Instead, he felt… nothing at all, as if the young man had no presence whatsoever.  
  
'No, wait…'  
  
This was the Lord of Shadows?  
  
The Lord of Shadows was this young?  
  
More importantly…  
  
He had been hiding this face behind a mask all this time?  
  
June was stunned.  
  
He was dazed.  
  
But only for a moment. When the moment passed, June realized that he had been staring at the Shadow Sovereign with wide eyes. But even knowing that, he still had to force himself to look away.  
  
'Stop ogling your boss, fool!'  
  
At the moment, June wanted nothing more than to find the bastard who had said that the Lord of Shadows was constantly wearing the mask due to being horribly disfigured, and drown him in a puddle.  
  
The silly rumors that the mysterious Saint and Lady Nephis had been lovers suddenly did not seem that silly anymore.  
  
In fact, they made too much sense.  
  
'Boss.'  
  
Awakened Kim bowed slightly.  
  
The Lord of Shadows glanced at her and smiled.  
  
His smile was radiant enough to stop hearts, but sadly enough, Kim seemed to be immune to it, while June was not in the mood to appreciate radiance. In any case, he was quite scared.  
  
'Argh, Kimmy. Is this the new recruit?'  
  
She nodded.  
  
'Yes. Only one from the latest batch passed the selection.'  
  
The Lord of Shadows shifted his gaze and looked at June.  
  
Surprisingly enough, his gaze wasn't alarming, suffocating, or oppressive.  
  
It was quite friendly.  
  
Which only made June tense up more.  
  
After all, people in his field of work knew that there was nothing more dangerous than a being that was supposed to be threatening, but did not feel like a threat at all.  
  
The Lord of Shadows slowly raised a hand.  
  
'What what is hе going to do?'  
  
…and waved at June lazily.  
  
'You must be Corsair! Welcome, welcome… wow, your dossier? Damnation! You are so cool.'  
  
June froze.  
  
'E - excuse me?'  
  
The Lord of Shadows shook his head dejectedly.  
  
'The black market, huh? Why didn't I think of that? More importantly… why didn't Aiko think of that? I should seriously deduct her pay…'  
  
June blinked a couple of times.  
  
'Huh?'  
  
And that…  
  
Was how he met his new boss, the Dark Lord, for the first time.