2298 Memory Lane   
  
Now a demigod, Sunny returned to the outskirts of NQSC once again.  
  
Standing in a desolate alleyway formed by the crumbling walls of decrepit buildings, he inhaled the toxic air deeply and grimaced. The smell was definitely nostalgic, but he did not feel welcome here.  
  
Not only because the outskirts had changed just as thoroughly as he had, but also because the world itself rejecting him.  
  
Sunny exhaled slowly, struggling with the uncomfortable feeling of being out of place. His powers were severely suppressed, and every breath he took was a struggle. A peculiar lethargy enveloped his mind, making him numb and drowsy, Worst of all, he could feel the very fabric of reality straining to push him out - so, he had to consciously will himself to stay in place every single moment.  
  
It was like the familiar action of pulling on his tether to travel between worlds, only extended in perpetuity. If he relaxed his grip even for a second, he would be banished back to the Dream Realm.  
  
Sunny was not in pain, but he still wanted to groan.  
  
'How… disheartening…'  
  
Even if he had never harbored anу affection for the outskirts, feeling like an unwelcome guest in his own homeworld felt a little bitter. Sunny pretty sure that he the only man from the slums of NQSC to have become Supreme… so, shouldn't his return here have been a triumph?  
  
In any case, he was wary. The outskirts were different now - this area in particular was completely abandoned in the wake of the Dream Realm resettlement. There were no people around, which meant that other things could have made their nests in the desolate concrete jungle.  
  
Sunny not powerless in his current state, but he definitely far more vulnerable than he would be in the Dream Realm.  
  
It was quite interesting, actually. Both Sunny and Nephis experienced the rejection of their homeworld differently from how most other Supremes would, and were on the opposite ends of the spectrum to boot.  
  
For Sunny, it was much harder to stay here - that was because he carried his entire Domain within his soul, and therefore, the laws governing the waking world rebelled against his burdensome presence with extra fury.  
  
However, for Nephis, it was actually much easier to stay on Earth than it would have been for other Supremes. That because of her original Attribute, Dreamspawn, which made her a being innately connected to both worlds.  
  
Nevertheless, she could not unleash her powers freely here, either… simply because of how obliterating and annihilating they were.  
  
The waking world was intricate and fragile, its damaged ecosystem brittle - if Nephis careful with how she used her Aspect, she could shatter entire continents, cause towering tidal waves that would wash human settlements off the face of the earth, usher in an endless winter by obscuring the sun with billowing clouds of ash, and initiate obliterating chains of supervolcanic eruptions that would boil the oceans and fracture the land.  
  
So, even if the world not suppressing Neph's power as much, she had to keep it contained herself.  
  
'I wonder if either of us will be able to return here at all if we become Sacred.'  
  
Sunny suspected that his days of visiting the waking world, at least, would be over forever.  
  
Leaning against the wall, he sighed deeply.  
  
'When is he coming?'  
  
Just then, there was the sound of footsteps, and a tall figure entered the alley, looking around with curiosity.  
  
It was Kai, wearing a ridiculously fitting ensemble of stylish designer clothes, his magnetic green eyes and auburn hair standing out in the morose bleakness of the outskirts like a bright beacon.  
  
Noticing Sunny, he hesitated for a moment, then smiled amicably.  
  
'Oh! Hello there, young man. You must be a member of the Shadow Clan… please, take me to your lord. We have an appointment.'  
  
Sunny stared at him in confusion.  
  
'What… is this fool going on about?'  
  
Then, it dawned on him.  
  
Kai had never seen the Lord of Shadows without a mask - and unlike Effie, who resided in Bastion, he had never encountered Master Sunless either. So, he must have imagined what every new recruit of the Shadow Clan imagined when entering the Dark Castle for the first time… a sinister, cold, and arrogant tyrant sitting on a throne of bones.  
  
Instead, he met Sunny, who younger than him by a few years, and glanced even younger still due to his modest stature, slender build, and porcelain skin.  
  
Kai suddenly leaned forward a little and looked at Sunny with wide eyes.  
  
'Uh… I am sorry, b - but… may I ask what skin products you use? The climate in Ravenheart is too harsh, so I've been really struggling.'  
  
Sunny stared at him silently, hiding how dumbfounded he was.  
  
'What?'  
  
That what Kai wanted to know? And more than that, wasn't he a Transcendent? What Saint would go around worrying about skin products? Were there even skin products for Saints?  
  
Eventually, Sunny said in an even tone:  
  
'You may.'  
  
Kai raisеd an eyebrow.  
  
'Pardon?'  
  
Sunny glanced at him for a few more seconds, then smiled.  
  
'I mean, you may ask. My skincare routine is a bit convoluted, though! Listen carefully: first, you need to find a suit of armor forged by the Prince of the Underworld. Then, you need to kill about seven thousand of Nightmare Creatures while wearing that armor to bind it to your soul. The rest is pretty straightforward - you just need to conquer the Second and Third Nightmares, which you already have covered, and then attain Supremacy. That is the secret of how to get glowing, dewy skin like mine.'  
  
Kai stared at him with wide eyes.  
  
After a while, he mumbled in a hesitant tone:  
  
'He's… he's not lying?'  
  
Sunny grinned.  
  
'Naturally, I am not. I am the most honest man in the world, after all. Two worlds, even.'  
  
Then, he raised a hand and patted the taller man on the shoulder.  
  
'I'm the Lord of Shadows, by the way. You can call me Sunny.'