2304 Needle in a Haystack  
  
Sunny spent the next few days exploring the Jade Palace as a shadow. Not knowing what to look for, he commenced from the places that held the most significance, like the throne room.  
  
As it turned out, there were two throne rooms in the Jade Palace. Both were majestic, with thrones that would suit a human, but while one was obviously meant for people, the other was too immense and cavernous, vast enough to fit much larger creatures.  
  
There was a third throne room, too, hidden in the ice caves below the palace - but that one had been created by Ki Song, so Sunny paid it less attention.  
  
Apart from the ice hall where the Raven Queen's throne stood, a few more caves had been polished and cultivated by the builders of Clan Song. As he found out, that was because Revel had lived in the caves below the Jade Palace once, most likely due to the fact that she was unable to step into sunlight because of her Flaw. In fact, the antisocial princess was still occupying those caves. So, he kept his distance.  
  
Sunny did not find anything particularly relevant to his search in either of the throne rooms, which prompted him to search out other important areas of the Jade Palace. It was hard to say which space had served which purpose, but he eventually discovered a place that should have been the Jade Queen's bedchamber - it was the largest and most opulent one, at least, as well as one with the best view.  
  
Funnily enough, the current ruler of the Jade Palace, Kai, did not use these quarters as his own. Instead, the gorgeous chamber served as a place for strategic meetings with his staff. Sunny accidentally listened to a few of those, finding it funny how different they felt from both the meetings on the Ivory Island and in the dark halls of the Marvellous Mimic.  
  
The former tended to be solemn and dignified, while the latter tended to be irreverent and borderline nonsensical. Kai's style of leadership, however, was personable and pleasant, just like he himself.  
  
Every ruler was different.  
  
In any case, Sunny did not discover anything of note in the Queen's supposed bedchamber, either.  
  
Next, he secretly explored the Gateway itself, which was located in a great hall close to the main gate. The tranquil murmur of water filled the hall, with clear streams of it flowing down the white walls into elaborate channels cut into the jade floor. The Gateway itself was a stunning sculpture, its vague silhouette obscured by the falling water.  
  
Exploring the Gateway Hall was a little difficult because it was always full of people. Naturally, Sunny managed to remain unseen, in the end… to no result whatsoever.  
  
After that, he even spent a day diving into various pools across the Jade Palace - some of them were both vast and immensely deep, so it took some time. Sunny did not find any traces of Weaver's lineage, but he did find out that some of those pools had actually been guest rooms of sort, meant for aquatic creatures.  
  
'Ah… this is a little frustrating.'  
  
Although neither of them had made arrangements, it just happened that Kai and Sunny ended up having dinners together in the evenings. Sunny glanced at the charming Saint and sighed.  
  
'Maybe the thing I am looking for was never in the Jade Queen's possession? The hint only said that it was lost to Dread. Come to think of it, Ariel must have spent plenty of time in the Jade Palace. Where are his chambers? Did he have a place to stay here?'  
  
Kai looked up from his food and raised an eyebrow.  
  
'I don't think so. Then again, we don't really know what daemons looked like, so it is hard to guess.'  
  
Sunny pushed his empty plate away and sighed.  
  
'Who says we don't know what they looked like?'  
  
He raised a hand and made to extend his fingers.  
  
'I met the Daemon of Hope personally. What a stunner! I saw the Daemon of Destiny as well, albeit from afar. Would not recommend. While I never met the Daemon of Fate, I did see their arm once, that was quite memorable. Did you know that Weaver had seven fingers? On each hand, I mean, not overall. Oh, and I've been to the grave of the Daemon of Oblivion. Her sarcophagus is pretty human-sized.'  
  
He scratched the back of his head.  
  
'Don't ask me what they look like, though. It's… pretty hard to describe.'  
  
Kai seemed very focused on his cup of tea, for some reason. He took a deep breath, then said weakly:  
  
'N - no… I wasn't going to ask…'  
  
Sunny looked at him with compassion.  
  
'Poor guy. He must be really tired from work.' Leaning back, he closed his eyes for a few seconds.  
  
'Actually, I'm curious. You did not even ask what it is that I am looking for, or why I must stay hidden. Don't you have any questions at all?'  
  
Kai glanced at him for a while, then smiled faintly and turned around to his cup.  
  
'I've learned not to ask unnecessary questions a long time ago. For someone like me, it's too easy to receive an answer that I would have preferred not to know.'  
  
Sunny opened one eye and studied him silently. Then, he scoffed.  
  
'Oh, because of your Flaw.'  
  
He shook his head. 'I can't say that I understand why someone would choose to remain willingly ignorant, but actually, you might have a point. You are a Saint now, so learning something that should have remained hidden can be dangerous. Some knowledge won't just hurt your feelings - it may very well destroy you. And it will only grow more dangerous the further on the Path of Ascension you go.'  
  
Kai put down his cup and nodded.  
  
'I know. Some truths are not meant to be known by mortal men… and unlike the Daemon of Dread, I can't bury the things I learn in a tomb.'  
  
Sunny grinned.  
  
'There's Cassie, though. She can bury them for you.'  
  
His grin widened a little. ',In fact, who's to say that she hasn't already liberated you from a memory or two? You'd never know.'  
  
Kai glanced at him in confusion, then frowned.  
  
'Cassie would never do something like that without my consent.'  
  
And, at the same time, a familiar voice resounded in his head:  
  
[Hey!]  
  
This time, there was a hint of indignation in it.  
  
Sunny laughed.  
  
'The two of you share something in common.'  
  
He shook his head with a smile. 'Both of you are far too nice to really make use of your terrible powers. I guess it's a relief, though.'  
  
Sunny leaned forward and asked:  
  
'In any case, when is Seishan arriving? Unlike you, all I want is answers. So, I want to ask her a couple of questions.'  
  
Kai hesitated for a few seconds.  
  
'Tomorrow. But… she and her sisters are the backbone of the entire region under my authority.'  
  
Sunny raised an eyebrow.  
  
'And?'  
  
Kai seemed to be considering his words carefully.  
  
'So, Sunny… can you… tone it down when we speaк with them? A little.'  
  
Sunny blinked a couple of times, scandalized.  
  
What kind of question was that?  
  
'Naturally, I can.'  
  
Kai nodded with relief, then suddenly tensed.  
  
'Wait… you said that you can tone it down. Not that you will.'  
  
Sunny gave him a satisfied smile.  
  
'Look at you, Nightingale. You know your friend so well…'