2307 Toy Room  
  
The Toy Room seemed to be located in a remote corner of the Jade Palace, down on one of its lowest and most desolate floors. Revel took the lead, calmly guiding them across the scenic labyrinth of magnificent corridors, halls, and galleries.  
  
Sunny had explored some of these places already, but he had no idea that one could travel between them that speedily, or that many of them were actually connected. More than that, Revel seemed to follow a path that avoided windows, often using secret passages and activating hidden enchantments that revealed previously unseen doorways. They had not met a single soul on the way.  
  
At one point, Sunny looked at Kai.  
  
'Huh?'  
  
It must have been quite unnerving to know that a murderous demoness not only basically lived in his basement, but could also get anywhere in the Jade Palace without being seen. She could probably even appear in Kai's living quarters unnoticed, to do something awful. Like kill him in his sleep. Poor guy must have been sleeping with one eye open for an entire year. Sunny looked at his friend with pity.  
  
'Hey, Kai, she really knows her way around here.'  
  
Kai seemed unperturbed, but hearing Sunny speak, he coughed awkwardly.  
  
'Ah, yes. Certainly. Lady Revel has lived in this palace for a long time, after all.'  
  
Leading them to a narrow stairwell, Revel ignored their voices and yawned.  
  
'Sorry. I usually only go out at night… I would have been asleep by now, considering that the sun is high up.'  
  
Seishan chuckled.  
  
'Come now. I don't need Kai to tell you are lying - you don't usually go out even at night, do you, Revel?'  
  
Revel looked at her sister with an aloof expression.  
  
'Well, true.'  
  
As Sunny had learned after the wall, Dark Dancer was a reclusive homebody, surprisingly enough. She preferred to hide herself in her caves unless there was a mission she had to accomplish.  
  
Technically, Revel was supposed to be managing a Citadel on the Storm Coast, but since days there were long and sunny, she passed it on to one of the newly risen Saints and returned to Ravenheart. Now, she was more or less the cavalry - whenever warriors in the western reaches of the Dream Realm encountered trouble, she was dispatched to solve it with violence. Naturally, she only descended upon the battlefield at night.  
  
Sunny was itching to try recruiting her into the Shadow Clan, considering the eternal darkness that reigned on the Forgotten Shore. But since there was nothing for a Saint to do there, really, he reluctantly postponed that idea. Humanity did not have enough Saints yet to send someone of Revel's caliber his way, anyway - at least for now.  
  
'Is there something on my back?'  
  
Sunny blinked a couple of times, realizing that he had been staring at Revel as she guided them down the stairs. He smiled.  
  
'Not really.'  
  
He paused for a mоment, then added with a chuckle:  
  
'Did you ever imagine that you would be comfortable turning your back to me, though? I find it amusing.'  
  
It was undeniably peculiar to be taking a walk through the halls of Ravenheart with the daughters of Ki Song.  
  
Revel seemed to smile darkly.  
  
'Who says that I am comfortable?'  
  
Sunny laughed quietly.  
  
'Fair.'  
  
Just liкe that, they reached the remote corridor. Most of the Jade Palace was illuminated by sorcerous lights, but the ones here seemed damaged by the passage of time, their radiance dim and uneven.  
  
Sunny glanced at the heavy iron door. In the weak blinking light of the sorcerous lanterns, its gorgeously decorated surface looked dark and uninviting. He looked at Seishan and her sisters.  
  
'You really used to sneak here as children?'  
  
She raised an eyebrow.  
  
'Sure. Why?'  
  
Sunny shook his head in utter bafflement.  
  
'I mean… look around. This place is beyond creepy! I am a Supreme, and even I am creeped out.'  
  
Kai nodded.  
  
'He's telling the truth.'  
  
Sunny gave him a scathing glare.  
  
'Right. Naturally, I am.'  
  
Seishan glanced at him oddly.  
  
'They're just toys, though. Some of them are a little magical, but that's that - what's the worst that can happen?'  
  
Sunny and Kai wince at the same time, as if they had swallowed bitter lemons.  
  
'Why did you have to say that aloud?'  
  
'Lady Seishan, please, do not say things like that!'  
  
The ensuing silence was broken by Death Singer's giggle. She glanced at them brightly.  
  
'Death… oh, death! I feel it! We're all going to die!'  
  
Sunny flinched.  
  
'Not now, damn it. Please!'  
  
Death Singer fell silent and glanced at him with a pout. Shaking her head, Revel opened the heavy door and summoned a Memory lantern.  
  
'Come inside.'  
  
She entered first, followed by her sisters. Sunny and Kai looked at each other and then joined them.  
  
The Toy Room… was, indeed, just that.  
  
Actually, it was a series of rooms, all filled with shelves, display cabinets, and trunks of various sizes. The atmosphere inside the Toy Room must have been festive and lavish once, but now, it seemed forlorn and eerie.  
  
Most of the toys had deteriorated or crumbled into dust, laying on the floor in bleak piles, but some had survived the cruel flow of time. Sunny glanced around warily, taking in the sight of gorgeously dressed dolls, silver knights with articulated joints, plushy magical creatures with beady eyes made from gems, and various playtime implements. The Song sisters were looking around, as well. Seishan was looking at a doll in a pretty dress, Revel was looking at a wind-up swordsman, while Death Singer was mesmerized by a colorful, cute, and chubby stuffed animal. Their expressions were wistful.  
  
Eventually, Seishan shook her head and sighed.  
  
'I really wanted to have this doll back then. But our mother had forbidden us from taking anything out of the room. How odd… now I can take whatever I want freely, and yet, I don't want anything.'  
  
Sunny attention, meanwhile, was drawn to a large dollhouse in the form of a miniature version of the Jade Palace that stood on a stand in the middle of the first room. It was created with a stunning level of intricacy, to the degree that there were even tiny streams of water flowing in the replica of the Gateway Hall.  
  
However, the dollhouse was eerie and frightening instead of gorgeous. That was because all the dolls inside of it - and there were dozens of them - were laying on the floor, dead, their tiny clothes covering intricately carved toy skeletons. What kind of sick toymaker had created this morbid thing?  
  
Sunny raised a hand to touch the wall of the dollhouse.  
  
'I wouldn't do that if I were you.'  
  
Sunny froze in place, then gave Revel a wary look.  
  
'Why?'  
  
She chuckled in her low, cold voice.  
  
'That is how I, Seishan, and Beastmaster ended up disappearing for a week. If you accidentally activate the dollhouse… you'll become a doll.'  
  
Death Singer giggled.  
  
'More of a doll, she means.'  
  
Revel scowled at her.  
  
'Stop it. Regardless, there is nothing dangerous inside, but we were pretty starved by the time our mother found us. I don't know how she reversed the sorcery of the dollhouse, either - which means that no one knows. So, keep your distance.'  
  
Sunny looked at the intricate dollhouses, feeling a chill run down his spine. So all these dolls had not been made to resemble skeletal remains. They had been living beings once, instead. Suddenly, the Toy Room seemed at least a hundred times more sinister.  
  
Exhaling slowly, he took a few careful steps away from the dollhouse and turned away. His smile was forced.  
  
'Let's… let's look around. Carefully.'