2308 Playthings  
  
Sunny really hoped that the piece of Weaver's lineage was not hidden inside the dollhouse. Luckily, he felt nothing but an eerie sense of repulsion when standing in front of the terrifying toy… even though he was neither Fated nor connected to the tapestry of fate anymore, and therefore had lost his supernatural intuition, his senses as a Supreme were still beyond that of a mere mortal. He would have felt something if a daemon's legacy was nearby. More importantly, Blood Weave would have reacted to the presence of another piece of the Demon of Fate.  
  
So, after studying the creepy dollhouse from a safe distance, Sunny shifted his attention elsewhere. He did feel that there was something special about that particular toy… a subtle scent of a daemon, even.  
  
But that scent did not belong to Weaver.  
  
'I think Ariel made this one.'  
  
Kai looked at him, remained silent for a bit, and nodded. 'That very well may be.'  
  
Sunny glanced around the Toy Room, studying various toys. The Song sisters had wandered off, lost in the memories of their childhoods… despite his unease, this place must have been magical for adolescent girls. Especially those who had been orphans once, like Seishan and her sisters. Orphans did not live easy lives in this world. Sunny knew it all too well himself… and just like them, he had been robbed of the joy of having toys as a kid.  
  
Granted, unlike them, he had not been adopted by a powerful Legacy witch. Come to think of it…  
  
Sunny narrowed his eyes and looked at Seishan.  
  
'The Song sisters were adopted. Rain was adopted. What the hell, how come I'm the only one who hasn't been adopted?!'  
  
Where was justice in that?  
  
Kai smiled faintly.  
  
'You have a peculiar expression, Sunny. What are you thinking about?'  
  
Sunny lingered for a few seconds, then shook his head.  
  
'Just thinking about how my life would have changed if someone like Ki Song had taken me off the streets. For better or worse.'  
  
He sighed. 'She really cared about her daughters a lot. However… she also forced the lineage of Beast God on them, as well as infected them with the Nightmare Spell. Were they lucky or unlucky to have met her? I'm not quite sure.'  
  
With that, he glanced around once more and added, his voice somber: 'I'm also not sure if the Jade Queen was lucky to have met the Demon of Dread.'  
  
Kai raised an eyebrow.  
  
'How do you mean?'  
  
Sunny shrugged.  
  
'Well, think about it. Why is there a room full of toys in the depths of the Jade Palace?'  
  
Kai seemed stumped by the question. Sunny remained silent for a bit, then said wistfully: 'It is possible that the Jade Queen had children, or that she simply enjoyed collecting toys. However, it is also possible that she was raised here, in this stone palace. By the Demon of Dread.'  
  
He looked at the figurines wearing pretty dresses, dashing knights cast of precious metals, plush beasts with gemlike eyes… and the intricate dollhouse brimming with the bones of perished dolls.  
  
His expression turned somber. 'Daemons were forbidden from siring offspring, you know. But they all seemed to rebel against that prohibition, in their own ways. Weaver left behind a secret Lineage. Nether created the Stone Saints. Hope lived among humans and cared for them as their own. The Demon of Imagination had her mirrors and illusiоns…'  
  
Sunny sighed.  
  
'But what did Ariel have?'  
  
Kai hesitated for a few seconds, then said cautiously:  
  
'He had the Jade Queen?'  
  
Sunny shrugged, unsure.  
  
'Possibly.'  
  
With that, he left Kai behind and went to explore the Toy Room.  
  
The five of them wandered the series of chambers for a while, studying the curios hidden there in ancient times. There were a lot of wondrous things to see, but none of them was what Sunny wanted to find.  
  
Eventually, only one last room remained.  
  
And, coincidentally, Sunny felt his blood stir as he approached it.  
  
'There?'  
  
He looked at Kai and the Song sisters, hesitated for a few seconds, and said:  
  
'Wait.'  
  
They glanced at him curiously.  
  
Sunny did not knоw what he would discover in the depths of the Toy Room, but he had a strong suspicion that the fourth piece of Weaver's lineage would not fall into his hands easily. The first three had not, after all.  
  
So… he had to be careful. Looking at his companions - one intended, the other three accidental, he took a deep breath and spoke: 'There is a high chance that something unexpected will happen once we enter that rоom. Whatever it is… don't panic and let me handle it. If things seem too dangerous, retreat immediately.'  
  
He paused, scratched his head, and then added nonchalantly: 'Oh, and if something happens to me… wait until the next me arrives. Should only take a few days.'  
  
There was a small chance that he would lose an incarnation here. That did not mean that he would give up on recovering the piece of Weaver's Legacy.  
  
Revel tilted her head a little.  
  
'The next… you?'  
  
Sunny gave her a wide smile.  
  
'Yeah, the next me. What, did you think that being killed once would actually kill me?'  
  
She stared at him for a few seconds, then let out a frustrated sigh.  
  
'If I didn't think that, I wouldn't have tried to kill you, would I?'  
  
Sunny laughed.  
  
'Probably not. But, hey… it was an admirable attempt. No, really - the ambush at Vanishing Lake was like a work of art. I gained so much that day. Thank you.'  
  
Revel gritted her teeth, then ground them.  
  
'You're welcome.'  
  
Kai leaned toward him and whispered:  
  
'She's lying. You're not welcome.'  
  
Sunny gave him a stare, and then whispered back:  
  
'Why are you whispering, fool? Everyone can hear you!'  
  
Kai coughed in embarrassment.  
  
'Oh… right. Sorry. It's a habit.'  
  
Shaking his head, Sunny took a deep breath and summoned Slayer. The murderous Shadow rose from the darkness, looking at him and his companions from behind her veil.  
  
Death Singer immediately pointed a finger and opened her mouth, her face beaming with excitement, but before she could say anything, Seishan covered her mouth with a hand.  
  
'Ah… I see you have a new servant, my lord.'  
  
Sunny smiled.  
  
'Oh, she's not a servant. She's an employee. Actually, now that I think about it, the two of you are kindred spirits. She only accepts paymеnt in blood.'  
  
Seishan did not say anything, but her gorgeous eyes suddenly glistened with a peculiar emotion.  
  
Sunny chuckled.  
  
'But don't worry, I won't be collecting blood donations today. I already paid her this week, and plus… I don't want to brag, but she only has a taste for my blood.'  
  
Turning away, she pushed the last door open and walked inside a small гoom.  
  
It had shelves with ancient toys, as well, but there was also a low table in the middle of it, surrounded by soft cushions. There was something on the table…  
  
A square jade board with small hinges in the middle, which suggested that it could be folded to become a case. Its surface was separated into seven rows of seven squares each - most of them were white, with only three squares at the bottom of the board standing out due to their vivid black color. There were intricately carved figurines standing on various squares, too, most of them representing alarming monsters. The three black figurines were surrounded by a dozen white ones.  
  
Sunny stared at the board intently, feeling his blood reacting to it with a peculiar, tingling sensation.  
  
There were no Nightmare Creatures inside the room. No awful danger, no startling secrets.  
  
Just old toys and the radiantly crafted jade board.  
  
Sunny raised an eyebrow, confused.  
  
'What the hell is this?'  
  
Slayer was already in the room, and Kai entered next.  
  
He glanced around, then studied the jade board curiously. Finally, he spoke:  
  
'I think it's… chess.'