2311 Snow and Ash  
'This… is a new one.' Sunny studied the odd and magnificent landscape. The dark slopes of the fuming volcano drowned in falling ash, snowy peaks rose from the sea of clouds in the distance…  
  
Darkness and moonlight were intertwined like an elegant ink painting. A concerned expression settled on his face.  
'Snow and ash, huh?' The white side of this Death Game seemed to be Snow, while the black side seemed to be Ash.  
  
Considering that Sunny was standing on the central of the three volcanoes, he had become a warrior of Ash.  
And not just any warrior, at that - in the game that Ariel and the Jade Queen had left unfinished, the black figure on the middle black square was wearing a crown. Which meant that Sunny had assumed the role of the Ash Tyrant. He groaned quietly.  
'Curse it all!'  
  
There were only three black squares left on the board, while the othеr forty - six were white. There were also only three black figures left - the Tyrant and two Beasts - while the white side had twelve. Somehow, Sunny could not imagine Ariel losing so miserably. So, it must have been the Jade Queen who had played Ash…  
'Just how terrible were you at chess, damn it?'  
  
Sunny huffed in outrage, his heart overflowing with indignation. He was not sure what the future held, but there was a high chance that he would have to finish the game if he wanted to escape the alarming jade board.  
That meant killing the Snow Tyrant from a woefully disadvantaged position. Wasn't the Jade Queen supposed to be renowned for her wisdom? Couldn't she have left him more figures to fight with, at least?  
He exhaled slowly.  
'Calm down.'  
  
He did not know anything yet. Even if his suspicion was on point, there was no telling how this Death Game worked. Obviously, the laws governing the artificial realm had to be different from the rules of the actual game, even if they seemed to be based on it.  
The battles between figures transpired according to the rules, for example - if the rules dictated that a figure had to lose, it would lose. But Sunny was not merely a figure… he was a person. A person who was notoriously difficult to kill and infamously lethal, no less.  
So, he could very well manage to slay the adversary despite the rules dictating his defeat.  
  
'Wait, the adversary?' Sunny's already somber expression turned even darker. Who was his adversary, exactly? The answer seemed obvious - it had to be the Snow Tyrant and the rest of the white pieces.  
But what were those pieces? Since Sunny was not a figure, but a living being that the game board had imprisoned…  
Then the rest of the figures could be the same. Remembering the dreаdful depths of Corruption contained within the beautiful jade board, he grimaced.  
If the Snow figures were indeed living beings, they had to be powerful Nightmare Creatures. He had been surprised to see a well of appalling darkness greater and deeper than even the soul of Condemnation, but if its source was not one, but twelve ancient abominations… then it made sense.  
'They are of the Great Rank, at least. Cursed Rank?' Sunny sighed deeply. What about the Ash figures, then?  
  
He was the Ash Tyrant, but there had also been two Ash Beasts on the board. Were they Nightmare Creatures, too, or had someone else been brought into the Death Game with him? Usually, Cassie would be able to serve as a messenger between him and his allies, but his mental connection with her seemed to have been broken.  
  
Sunny hesitated for a while.  
'First things first…' Before considering how to win the Death Game, he had to make sure that there was no way to simply escape it.  
If there was, then he would have no reason to fight the Snow Abominations. Or rather, fight them unprepared. Sunny was still determined to recover the piece of Weaver's lineage, and that piece was connected to the Snow Tyrant. Which meant that the Snow Tyrant and he would have to meet at some point.  
  
Sunny slowly assessed the situation. His current state was quite anomalous, and it was time to address the issue now.  
'How odd…'  
The first anomaly was quite bizarre. It was that he could not sense what his other incarnations were sensing. Sunny had seven bodies, but he only had one mind - so, that should not have been possible. And yet, it was.  
He could not sense the shadows around his shades or around the members of the Shadow Clan, either. For the first time in a long while, his mind was quiet and desolate, populated by the senses of only a single avatar. It was sort of peaceful. Even his shadow sense was suppressed, enveloping only the part of the volcano that towered above the clouds.  
  
'Damn Ariel… I really hate that guy. Each of his creations is worse than the previous one.' Sunny scratched the back of his head, then sighed loudly.  
'Well, I am sure that my other incarnations are doing just fine.' More importantly, he could not feel a connection to his Domain.  
Actually, he could not even feel a connection to his source element - the shadows still welcomed him, but he was not receiving any spirit essence from them… or from his army of shades, for that matter.  
  
Despite that, Sunny was connected to a Domain and was being nourished by a source element. It was just that they were not his Domain and his source element. Instead, it was…  
'Ash?'  
Well, that made sense. He was the Ash Tyrant, after all. It would be reasonable to assume that his power would grow the more peaks he conquered.  
Currently, he only controlled three, while the Snow Tyrant controlled forty - six. Sunny did not like these numbers at all.  
  
'Moving on.' He was quite curious about whether or not he could summon his shades. If he could, destroying the Snow figures would be much easier…  
But, alas, he couldn't. In fact, he could not even enter his Soul Sea, or summon Memories.  
He could not summon his Shadows, either.  
'Oh, come on!' Sunny gritted his teeth.  
  
After assessing the situation, he concluded that the situation was simply ridiculous.  
'So, in conclusion…' He was trapped in a game created by the Demon of Dread, stripped of his powers, his equipment, and his minions.  
All he had was this one body and the shirt on his back… the proverbial shirt on his back, rather, since his clothes had been actually manifested from shadows. These were the only resources available to him in order to deal with twelve ancient horrors, including the ominous Snow Tyrant.  
  
Sunny lingered for a while, then smiled crookedly.  
'This is quite unfair, isn't it?' …For the Snow Tyrant, naturally.  
Whose bright idea had it been to invite the Heir of Death to play the Death Game?  
Sunny shook his head. Those fools did not know what was coming for them.