2314 Pawns of Snow  
Sunny remained silent for a while, then chuckled.  
'Well, whatever it is, we'll find out sooner or later - as long as we live long enough.'  
He considered his next steps. Kai, meanwhile, was studying him with a complicated expression.  
'So you are searching for pieces of a daemon's Lineage?'  
Sunny nodded.  
'Yes. And one of those pieces is somehow connected to the Snow Tyrant. Speaking of…'  
He hesitated for a moment, then asked:  
'You saw me from all the way on that other volcano. And you can see Slayer, too. So… can you see what is waiting for us on those three mountains, as well?'  
Kai opened his mouth, then closed it again and looked into the distance. After a while, he said in a subdued tone:  
'Yeah. I see them.'  
'Bingo.'  
Now, he would at least know what they would have to face. Sunny leaned on his odachi lazily and asked, his voice calm:  
'There should be three Snow Beasts on those mountains. What do they look like?'  
Kai hurriedly glanced away, as if someone out there stared back at him. He shivered, then brushed his hair back and straightened.  
'Right in front of us… the whole mountain is riddled with caves, like an enormous ice beehive. Inside, a swarm of insect-like abominations is slowly coming to life, each of them seemingly carved from gemstones. They look frightful, if a little mindless.'  
Sunny's face fell.  
'Huh.'  
'So a single figure can represent a whole swarm of abominations, not just a lone Beast. I see. What of the other two mountains?'  
Kai frowned.  
'The one on the right… there's a statue standing on its peak. No, not a statue… more of an automaton, I guess? A clockwork knight. Actually, he looks like the giant version of one of the toy knights we saw in the Toy Room. I feel an enormous amount of dread when looking at him, though. That one… is not an easy Abomination, I think.'  
  
This time, it was Sunny's turn to frown.  
'If a single Abomination makes Kai more wary than a swarm of them, then it must be powerful. A Cursed Beast? It's possible.'  
'And what is on the third mountain?'  
Kai shivered.  
'There is a worm-like creature there. Actually, it's not on the mountain… it's inside the mountain. This creature is simply enormous - it seemed to have hollowed out the entire mountain and made a nest inside of it, coiling into a sphere. It took me a while to realize what that immense mass of flesh was.'  
A sour expression appeared on Sunny's face.  
'A giant ice worm, huh.'  
He had just come from months of battling giant millipedes. He had really had enough of worm-like creatures.  
Sunny sighed.  
'I'm guessing that one is a Cursed One, as well.'  
  
A swarm of Great nightmare creatures and two fallen deities… and these were some of the weakest Snow figures on the board. The first battles of the Death Game promised to be quite unpleasant.  
  
Sunny glanced at Kai.  
'What is your condition? I mean… how weird is it?'  
Kai seemed to understand what he meant.  
'My Aspect is entirely unaffected. However, I can't enter my soul sea, my source element seems to have switched to ash, and on top of that, I can't summon any Memories - only those I was wearing when the game snatched us are left. That is… just my armor.'  
Sunny nodded silently.  
'So you are completely unarmed?'  
Kai nodded in discomfort.  
'Yes. I can still assume my Transcendent form, though. So… that's something.'  
He said that, but he was wrong. It would have been fine to engage the enemies as a dragon in most other situations, but here, the enemies were much stronger than Kai. He could probably fight a Great Nightmare Creature… but not a Cursed One.  
At least not at a close distance. If he had a good bow and arrows, though, he could at least assist Sunny from afar - Kai was an archer of sublime skill, after all, second only to Slayer herself.  
Sadly, he was in the same predicament as Sunny. Ariel's Game had sealed their soul arsenals, somehow.  
Sunny sighed.  
'It's a good thing that I weaned myself off overly relying on Memories. Kai is a different story, though.'  
  
'Alright. I get it.'  
What had he found out?  
There were powerful enemies on the three snowy peaks facing the three volcanoes. Moving from the volcanoes to the peaks, and vice versa, was prohibited at the moment… however, moving between the mountains of the same Domain seemed to be allowed.  
There was an important difference from the actual Death Game he could not overlook, too. It was that Kai was currently standing next to him. If he was simply moving figures across the game board, two game pieces would not have been able to occupy the same square.  
'There has to be a way to make an actual move.'  
In other words, if some conditions were met, he would be able to attack the Snow Abominations… but since Sunny did not know the laws governing this miniature world, yet, it was far more probable that the Snow Abominations would attack him first.  
Rather, they would either make a move to attack the Ash Tyrant, or attempt to conquer the remaining volcanoes first. Seishan had mentioned that there were special squares in some versions of the Death Game. Squares with a Castle, for example, never changed color… if the crumbling fortress on this volcano was one such castle, then the Snow Tyrant could attempt to conquer the other two volcanoes to prepare for the final siege.  
'Are there any structures on the volcano you came from or on the one where my Shadow is currently waiting to be rescued?'  
Kai shook his head.  
'Not that I can see.'  
Sunny lingered for a few seconds, then nodded slowly.  
'Alright. Then, do me a favоr please… go to the next volcano over and bring that murderous woman here. Whatever happens next, we'll have a better chance to survive it together.'  
Kai smiled.  
'No problem.'  
A moment later, before Sunny had time to say anything else, he was already flying away.  
'She's not going to kill him, right? Right. She wouldn't.'  
Wouldn't she?  
Sunny scratched the back of his head.  
'Why am I worried? If I need to worry about something, it's that Slayer might become one of Kai's fangirls too!'  
Shaking his head, he sat down on the ground and reached into the shadows.  
'I won't give her any more of my blood if she does. Kai can give her his if he wants!'  
Above him, the wound his javelin had dealt to the veil of ash that obscured the sky was alгeady repairing itself, and the world was once again submerging in darkness.