2321 Truth or Death  
  
The world was coming to an end.  
  
On an endless white plain, the corpses of lesser gods lay broken and shattered. Rivers of ichor were flowing across the fractured ice like molten gold, cascading into the depths of an imprisoned ocеan. High above, the sky was broken as well. Tendrils of nothingness were seeping through the fissures, slowly consuming the vast expanse of the firmament.  
  
A giant was kneeling in the middle of the silent battlefield, grasping his head with two enormous hands. Golden blood and viscous streams of grey matter were flowing through his fingers, and his radiant eyes were darting around, feverish and dazed.  
  
His gorgeous ivory armor was torn, and his spear lay on the ice, forgotten, still brimming with the echoes of destructive lightning.  
  
The giant was a deity, his spirit as vast as a world.  
  
His lips moved, whispering:  
  
'I… I am… I am, I am… I am…'  
  
His whispers were full of dread.  
  
Then, he suddenly grew still and glanced down, at the empty vastness of the broken ice in front of him.  
  
The giant's expression slowly grew eerily calm, and his voice grew even, sounding deeper and lower than it had before.  
  
He lowered his hands, allowing his broken skull to come undone, and spoke:  
  
'Hail Weaver… Firstborn of the Forgotten God.'  
  
As he did, a nebulous figure was suddenly revealed on the ice, shrouded by a tattered mantle and wearing a fearsome mask. A voice that was like a thousand hopeless prayers resounded from behind the mask, making the giant shiver.  
  
'Brother, my brother. Why are you hiding inside this hideous corpse?'  
  
The giant laughed with a voice that was not his own, then spoke in an insidious whisper:  
  
'Ah… must you offend me so, Weaver? Must you abandon all fear when facing the Demon of Dread? All of us daemons have sworn to destroy you. Why are you here? Why have you revealed yourself?'  
  
The fearsome mask of the nebulous daemon stayed still.  
  
Weaver remained silent for a while, then spoke:  
  
'My brother knows what everyone fears, and therefore, he knows everyone's truth. However, I know no fear. What then is my truth?'  
  
The wind moved the tattered mantle, revealing nothing of what was hidden beneath.  
  
'I thought I'd offer you to play a game.'  
  
The dying giant gazed upon him, light dimming slowly in his golden eyes.  
  
'A game? Ah… what kind of game?'  
  
The Demon of Fate responded to the dуing deity:  
  
'A game of death, naturally. Whoever wins will give the other one a truth. And if I lose, I will allow myself to be destroyed.'  
  
The giant shuddered and collapsed, and as he did, the broken ice swallowed his corpse.  
  
A faint whisper drifted above the harrowing battlefield:  
  
'Come… I accept…'  
  
The world suddenly disappeared into nothingness, replaced by a familiar room.  
  
A masked figure was sitting on the cushions in front of an exquisite jade board. The room was drowning in darkness, and from that darkness, a whisper came:  
  
'I know what truth I seek. But what truth can you, who sees the depths of fate, be lacking? What is it that you wish to learn, Weaver?'  
  
The fearsome mask of the Demon of Fate glanced at the darkness. A thousand intertwined voices resounded from below it, making the darkness tremble.  
  
'Do you know how fate can be broken, brother?'  
  
A porcelain hand rose from the depths of the tattered mantle and grasped the figure of a figure carved from white jade.  
  
'That is what I wish to learn.'  
  
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Sunny let out a groan and collapsed to his knees.  
  
'Ah…'  
  
The echo of the insidious whisper and the aftershock of the nebulous voice were still ringing in his ears. He shuddered, feeling a terrible pressure crushing his mind.  
  
'Sunny?'  
  
Kai was startled, rushing to support him.  
  
Sunny waved him away.  
  
'I am… I am fine.'  
  
He was, indeed, fine - if a little worse to wear.  
  
'What happened?'  
  
Sunny slowly picked himself off the floor and glanced at the remaining jade figure on the altar.  
  
'Hell if I know.'  
  
His voice sounded subdued.  
  
One moment, he was standing in the keep of the Ash Castle, and the next moment, he was in the middle of a distressing battlefield, the world coming undone around him, witnessing two daemons having a peculiar conversation.  
  
Weaver and Ariel… Fate and Dread.  
  
The master of lies and the keeper of truths.  
  
Weaver's nebulous figure seemed to be a bit ragged, for a lofty Divinity. The conversation must have taken place during the Doom War, when the sinister daemon was being hunted both by their siblings and by the gods. That porcelain hand looked familiar, as well… it must have been the one Weaver had assembled from the parts of the broken mannequins in the Ebony Tower.  
  
Ariel, meanwhile, seemed to have been possessing the body of a defeated Divine champion - the giant who wielded a spear infused with ferocious endlessness of golden lightning. Sunny had not seen what the Demon of Dread actually looked like until the very end… possibly Ariel did not look like anything, at all.  
  
Maybe the Demon of Dread existed only as a whisper.  
  
In any case, Weaver had offered to play a game with high stakes, and Ariel accepted.  
  
'I think… I just saw a vision. Of sorts.'  
  
What Sunny had seen did not feel like a vision. Actually, it did not feel like anything he was familiar with. It was as if he was there, but not there. As if he was present, but also absent.  
  
As if he had simply learned the truth of what had happened on that day.  
  
Sunny winced, feeling the pressure of witnessing three gods - two daemons and a dying Divine human - subside slowly, allowing him to breathe freely once more.  
  
'Who was that giant?'  
  
Kai, meanwhile, raised an eyebrow.  
  
'Uh… are you prone to receiving visions, Sunny?'  
  
Sunny shook his head.  
  
'No. Rather, it seems like throwing the figure of the Snow Beast into the volcano triggered it.'  
  
He hesitated for a while.  
  
'In any case, I think I was wrong.'  
  
Kai frowned.  
  
'About what?'  
  
Looking around, Sunny remembered the jade board and the desperate position of the Ash Domain. The Ash was losing desperately.  
  
He inhaled deeply.  
  
'I don't think that the Jade Queen played Ash.'  
  
Sunny looked at the figure of the Snow Beast once more and said, his voice subdued:  
  
'I think the Demon of Dread played Ash. As for Snow… it must have been played by Weaver.'