2344 Nature of the Beast  
There were a few minutes left before sunset. Sunny, Kai, and Slayer were on the slope of the volcano, waiting for the obsidian bridges to span the vast divide between them and the mountain where the Snow Worm lay in wait. Sunny was calm, while Slayer was her usual malevolent self. Kai, however, seemed worried. Watching him count his arrows for the tenth time, Sunny sighed.  
  
'That worm is a Beast. Which means that it is huge, strong - and dumb. Dealing with a dumb beast is not that difficult… however, it is also of the Cuгsed Rank. Which means that it is a lesser god. I know that you are a spеcialist in killing dragons, Kai, but have you ever killed a god?' The charming archer slowly shook his head. 'No. Have you?' Sunny chuckled. 'Not really. I did kill a dead god once, though.' Kai took a deep breath, prompting Sunny to smile. 'It was a minor god, and the Shadow Realm did most of the job. I only dealt it the last blow.' He paused for a moment, then shrugged. 'I have yet to slay a Cursed Beast, but in normal circumstances, it would not have been too big of a problem. Sadly, I am severely weakened by the current circumstances. So, we will have to really apply ourselves today. If we don't kill that thing before night comes, we'll probably die.' They did not simply have to kill the Snow Worm - they had to kill it before the sun disappeared behind the horizon. If they failed to slay the Cursed Beast in time, they would have to retreat to the volcano. And if they did, all three Snow Abominations would attack them come dawn - two Cursed Beasts and a Devil of unknown Rank. Defeat was not guaranteed, but Sunny did not count their chances of repelling all three nightmare creatures high. He smiled. 'I did watch good old Anvil fight a Cursed Tyrant once, though. So, I know a thing or two about fighting gods.' Sunny considered his words for a moment. 'Fighting a god, lesser or otherwise, is different from fighting any other Nightmare Creature. That is because gods exist outside the boundary of absolute laws that govern all of existence. They are not free from them, but… let's just say that they have more liberty in interpreting how these laws work, as applied to them. What I mean to say is that the existence of deities, from the point of view of us mortals, is inherently irrational.'  
  
He shook his head. 'That… is a long way to say that when we engage the Snow Worm, you should not be surprised when weird things start to happen.' Kai chuckled. 'Weird things? Oh, I think I have developed a high tolerance to weirdness… after spending some time with you, I mean. I guess you truly are a demigod, Sunny! In more ways than just one.' Sunny gave him an oblivious look. 'Huh? What do you mean? Me, weird?' Kai blinked a couple of times. ',Forget I said anything.' He remained silent for a bit, then spoke again: 'I am curious, though. You and Nephis… you want to become Sacred yourselves, don't you?' Sunny was a little surprised by the question. He shrugged. 'I am not sure that it is something that we want. Rather, it is a means to an end. It's something that we have to do.' Kai smiled. 'Doesn't that mean that, soon enough, you will become inherently irrational, too? Aren't you afraid?' Sunny scratched the back of his head. 'Well. I haven't thought about the issue from that point of view, before.' He hesitated. 'But… yes. I am a bit afraid. Actually, I am very afraid. Of what I will become, and what I won't be anymore.' He remained silent for a while, then shrugged. 'But I have some experience with that. Becoming something new and leaving some of myself behind, I mean. I am not sure if I should say this, but… did you know? Actually…' Sunny glanced at Kai somberly. ',You may not believe it, but I haven't always been this good - looking.' Kai stared at him. 'Uh…' Sunny gave him a solemn nod. 'Indeed. I know it's hard to believe, but if anyone can, it's you. After all, you can sense when people tell lies.' Kai cleared his throat. 'I see. So… correct me if I am wrong… but are you saying that you becoming attractive is a change of the same magnitude as someone mortal becoming a god?' Sunny stared at him with indignation. 'I am definitely not!' 'That bastard!' But at least Kai wasn't counting his arrows anymore. Instead, he shook his head and laughed quietly. 'For what it's worth, I doubt you'll lеave a lot of yourself behind even if you do become a deity, Sunny. I am not sure how to describe it, but… you seem like someone who will always be himself, no matter the circumstances.'  
  
Sunny smiled. Then, he frowned. 'Are you, perchance, implying that I am already so weird that becoming any weirder will be impossible?' Kai coughed. 'No, naturally not! I definitely… was not implying that…' Sunny grinned. 'Good, good. Because if you had… I was going to take it as a challenge.' Just then, the sun finally touched the horizon, and the volcano they were standing on spat out a billowing cloud of ash. Soon enough, a bridge of glossy obsidian connected the ashen slope to the distant mountain, glowing in the scarlet radiance of the dying sun. Sunny smiled. 'Let's hurry. You know what they say… the early bird gets the worm!' He jumped down to the surface of the bridge, utterly appalled by himself. 'Gods… what the hell did I just say? Did I really say that?' The early bird gets the worm?! It seemed that hanging out with Kai so much after being deprived of the charming archer's company for so long was having a negative impact on his sanity. That joke was truly, unforgivably terrible, worthy of being spoken by that despicable old fool, Jest. The last thing Sunny wanted was to resemble Jest in any shape or form. Groaning inwardly, he rushed forward. He had to kill a Cursed Beast, and he had to do it quickly.