2361 As Old and as True as the Sky  
  
The wolf lunged forward.  
  
As it did, the world itself seemed to crumple and shrink, the space folding on itself as the Cursed Demon tore through. Sunny felt it in his bones - an alien, violent presence invading his Domain, its boundless ferocity pushing against the brittle walls of his authority, making them rattle and crack.  
'Not… so quick…'  
  
Sunny gritted his teeth and pushed back, asserting his will over the dark expanse of the towering volcano. As he did, the surrounding space became less pliable and more indomitable, as it was meant to be.  
So what if the Snow Demon was a god? Sunny was a Sovereign within the bounds of his Domain. He was the ultimate authority here, and a mere Cursed One was not powerful enough to assert dominance over his kingdom.  
The three-eyed wolf might not have been weakened by the Ash Domain because the Shrine of Truth was surrounded from all sides by snowy peaks, but it was still an invader here. The rules of Ariel's Game were not helping Sunny, but the laws of existence were - any adversary would be at a great disadvantage when attacking a Supreme within their Domain.  
Especially if that Supreme was a Titan.  
As Sunny's titanic will clashed with the will of the Snow Demon, the distressing advance of the latter slowed down - enough so, at least, for the Obsidian Wasps to rush down the slope and intercept the wolf before it could leap аt Sunny.  
  
The shades moved in harmony with each other, assembling into a crescent phalanx as they scurried down the slope at great speed - some moving on the ground, some jumping into the air and unfolding their translucent wings to fly. Sunny was getting better and better at commanding his shades, so this kind of intricate control was not beyond him anymore.  
The Wasps were meant to break the Snow Demon's momentum, stall it, and attack it from both sides - opening it up for the punishing attack by Sunny himself.  
However, before they could descend upon the grotesque fiend, the figure of the giant wolf suddenly burst into a hurricane of snow. The billowing white wall swallowed the front rows of the shades and simply… erased them from existence, each snowflake cutting into glossy obsidian like a razor-form blade.  
Sunny lost dozens of his Obsidian Wasps in an instant.  
  
Feeling concerned, he quickly called the rest of them back and thrust his odachi deep into the ground.  
A web of fractures shot through the slope of the volcano from the point where the black blade pierced the rock, and in the next moment, roaring geysers of luminous lava shot from under the ground, making the raging snow shinе with a gorgeous red glow.  
  
The Snow Demon coalesced into its bestial form once more, jumping over the fiery fissures to tear into the гetreating shades. Its awful maw opened аnd closed, easily crushing several of them between the jade fangs in one bite.  
The rest of the Obsidian Wasps escaped into the air, circling around the Cursed Nightmare Creature like a swarm.  
  
By now, Sunny knew that his shades would not be able to buy him much time… but they could still buy him a second or two to think, at least.  
'I wonder…'  
Sunny had not fought a lot of Cursed Nightmare Creatures just yet, but he already suspected that each of them embodied some kind of concept - or at least wielded one as a weapon.  
The Snow Worm, Abundance, was the easiest example. The name Sunny had given it was also its essence. That Cursed Beast had used the concept of infinity to make itself inexhaustible, indestructible, and inevitable… until it had met an inglorious end by Sunny's hand.  
What concept did this Cursed Demon embody, then? What was the weapon it used?  
  
Then again… Beasts were easy creatures by definition. Demons, meanwhile, were beings of a far higher order and sophistication. They were cunning, insidious fiends whose dreadful malice was borne of keen intelligence. So, possibly what a Cursed Demon embodied was incomparable to the easy nature of Abundance.  
'Who is this adversary of mine?'  
Sunny felt that victory or defeat, as well as his very survival, depended on finding a correct answer to this question.  
The creature in front of him… had been a bestial Spirit once. A primordial predator who had hunted the first humans at the dawn of time, only to fall to their flint spears when the humans learned to be hunters instead of prey.  
Perhaps it had been corrupted by the Void back then, already. Perhaps it had been a benevolent guardian Spirit of a human tribe before falling prey to human malice and being reborn as a harrowing wгaith. In any case…  
It was truly ancient. It was a being from before history existed, having been born and slain in the age when even the gods were young, let alone the world they had created. A horror from the beginning of… everything.  
So, wasn't Sunny's thinking too constricted by the complexities of the modern era?  
  
He felt something - a hint of an intuitive understanding. It came from the primal fear he had felt when the Snow Demon's gaze fell upon him.  
Why did the grotesque wolf have to embody a concept of anything?  
Why couldn't it just be the embodiment of a… wolf?  
Of the Wolf. The first, or perhaps the most flawless member of their storied tribe.  
Sunny shifted faintly, watching the Wolf eviscerate the swarm of hapless Supreme shades.  
  
If his enemy was indeed the embodiment of the concept of a wolf, then it was already at a deadly disadvantage. It was alone, after all…  
While the true strength of a wolf was the pack.  
Just as Sunny thought that, a litany of dreadful howls resounded from the other side of the volcano, where Slayer was fighting the Great Beasts - the Snow Wolves.  
He paled.  
",Crap."  
At that moment, he knew that he had to prevent the Wolf from uniting with the pack of lesser Beasts on the northern slope of the volcano at all costs.  
And he also knew something else.  
His odachi rippled and elongated, turning into a black spear, Sunny dismissed most of his armor and aimed his spear at the distressing demon.  
If his enemy was truly the source and embodiment of all wolves…  
Then who was its greatest adversary?  
Naturally… it was the hunter.