2369 Fine Thread  
Once again, Sunny gave Kai and Slayer one jade Beast figure each, to be sacrificed to the Shrine of Truth. Everything happened as it had happened before - after being placed on the altar, the figures turned to ash and were absorbed by them. A second ring was added to the one already encircling their soul cores…  
  
Well, a soul core in the case of Kai. In the case of Slayer, though, Sunny was not entirely sure what to call the radiant ember at the heart of her unfathomably dark self. A shard of a core in a shadow of a soul, possibly.  
  
Looking at it, he remembered what Eurys had told him once. That his Shadows were not entirely complete… if there was a way to complete them, Sunny did not know what it was. Or if there was a need or a benefit to completing them.  
All he knew was that Slayer had been complete before being slain by his blade, but now, she was a part of him - just like the rest of his Shadows.  
'Another mystery to solve… one day.'  
  
The second ring of ash made Kai and Slayer much stronger. It also allowed Sunny to imbue them with far more of his Will - enough so that he would not worry about sending either of them into a battle with Great Nightmаre Creatures.  
As for the Cursed Ones, well… Sunny himself was not too confident when facing those. With how much his companions were enhanced by his Will, however, they would at least be able to help him take the Cursed Ones down. Their arrows would not bounce off the flesh of those fallen gods without leaving a scratch.  
'That's something.'  
  
That was quite a boon, actually. The shadows of the Wolf and its pack were resting in his soul now, as well - as long as Sunny could summon the shade of the Sacred Demon into existence, his small army was going to become tremendously more powerful.  
Still…  
  
He studied the third jade figure - the Snow Demon figure - which was left laying on his palm.  
He wanted to become stronger, as well. Five of the Snow Tyrant's abominations had already fallen by his hand, including three Cursed Ones… but instead of making him feel secure, the experience of those battles only made Sunny feel trepidation.  
The battle against the Wolf had been a close one. He had triumphed in the end, and it was quite a spectacular victory. And yet, nobody knew better than Sunny how easily he could have lost his life instead.  
How was he going to fight a Cursed Devil?  
  
There was a qualitative jump in power between Monsters and Demons, because Demons were sapient. But there was just as significant of a jump betwеen Demons and Devils, because Devils wielded profane and distressing powers. What was he going to do when a fallen deity unleashed its powers against him?  
What if that deity was accompanied not by Beasts, but by Monsters? Or even creatures of a higher Class?  
So… Sunny was not going to refuse more power.  
  
That said, he also wanted to learn the truth.  
Whatever boost he could receive from sacrificing the Snow Demon figure to the Shrine of Truth was bound to be if not insignificant, then at least marginal. Kai and Slayer could borrow his Will with the help of ash, but what would Sunny borrow? At most, his strength would somewhat increase.  
  
Knowledge, on the other hand, was the origin of all power. It was none other than Weaver themself who had said it… so, learning a useful truth could actually give him far more power than sacrificing a figure would.  
Or not.  
'I've decided.'  
  
Sunny sighed.  
"I think I am going to toss this thing into the lava."  
Kai, who had been drawing his bow to get used to his newfound strength, glanced at him briefly.  
"Whatever you think is best."  
Then, he lowered the bow and looked at him properly. There was a peculiar expression on Kai's face - not quite a frown, but something similar to it.  
Sunny raised an eyebrow.  
"What?"  
Kai remained silent for a bit, then shook his head.  
"No, nothing. It's just… that Demon. Did you see anything peculiar when fighting it?"  
Sunny blinked a few times.  
"That Demon was an eldritch god, everything about it was peculiar. What do you mean exactly?"  
Kai hesitated a little, then shrugged.  
"It's just… I think I saw something when I was fighting the brass giant. Helping that worm of yours fight him, I mean."  
His expression soured a little at the mention of Abundance, prompting Sunny to grin.  
"What is this I'm sensing? A bit of repulsion toward Abundance? Come on now, Kai, it is just a worm… a truly enormous, sacred worm. Actually, it is practically a wyrm. Dragons and wyrms are kin, so doesn't that sort of make the two of you siblings?"  
Kai shuddered.  
"No worm is a sibling of mine, thank you very much! Please don't say such awful things, Sunny!"  
Sunny laughed.  
"Well, alright. No need to be so offended. In any case, what was it that you saw? We both know how special your sight is, Kai, so don't make the mistake of underestimating it."  
  
Sunny was higher in Rank than Kai and vastly more powerful, but that did not mean that he was superior to his friend in all regards. In terms of perception, for example, Kai was far ahead of him - or anyone else, really. So, Sunny was inclined to take whatever Kai had seen seriously.  
Kai lingered for a while, frowning, then said finally:  
"During the battle… a few times, I thought I saw something glistening in the air behind the giant. But every time I tried to take a closer look, there was nothing there. I would decide that I saw wrong, only to be distracted by that shine again later. Eventually…"  
He paused for a moment, then added:  
"I thought that I noticed a silver thread extending from his back and disappearing into the distance. It was so thin and fine as to аlmost be non-existent, so even I could not see it clearly. Then, it was gone in the blink of an eye, so I can't be sure that I did not simply imagine the whole thing. The battle was quite hectic, after all."  
Sunny remained silent for a while, looking at him.  
"Didn't you say that there was something strange about all the Snow abominations? Could they have strange threads extending from their backs as well?"  
Sunny himself had not seen or sensed any threads. But if these strings were as infinitely thin as Kai had said, there would be no shadows left by them on the ground - and therefore, there would have been nothing for him to sense.  
It sounded quite suspicious, though, summoning imagery of puppets being pulled by puppeteer's strings. The Snow Tyrant had to be controlling its figures somehow, so Sunny responded to that imagery strongly.  
  
Kai shrugged.  
"I don't know."  
Sunny let out a sigh.  
"Keep an eye out for these threads in the days to come, then. If you do notice another, let me know."  
  
With that, he headed away and left the temple.  
Walking over to the edge of the platform, Sunny glanced across the lake of lava. The heat here was almost unbearable, so he did not loiter around and directly tossed the jade figure into the lake.  
As it was swallowed by bubbling lava, he took a few steps back and sat down.  
'Let's see…'  
Sunny concentrated on the questions he wanted answered the most, hoping that it would affect what truth he received this time.  
How had the world ended? How had the gods died? What had Weaver…  
Then, suddenly, he was somewhere else.