2379 No Way Back  
  
Sunny had never found any answers.  
  
The mystery of the Snow Demon remained unsolved, and he suspected that he might never find out what that creature had been and what it had done to him and his companions. Perhaps they would meet again, one day, in the dark reaches of the Shadow Realm. But since Sunny did not even know what the eerie Demon had looked like - or if it had even glanced like anything at all - they would not recognize each other. So, he could only console himself by the fact that the mysterious Nightmare Creature was dead.  
  
Disheartened, Sunny and Kai returned to the Shrine of Truth. Slayer was still leaning against the wall atop the sloping pillar, seemingly asleep. Sunny had never seen a Shadow sleep before, so she must have been truly exhausted by what transpired during the two missing days. He could summon her back into the nurturing darkness of his soul, but that would mean not being able to summon her again until her wounds were entirely healed. And that was a luxury he could not afford at the moment.  
  
After all, three more Snow figures were going to surround the Shrine of Truth come morning - most likely. Now, there were only five of them left on the board: two Beasts, two Devils, and the Tyrant itself. So, at least one of the three figures was likely to be a Devil.  
  
Sunny closed his eyes, suddenly aware of just how beaten and battered his body was. He was missing an arm, damn it. Well, actually, he wasn't missing it anymore. He had found his arm, it was just not attached to his body. ', That's a bit funny.'  
  
Gritting his teeth, Sunny dismissed the Jade Mantle and the surrogate arm he had manifested from the shadows. Then, he pressed the severed arm to the mangled stump and cursed quietly, concentrating on controlling the flow of his blood. Kai observed him with a peculiar expression.  
  
"What are you doing?"  
  
Sunny looked at him and smiled darkly. "Trying to regrow an arm."  
  
In truth, even some Saints could regrow missing parts of their bodies - it just took a lot of time. Supremes were even more tenacious, but Sunny naturally did not have a lot of insight into how long it would take a Sovereign to regrow a limb. There was simply no data on that issue.  
  
He healed a lot faster than most due to the Blood Weave, but still, reattaching a severed arm was going to waste much less time than cultivating an entirely new one. Plus… he was attached to his arms. They had gone through a lot with him. "I need both hands for cooking, you know? As well as for, other things,"  
  
His attempt to lighten the mood fell flat. After that, neither Sunny nor Kai spoke for a while. Both felt disheartened. They might have survived the battle, but it was not due to their skill or effort. It was not even due to luck… there was simply no explanation for why they were still alive, which meant that they were only alive by accident.  
  
Eventually, Kai sighed. "I don't know why I am surprised."  
  
Sunny raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"  
  
Kai hesitated for a while, then smiled faintly. "I guess it is because of you and Nephis. The two of you have a habit of making the impossible seem normal. You are powerful beyond reason, and the way both of you think is beyond reason too. So, sometimes, it is easy to forget that the things you do are not reasonable. They are not normal at all."  
  
He shook his head. "It is not normal to defeat a god. In fact, it is entirely unreasonable to even try fighting a god - especially an ancient, malevolent, corrupted one. And yet, that is what we have been doing ever since entering the odd realm, isn't it? Not only that, but we've even managed to kill several of those fallen deities. You seemed to take it in stride, so at some point, I found myself assuming that that was how things were supposed to be. But, Sunny…"  
  
Kai fell silent for a few seconds, then looked at him with a slight frown. "They're not. No matter how powerful we are, these beings are still Cursed Ones. They are former gods… they are literal beings of legends. The traumatic and dreadful kind of legends. So, I shouldn't have been surprised when something like that happened. Actually, it is a miracle that something like that had not happened sooner."  
  
Sunny scowled, not entirely sure how to respond. "Are you trying to say that I am reckless?"  
  
Kai shook his head. "No… not really. Being reckless means that you have a choice between safety and danger, and we weren't really given a choice, were we? It is not like the Cursed Ones would not have come for us if we stayed still, here in this cursed place." He sighed. "What I am trying to say is that, possibly, meeting that Snow Demon was a stroke of luck. It gave us a reminder that beings like that are beyond our league… so much so that we cannot even understand them, let alone match them. Well, some of them, at least. Every adversary we face can be our last. And what would you know? We managed to receive that reminder without dying. That's a good thing."  
  
Sunny studied him for a while, then nodded slowly. Kai was right. Sunny had done well facing Great Nightmare Creatures, so he assumed that fighting against Cursed Ones would not feel much different now that he was a Supreme. But really, every single one of them was an opponent he could not afford to underestimate.  
  
In fact, he had been lucky not to encounter any truly dangerous Great abominations, probably because most of the ones he had slain came from the jungles of Godgrave. In the Dream Realm, they were on the younger side, and not as sinister as those great horrors that had been wandering its terrifying reaches since the times of the Doom War. And Cursed Nightmare Creatures were on an entirely different scale, as far as malevolence was concerned.  
  
Kai sighed. "I also realized… that you were right."  
  
Sunny glanced at him with a silent question. Kai remained silent for a moment, then spoke in a sober tone: "Before all this began, you told me that a couple of Supremes would not be able to protect humanity, and that becoming Sacred was the only way for you and Nephis. You seem so immensely powerful to me, so out of reach, so I did not take it seriously enough. But now I see now that you were right. The Cursed Ones are already this frightening, and I don't even want to imagine what Unholy Nightmare Creatures arе cаpable of. I am not sure that I can. So, there is indeed only one way - forward. Whether we like it or not."  
  
Sunny stared at him for a bit, his expression unreadable. 'A reminder, huh?'  
  
Then, he grimaced and cursed loudly.  
  
Kai flinched. "Oh… I'm sorry. Was I too presumptuous?"  
  
Sunny gritted his teeth and shook his head. "No, it's just… I think my nerves are reconnecting…"  
  
He could suddenly feel his missing arm again. And while being reunited with it felt wonderful, it also hurt like hell.