2380 Shifting Scales  
  
By morning, Sunny's bones had reconnected, and his arm was not at risk of falling off anymore. That said, he could not really move it yet, so it just hung limply at his side.  
  
There was also the problem of the missing fingers. Unlikе the arm itself, he had never found them - so the fingers would have to grow on their own, which was not going to be a short or pleasant process.  
  
Naturally, if Sunny managed to get out of Ariel's Game early, Nephis would heal him in no time… The problem was that he had a far greater chance of never leaving this odd place at all.  
  
As the sun showed itself from beyond the horizon, three new Snow figures did, indeed, move to occupy the surrounding peaks. Both Sunny and Kai felt uneasy about scouting their enemies, consideгing what had happened the last time they tried, but they had little choice - going into battle blindly was a far worse prospect.  
  
So, Sunny mustered his courage and asked Kai to take a look.  
  
This time, his friend remained silent for far longer than usual. When he eventually turned to Sunny, there was a very odd expression on his face.  
  
Sunny frowned, not liking it one bit.  
  
"What?"  
  
Kai hesitated for a few seconds. "Listen, Sunny… before I say anything… I feel that I need to mention that I have nothing…"  
  
Sunny pursed his lips. "Stop stalling. Out with it!"  
  
Kai cleared his throat, then pointed at the northern peak. "Well. There is no other way to say it. But there's… there's a dragon on that mountain."  
  
Sunny blinked a couple of times, staring at his friend in disbelief. After a few seconds, he asked evenly: "A dragon?"  
  
Kai nodded. "Yeah… it's a white dragon. It's very gorgeous, actually."  
  
Sunny stared at him some more.  
  
"Are you kidding me?"  
  
Kai chuckled nervously. "No. Why would I joke about something like this?"  
  
Sunny raised a trembling hand and pulled on his hair. "No, really? What the hell is this… how come… listen here, you!"  
  
He raised pointed an accusing finger at Kai. "Let me tell you, I've been around the Dream Realm and back! And never - not once! - have I met a dragon without you around. What are you, a dragon magnеt? How the hell are you attracting all these dragons, bastard?!"  
  
Kai coughed a couple of times. "Calm down, please. Well… true, people call me the Dragonslayer, and I have an Attribute of that name. But if you think about it, technically, I only ever encountered one dragon. The other one was myself, so that doesn't really count. So… you can't blame me for this dragon, alright? I have no control over where dragons decide to show up, or why…"  
  
Sunny stared at him with suspicion. It couldn't be a coincidence, could it? Every time there was a dragon, Kai was somewhere nearby. Granted, the same could be said about most members of the cohort, since they were usually in the same place.  
  
Still! 'Damn Dragonslayer…'  
  
Sunny let out a long sigh, then winced and decided to let it go. "What about the other two peaks?"  
  
Kai pointed to the eastern peak. "That peak… seems to be infested with rats. I can't count how countless of them are there, because there are too countless. The whole mountain is teeming with them, and they seem to be… eating the mountain."  
  
Sunny raised an eyebrow. "How in the world… actually, never mind. And the last one?"  
  
Kai hesitated, but chose not to point to the southern peak. In fact, he did not even look at it again. "There is someone we've already seеn on the mountain to the south. It's the Devil from the tree… the one who looks like a human, or at least human-shaped. It knows we are looking."  
  
He paused for a moment, then added: "The dragon seems to be a Devil, too. The rats are a Cursed Beast… the entire swarm of them feels like a single entity."  
  
Sunny remained silent, thinking. A Cursed Devil to the north, a Cursed Devil to the south, and a Cursed Beast to the east.  
  
Things glanced quite bleak. He was hardly in a form to fight, and most of his shades could not be summoned yet. Slayer was in a rough state, too… her situation was worse than his, really. Just like Sunny, she could not move one of her arms, which meant that she could not draw her bow.  
  
There was a day left before the three Cursed nightmare creatures descended upon the Shrine of Truth. The odds would not be any better tomorrow, either.  
  
Kai looked at him tensely. "How are we going to repel this attack?"  
  
Sunny lingered for a while, then smiled. "Well, the answer is easy."  
  
He looked at Kai and shrugged, wincing from the pain of his mangled arm moving up and down. "We won't."  
  
As Kai glanced at him silently, Sunny shook his head. "I am not fighting two Cursed Devils and a Cursed Beast. So, instead of waiting for them to come…"  
  
He glanced east. "We will attack, instead."  
  
He had come to the Shrine of Truth to make his warriors stronger. And he accomplished just that - with the jade figures in his possession, Slayer and Kai would receive the third ash augmentation. As long as his Will strengthened them, that would make them as deadly as any Great Abomination.  
  
More than that, his army - as long as it was given time to repair itself - now consisted of two Sacred shades and two groups of Great Shades. The Snow Tyrant, meanwhile, only had two Devils and one Beasts left. It was actually at a disadvantage in terms of pure numbers.  
  
What a startling reversal it was, considering its overwhеlming numerical advantage at the start. More importantly, the Snow Tyrant had to send all of the figures that had been protecting it into battle, with only one Beast unaccounted for.  
  
Which meant that it was almost defenseless. So, there was no point in staying in the Shrine of Truth anymore. Sunny had the adversary where he wanted.  
  
Inhaling deeply, he summoned the few Obsidian Wasps that had already mended themselves and sent them off to dig out soul shards from the remains of the dead Cursed Monster. Then, he turned to Kai.  
  
"Prepare yourself. We'll be fighting another god in the evening."  
  
It was time to do some rat hunting.  
  
'Thank the gods!' He would finally have something to eat.