2387 Godmeat  
  
Just before the last vestige of the setting sun drowned in the sea of fiery clouds, Sunny took a deep breath and glanced at Slayer. Surrounded by wisps of ghostly smoke, she was cleaning the blade of her sword. His Shаdow seemed… tattered, a little. One of her arms was still mangled and hanging limply, her armor was shredded, and even her veil was torn. Behind the veil was a face that Sunny knew all too well now - the gorgeous face of the woman he had seen in the visions, or rather, a version of it seemingly carved from flawlessly black obsidian.  
  
She was the relentless huntress whose fate it had been to slay the Demon of Fate. Her shadow, at least. Granted, even after learning the unbelievable truth of Slayer's past, Sunny had his doubts about its veracity. Weaver was the master of deceit, after all. Was it beyond that nebulous scoundrel to sneak a lie into the game their brother designed to reveal only the truth?  
  
He did not know. Not that it mattered.  
  
With a sigh, Sunny threw one last look at Slayer and commanded the shadows to open, pulling her into their dark depths. A second later, she vanished from the devastated slope of the mountain. Just as the ethereal bridge connecting it to the distant Shrine of Truth crumbled into ash, her graceful figure appeared far away, on the tilted roof of the drowning temple.  
  
Kai landed on the ground near Sunny as the mountain shook, rivers of lava flowing out of its shattered peak to announce thе end of the Ash Domain's move. He looked west with a startled expression. "Sunny?"  
  
Sunny let out another sigh and sat up, rubbing his face with his one functioning hand. He remained silent for a few seconds, then smiled tiredly. "Don't worry. I am not leaving our resident psychopath for dead."  
  
With the move finished, he could not sense the shadows covering the lake of lava anymore. Neither could he see Slayer from this distance… but he knew that she was there, standing alone on the roof of the ancient temple and looking at him.  
  
"I have a plan, so relax."  
  
Kai hesitated for a few seconds, then sighed and sat down near Sunny, placing his bow on the ground with a trembling hand. He glanced utterly exhausted, having drawn its heavy string time after time with breathtaking speed. Kai had a peculiar expression on his face, so Sunny asked lazily:  
  
"What's the matter? You seem a little out of it?"  
  
His friend lingered for a moment, then shrugged. "Oh, it's just that we… we killed another deity. The previous times, it was mostly your doing, but tonight, Lady Slayer and I took the lead roles. Naturally, it was only possible because of your Will and the sacrifices we made to the Altar of Truth, but still. We killed a god."  
  
Sunny studied him for a little while, then smiled. "That you did."  
  
Kai exhaled slowly. "I just feel like I should be stunned and shocked by that fact, but honestly, I am not even bothered. Witnessing deities fall… has lost its novelty, it seems. Unbelievable as that might sound." He let out a shaky laugh.  
  
Sunny stared at him silently, then shook his head. "I mean… aren't you the guy who fought a flock of Spire Messengers as a Sleeper? And then jumped into the maw of a Transcendent dragon as an Awakened? Oh, and then there was the mad stunt you pulled in Verge? Why should you be stunned, let alone shocked?"  
  
Kai smiled shyly and scratched the tip of his nose. "Well, true. Still, this repugnant swarm of rats was a god."  
  
Sunny grinned, then glanced around, grimacing at the stench of rat fur burning in the flowing lava. "Speaking of which… hey, how about we barbeque some god meat?"  
  
Kai changed in the face, turning almost green. "T - the rats? Eat them? T - thanks, but no thanks!"  
  
Sunny laughed. "Huh? Why not? You know, we mostly ate universal ration packs in the outskirts - also known as rat packs. It was all synthpaste and the driest, blandest crackers you can imagine, plus a disposable water filter. So, I actually always wanted to taste a real rat. Real rats were a rare commodity, though - the stronger kids hunted them down before the rest of us could."  
  
Looking around, Sunny inhaled the disgusting stench of burning fur and smiled. "Look how far I've come! Ah… dreams do come true."  
  
Kai studied him for a while, then forced out a polite smile. "They're… all уours, then. By all means! I'd rather not stand in the way of fulfilling your dreams."  
  
Sunny scoffed. "How picky."  
  
Kai had not wanted to eat the torn remains of the Cursed Monster because the manner of its death had been too eerie, and both halves of the hideous corpse were too disgusting. And now, he was refusing to eat perfectly fine, if a little cursed, rats as well… There was just no pleasing that guy.  
  
Sunny gave Kai a look of reproach, then stood up and dusted off his tattered clothes. "Well, suit yourself. I'm hungry, though."  
  
Sunny might have been of the same mind as Kai regarding the eerie corpse of the Cursed Monster, but he was not going to hold himself back tonight. The poоr Rat King had never managed to satiate its hunger, so it was only proper to honor its damned memory by satiating his.  
  
He found the Beast figurine while scrounging for rat meаt. And a little later, he found the sole soul shard left behind by the Rat King, as well - it had been buried under the rockfall, which was submerged in lava now, but Sunny retrieved the tiny crystal without much trouble.  
  
…The rat meat turned out to be diseased, and possibly even cursed. It was still delicious, though, and Blood Weave made short work of the contaminants. In hindsight, it was probably for the best that Kai had refused to partake in consuming the slain god's flesh.  
  
There was more of it left for Sunny! 'Is his survival instinct really sharp, or have mine become completely dull?'  
  
Sated and satisfied, Sunny returned to the western slope of the newborn volcano and sat down near Kai to watch the sun rise.  
  
The final act of Ariel's Game was going to be decided once it did.