2398 Fuel of Desire  
  
At first, Sunny laughed.  
The question was really too preposterous. What was the Puppeteers insinuating? That the horrors of the modern era were caused by humans, and not by the plague and Nightmare Creatures lusting to destroy and devour the world?  
  
"Oh, it is definitely because of you. Believe me, I am quite a peaceful person. You can even call me the Heir of Peace, if you wish."  
  
Well.  
Sunny did have an army of tens of thousands of dead souls dwelling in his own, all of whom - most of whom, at least - he had personally killed. But that was not because he was a bellicose and violent person. He had just been forced by the circumstances to go on a rampage or two.  
  
And while few even among the Nightmare Creatures had caused as many violent deaths as Sunny had, that was not because he particularly enjoyed slaughter and carnage. Well, he did enjoy them sometimes, but not that often.  
Very rarely, really.  
Sunny opened his mouth to say something, but then closed it again.  
  
He wanted to explain that humans would have left the Nightmare Creatures alone if the Nightmare Creatures did not represent an existential threat to humanity, if they had not attacked first, but that would have been a lie.  
  
After all, humans had managed to eradicate most life on Earth - and had almost eradicated each other - long before the Nightmare Spell descended. They were full of avarice, violence, and insatiable desire to have more, spread more, be more. They pillaged and plundered anything and everything that was of value relentlessly, repeatedly, and without remorse. So, if there had really been a flock of harmless Nightmare Creatures grazing peacefully somewhere on a meadow, humans would have probably slaughtered them and dismantled their precious bodies for parts. The soul shards alone would have been a reason to drive them to extinction.  
  
Sunny pursed his lips, suddenly unsure of himself.  
Eventually, he simply repeated:  
"Yeah, it is most likely because of you."  
The Puppeteer seemed to look at him with pity.  
After a few moments of silence, the soft voice spoke again:  
"There is a far more meaningful question, Liberator. The Incarnations of Flame, why did they create their cruel world this way? Why must they make life a constant struggle, and deny solace to the beings trapped in the cage of their design? Why is there desperation, desire, hope, and war? Tell me, creature of the Flame."  
  
Sunny suppressed the desire to scoff, surprised by the sudden philosophical question. Philosophical questions, by definition, had no answer - that was what made them such, to begin with. So, the better question would have been why the Puppeteer insisted on wasting his time. But then, the derisive smile slowly drained from his face. Because Sunny suddenly realized that he knew the answer.  
He lingered for a few moments, and then whispered in a stunned voice:  
"Because, the Flame, wanes."  
The black silk fluttered in the wind, its many strings rustling like a sea.  
  
The soft voice of the Puppeteer was born from that rustle:  
"Indeed. The Flame is Desire, and Desire is the Flame. But flame needs fuel to burn, Liberator. It needs to be fed. It needs to devour something in order to sustain itself. Our longing, our yearning, our desire, our hope - they fan the Flame. You and I are different, but in the end, we are both the same. Our lives are fuel, and we only exist to be devoured by the Flame."  
  
The giant black moth lowered its enormous head, staring at Sunny from above. "We are both prisoners of this game, as well. We are different, yes, but we are the same. What we share is far more immеnse than what divides us. And so, there is no reason for us to be enemies."  
  
Sunny shifted, engrossed by the truth - a version of truth, at least - offered him by the Puppeteer. His mind slowly drifted to its last claim, and after hesitating for a short while, he asked in an even tone:  
"We are both prisoners? Is that why you keep calling me the Liberator?"  
The giant black month's antennae swayed lightly. "Yes. A long time ago, the one you call Weaver offered me a bargain. I would help them defeat the Demon of Dread in the Death Game, and in return, they would twist the Strings of Fate to ensure my survival. And if I waited long enough, a being would come to liberate me from my cage."  
Sunny chuckled. "Weaver promised you freedom, huh?"  
The Puppeteer stirred. "Freedom. Survival. Salvation."  
The winds howled above the silken making, making the strands of black silk billow fiercely, urgently.  
  
Sunny smiled darkly.  
".Did you not know that Weaver was a consummate liar? No, really. You would have been hard-pressеd to find a more treacherous bastard to make a deal with."  
He shook his head.  
"Let me tell you, Puppeteer. You should never trust the gods, but you should really never trust Weaver. Only a fool would. In fact, the only thing more foolish than that, would be to trust a Cursed Tyrant."  
  
Looking up, he stared the colossal black moth in the eye."Let me ask you one question."  
Sunny sighed and raised his hand, stretching slowly. "Actually, I asked it already - as a matter of fact, it was more or less the first question I asked. Why are you talking to me?"  
He lowered his hands and regarded the Puppeteer chillingly.  
"It wouldn't be to stall for time and make sure that I can't kill you befoгe the sun sets, would it?"  
There was silence for a few long moments.  
And then, the soft voice resounded from nowhere once again. Only it wasn't so soft anymore. And neither did it rеsemble anything that could be even distantly mistaken for a human voice.  
  
Instead, an eerie, deeply disturbing, dreadful rustle wаshed over Sunny, making his skin crawl.  
"Argh, kill, me?"  
The world itself seemed to laugh at Sunny, full of scorn, sending his mind into a spin.  
"Your death is liberation. Ash Tyrant. Weaver. kept their promise."  
The Puppeteer did not speak after that, but moments before they clashed, Sunny thought that he heard a dying echo drowning in the wind.  
He could barely discern the words:  
"Your flame, so sweet, it's calling."