2407 Certain Death  
  
The Stone Saint hesitated.  
  
The Spirit of Doubt was kneeling on the shattered ground in front of him, its black wings broken and torn. The eerie moth was great and awful. However, so was the Stone Saint. He was the Jade Titan, and the Mantle of the Underworld lay hеavy on his shoulders. If he wanted to kill the Cursed creatuгe, the only choice it had was to die.  
  
Even now, the Puppeteer was only keeping itself alive by slowing down the flow of time to such a crawl that it seemed to stand still. But interfering with an absolute law to this degree was an unbearable burden even for a being like the eerie moth. It would not be able to hold time still for very long, let alone indefinitely. So, if the Stone Saint wanted to kill the Spirit of Doubt, he could.  
  
But did he want to?  
  
Why would he, indeed?  
  
The Stone Saint glanced at the giant moth chillingly, feeling a peculiar compulsion to answer its question honestly.  
  
"I am not sure. However, I burn with the Flame of Divinity, while you are a Nightmare Creature of the Void. Are we not enemies, you and I? Are we not destined to maim and slay each other? I am holding a sword, while you are on your knees. Is that not reason enough to kill you?"  
  
The Puppeteer's enormous black eyes glistened like gorgeous gems, reflecting innumerable versions of the Stone Saint and his merciless blade in their compound depth.  
  
It spoke softly:  
  
"Ah, but look around you, warrior of the Underworld. Look who brought me to my knees. The Wolf, the Huntress, the Giant, and the Dragon. They are shadows of Death; he is a herald of Night. The servants of the gods surround us, you and me. The same gods whom your Prince is at war with. Are they not your true adversary, instead of me?"  
  
The Stone Saint gazed at him chillingly.  
  
'At war with.'  
  
The ferocious flame burning in his chest blazed, full of pride and animosity.  
  
The Spirit of Doubt was right. The gods were enemies of the Prince of the Underworld, and therefore, of his children. So many had been shattered on the innumerable battlefields of the War, so many had fallen.  
  
So many were yet to fall. There was no peace left anywhere in the world. There was no mercy left, either. Surrender was impossible, and those who lost would not be spared. So, the war could only end when the gods fell, or when аll of existence fell.  
  
The Puppeteer's soft voice flowed into his ears like honey:  
  
"You are a child of Nether, and therefore, of the Forgotten God, who dreams in the Void, who dreams of the Void. I am a being of the Void, and while there is a conflict between us, doesn't it pale in comparison to the conflict between us and those who serve the vile gods? Are we not more alike than we are apart? Are we not allies, before we are enemies?"  
  
'Allies.'  
  
The Stone Saint regarded the kneeling moth silently, then shifted his gaze to the frozen figures of his own companions. His frown deepened. The three shadows. The gorgeous dragon whose scales were the color of midnight, its eyes burning like silver stars.  
  
'The servants of the gods.'  
  
The vile, hateful, cruel gods.  
  
Why was he fighting side by side with the adversary?  
  
The Stone Saint glanced at the Spirit of Doubt.  
  
"You might be right."  
  
There was indeed a semblance of truth to what the sinister moth had said.  
  
He smiled chillingly behind the visor of his helmet.  
  
"But, Spirit of Doubt, did you not say it yourself?"  
  
The Stone Saint gathered his will, sensing the pressure of the Snow Domain crushing him.  
  
"That you made a deal with Weaver."  
  
Something about the Puppeteer's eyes changed.  
  
But it was too late.  
  
Not letting the eerie black moth say anything else, the Stone Saint sent his will and authority outward.  
  
"And while the gods are truly hateful, no one is more odious and vile than the traitor, Demon of Fate. You have aided Weaver, Spirit of Doubt."  
  
His will enveloped the fractured mountain, crashing against the Puppeteer's authority.  
  
". And for that, I will kill you."  
  
There was no hesitation to his sword anymore. No doubt. No mercy. Only certainty and finality. Only death.  
  
The Stone Saint poured his indomitable willpower into assaulting the Snow Domain and challenging its reign over the mountain. He was not strong enough, not vast enough to usurp the Puppeteer's authority, but he did not need to, either.  
  
He was someone who had survived innumerable battlefields of the frightening War, after all. Someone who had led legions and won victories against the Divine Host. Born for battle, he was proficient in all forms of strategy and tactics.  
  
He was a master of war, and so, he knew how to break an impregnable obstacle by striking at its pressure point.  
  
He knew how to break an adversary who refused to be broken.  
  
For the Spirit of Doubt, that pressure point, the deadly vulnerability, was the strain it was enduring to exert influence on the absolute flaw.  
  
The Stone Saint did not use his strength to crush the authority of the Cursed Tyrant. Instead, he added his strength to the destructive pressure of the endless mass of time wishing to flow free, and saw the dam built by the Puppeteer cracking.  
  
A second later, it collapsed.  
  
The fact that it collapsed was apparent from the fact that there was a difference between the previous moment and the next, to begin with.  
  
And in the moment after that.  
  
Everything happened quickly. Time resumed its flow. The giant moth was already lunging forward, its two unscathed legs moving with frightening speed.  
  
One pierced the armor of the Stone Saint like paper, impaling him. The other batted his sword away, then pushed his arm down, breaking it.  
  
Awful pain washed over his mind, blurring his vision.  
  
The two of them were suddenly face to face, with only a few meters separating the fearsome visor of the jade armour from the harrowing moth's enthralling black eyes.  
  
The Stone Saint saw himself reflected in the thousand black gems, rivers of ruby dust streaming down his breastplate.  
  
The Puppeteer stгained its scythe - like leg, aiming to extinguish the flame burning in his chest.  
  
The Stone Saint raised his free hand above his head as if wanting to bring his fist down on the adversary in desperation.  
  
Instead, though, he caught the giant dark discus of the round shield he had tossed into the sky before.  
  
And brought it down with the weight of a mountain.  
  
The rim of the shield crushed the Puppeteer's neck and went through it, slicing the Cursed Tуrant's head clean off.  
  
The huge body of the moth shuddered, and then went limp.  
  
Its head rolled to the ground, staring into the lightless sky blindly.  
  
The tendrils of black silk rustled as they fell, and in their rustle.  
  
The Stone Saint thought that he heard an echo of a soft, dying voice.  
  
"You lied to me. Weaver."  
  
The voice had only wished to be free.  
  
The last vestiges of the molten sun drowned in the sea of crimson clouds, and darkness descended upon the world.  
  
The cursed Spirit of Doubt, Puppeteer, was no more.