2408 Lost You Forever  
  
[You have slain an adversarу.]  
  
The Stone Saint tilted his head, looking at the corpse of the fallen deity.  
  
'Whose voice was that?'  
  
Many things seemed strange now that the battle was over. He vaguely senses that he was supposed to feel something now that the Spirit of Doubt was dead. Was it a sense of triumph? Or a sense of loss? It was a rare and incredible feat, for someone Supreme to slay someone Cursed - not to mention a Cursed Tyrant, and one as insidious as the Puppeteer had been to boot. But the Stone Saint was not glad. He was a champion of the underworld, after all. His victory was a matter of course.  
  
He only felt pity that the stunning black moth was no more. It had fought valiantly and deserved his respect. The death of an adversary like that was not a joyous occasion.  
  
But it was also not something to feel so strangely about.  
  
So why?  
  
It was as if he was forgetting something.  
  
'Ah. I see.'  
  
The battle was not over yet.  
  
Raising his head, the Stone Saint glanced at the approaching dragon. The shadow of a wolf was sniffing the corpse of the giant moth nearby. There was another shadow not too far away, as well - a dark vortex consuming everything it touched, a new vessel almost formed around it.  
  
And a third. A graceful woman who moved like a dancer, hiding on the dragon's back.  
  
The servants of the gods.  
  
As the Stone Saint observed, the shadow of a huntress leaped off the dragon's back. She drew her bow in the air, and an arrow that carried an imprint of death tore the fabric of the word, piercing the heart of the dark vortex.  
  
'They are fighting each other.'  
  
The Stone Saint felt a hint of relief.  
  
That was going to make his job easier, not that the task of dealing with these enemies seemed particularly arduous. He could kill them in a heartbeat.  
  
High above, the black veil obscuring the world was falling apart. The silk covering the surface of the mountain was withering, too. Countless strings of it were turning brittle and pale, the beautiful black gleam of their smooth surface slowly wasting away. It was as if the mountain was turning grey with age.  
  
And something else was happening, as well. It was as if... as if there was an invisible force radiating from somewhеre far away, hidden within the sea of clouds.  
  
Pushing him. Rejecting him from this world.  
  
The Stone Saint frowned as the dragon landed near and spoke, his melodious voice thundering above the fractured mountain:  
  
"Sunny! We've... we've won!"  
  
The towering stone colossus glanced down at the dragon silently, ruby dust still streaming down the polished jade of his armor. There was something strange about that, as well.  
  
Why was he bleeding?  
  
Then again.  
  
Why wouldn't he?  
  
'I need to finish this battle swiftly and tend to my wounds.'  
  
"Sunny?"  
  
Nearby, the wolf shadow raised its snout and peered at the Stone Saint. Its fur bristled, and it backed away slowly, letting out a threatening growl.  
  
Far away, more arrows pierced the dark vortex, and the shadow huntress landed gracefully on the slope, unsheathing her twin swords as she dashed toward it.  
  
'It is better to kill them now that they are divided.'  
  
The Stone Saint glanced at the Night Dragon chillingly. This, too, was a battlefield of the War.  
  
His sword moved faster than a blade of its size was supposed to. The Stone Saint targeted the shadow wоlf first, vanquishing it back into the Shadow Realm with a single strike. Something strange happened then. It almost felt as if something had returned to him the moment the figure of the tenebrous beast became a torrent of shadows and dissolved into nothingness.  
  
The Stone Saint did not pay it much attention, because the dragon had to die next.  
  
"What are you doing?! Stop!"  
  
There was a powerful compulsion in the dragon's voice, but it was just as powerless against him as the Strings of Doubt had been. The question, however, slowed down his sword by a fraction of a second. That was enough for the great beast to avoid a fatal wound, but not to dodge the stonelike blade entirely.  
  
It sliced the midnight scales easily and bit deeply into his flesh, drawing silver blood. The dragon let out a pained scream and staggered away.  
  
It was not going to get far, of course.  
  
"I am putting down a dog of the gods."  
  
The Stone Saint tensed his body, preparing to lunge forward and finish the adversary once and for all.  
  
"S - Sunny, stop!"  
  
Who was the creature calling out to? One of its allies?  
  
The huntress, possibly.  
  
If so, its calls were in vain. The huntress was going to die under the Stone Saint's sword soon enough.  
  
He tore through the compulsion effortlessly, rushing forward as he raised his sword.  
  
The dragon only had a split second to live.  
  
"N - nephis, Cassie, Effie!"  
  
He lingered.  
  
'What... is it?'  
  
"Kai, Rain, Jet!"  
  
The Stone Saint froze, the blade of his sword lightly touching the dragon's neck.  
  
"Noctis, Ananke! Remember, damn it! Aiko, Julius, Beth!"  
  
'Those names.'  
  
His eyes widened.  
  
"Kim, Luster, Quentin, Dorn, Belle, Samara, Obel!"  
  
The dragon did not move either, looking at him with fear and hope in his eyes.  
  
Somewhere far away, the vortex of darkness dissolved, disappearing without a trace. It almost seemed as if it was absorbed into the ebony body of the shadow huntress.  
  
The huntress then spared them a glance, and vanished as well.  
  
The dragon stared at Sunny, and then bellowed.  
  
"How could you forget? Snap out of it, now!"  
  
Sunny stared at him back from his great height.  
  
Then, he lowered his sword and shook his head.  
  
"Is there really a need to shout so loudly? I am not deaf, you know."  
  
Hiding the shiver from his voice, he hurriedly dismissed the form of a Stone Saint and turned into his cozy, familiar human self.  
  
Granted, there was a hole in his chest, and the arm that had just recently regained its mobility was now broken. But being himself still felt wonderful.  
  
Sunny stemmed the bleeding and shuddered, remembering how close he had come to killing Kai.  
  
And to losing himself entirely, forever.  
  
'That... that was too close.'  
  
In the end, it was the memories of the people Kai reminded him about that had brought him back... barely.  
  
Their names, and the fact that even as a Stone Saint, he still possessed the same Flaw.  
  
When Kai asked him how he could have forgotten, Sunny had found no answer, but felt compelled to provide one. And when he went looking for an answer, the persona of the Jade Titan unraveled like a mirage.  
  
He was not sure what would have happened if he had spent more time wearing it, though, and fell into the delusion of a foreign form deeper.  
  
"To answer your question, I did not really forget. I just convinced myself that I was someone else very well. I am a very persuasive person, you know? I am so persuasive, in fact, that I once convinced myself into existence."  
  
That was how he had crossed the Hollow Mountains without becoming nothing.  
  
Kai stared at him in utter disbelief.  
  
Which looked quite strange, considering that he was still in the form of a dragon.  
  
"Convinced yourself... into existence. What?"  
  
Sunny shrugged.  
  
"It's true."  
  
Kai released his transformation and turned into a human once more. There was a flabbergasted expression on his sunken, tired face.  
  
There was also blood running from a deep cut on his shoulder, which made Sunny wince internally.  
  
"Indeed. It's really you!"  
  
All around them, the cocoon of black silk was falling apart.  
  
The corpse of the Puppeteer towered above them like a dark hill.  
  
The Snow Tyrant was dead.  
  
Sunny stared at the enormous severed moments, then sighed.  
  
'Find peace within me, you sinister moth. Your nightmare was long... but now, it is over.'  
  
He had to hurry. His adversary was dead, which meant that Sunny had precious little time to achieve what he had come here to achieve.  
  
"Come on. We need to find the Snow Castle!"  
  
The Death Game was coming to an end.