2441 Immediate Impact  
  
Sunny shook his head as he continued on his way. The memories of learning what Nephis had done in Bastion were followed by the memories of reuniting with her in Ravenheart — at that point, he finally reached his destination.  
  
Having spent several weeks surrounded by billowing clouds of ash and Cursed abominations, fighting one desperate battle after another, he was truly a pitiful sight to behold. His body might have been rеbuilt and perfected by Flesh Weave, but he still could not wait to take a shower, lower himself into a bath, or better yet, rest his weary self in a steam room, followed by a plunge into ice-cold water.  
  
It just so happened that he could really use a cold plunge at the moment…  
  
Leaving his battered incarnation to tend to itself, Sunny shifted his focus to the avatar who remained in the council room. The Song sisters had left by then, leaving him alone with Nephis and Cassie.  
  
The mood in the spacious chamber was different now. The sunset had drawn its last breath, surrendering the world to the embrace of darkness — the sky outside the tall windows was black and littered with shimmering stars, snow dancing in the torrents of cold wind.  
  
The brief levity was gone, replaced by a sense of gravity. Sunny remained silent for a few moments, then spoke with a sigh — this time, he described what had happened in the miniature realm of Ariel's Game in detail, without wasting his time on jokes or witty wordplay.  
  
Going over everything he had experienced helped him put the events of the past weeks in perspective, as well.  
  
'Let's see…'  
  
First, he explained the nature of the little, dreadful world created by Ariel — the vast grid of towering mountains, the Snow and Ash Domains, the significance of dawn and dusk for the game pieces, the role of Castles and Shrines, and lastly, the existence of the terrifying arbiter who hid beneath the clouds. These were the laws governing the Death Game.  
  
Then, he described his own actions in the game and the battles he had fought.  
  
The battle against the Crystal Hive was relatively insignificant, in the grand scheme of things. At best, it was a valuable exercise in fighting a powerful adversary while being suppressed by a hostile Domain — which wasn't really that new of an experience for Sunny or for Nephis, who suffered a much worse version of the same suppression every time they entered the waking world.  
  
Next was the battle against Abundance. That one was a much more valuable lesson… a priceless one, even, since it was the first time Sunny had fought a Cursed abomination. He had learned about how lesser deities embodied concepts and weaponized them to twist the absolute laws of existence in their favor from that clash, as well as understood the natural affinity of his own Will better.  
  
In the end, Sunny had defeated Abundance by utilizing sorcery to counter and restrain the Beast's authority, then slowly poisoning its soul with Death Will.  
  
Nephis smiled faintly when he described crushing the infinite worm under his boot.  
  
"...What an elegant solution."  
  
Sunny chuckled.  
  
"Thank you. Killing Abundance was the pebble that began an avalanche. With a Sacred shade in my service, I could tackle more powerful foes and slowly build an advantage over the Snow Tyrant. Plus... it was quite satisfying!"  
  
He continued, describing the race to the Shrine of Truth and its first siege — his battle against the Wolf, the grand spell he had woven, and the eventual annihilation of the volcano.  
  
The details of how he had held off a Cursed Demon while fueling his trap with the Demon's own strength had a greater effect on Nephis and Cassie.  
  
Cassie especially seemed stunned.  
  
"So, you… channeled an opposite concept to that of the Wolf?"  
  
Sunny nodded.  
  
"When you fight deities, the battle itself is only the tip of the iceberg. There is a clash of Wills happening at the same time, hidden from view — it influences the cadence of combat, deciding who will gain the decisive advantage. Gods reshape the world around them according to what they are, and in order to defeat them, you have to break that vision of reality first. One would ideally achieve that with overwhelming strength… but since we are weaker than the Cursed Ones, I had to get inventive."  
  
Cassie smiled.  
  
"Amazing…"  
  
Nephis, meanwhile, contemplated his words deeply.  
  
Eventually, a sigh escaped from her lips, and she gave Sunny a long look.  
  
It was sort of... boastful? Satisfied? A little prideful?  
  
However, Nephis did not seem proud of herself. Rather, she seemed to be proud of Sunny... and satisfied with herself as a result?  
  
'What has gotten into her?'  
  
"It is an incredible technique, Sunny. Sadly… I don't think anyone except you can make use of it. Your Aspect and Aspect Legacy make you supremely adaptable, and this arcane ability to channel foreign concepts is their culmination. No one else would have been able to do something like that."  
  
Sunny remained silent for a few moments.  
  
Well... she wasn't wrong. Granted, he did not explain how he had almost killed Kai after taking this technique a step further in the battle against the Puppeteer yet — but that could wait a little longer.  
  
After all, who didn't like being praised by their girlfriend and receiving these kinds of looks from her? Sunny wanted to enjoy the second a little longer.  
  
He sighed.  
  
"The spell I created takes most credit for the deaths of the Wolf and the Brass Giant. It was a significant breakthrough in and of itself, made possible by the lessons I had learned while creating a bow for Kai. Actually… out of everything I gained in Ariel's Game, this one might be the most immediately impactful."  
  
Nephis gave him an intense look.  
  
"Do you mean?"  
  
Sunny nodded.  
  
"Yes. It opens an entirely new horizon of possibilities for us. I can further develop and expand this new branch of Weaving… then, I'll be able to create more intricate spells. Even with seven bodies, I won't be able to enchant every Citadel of humanity — but doing so for our most important strongholds in the Dream Realm might be possible, as long as there are enough Sacred soul shards to fuel the spells."  
  
Nephis looked to Cassie.  
  
"Cassie, do you think you can help Sunny integrate his enchantments into the fortifications of human Citadels with runic sorcery?"  
  
The blind seer considered her words seriously for a while, then gave her a hesitant shrug.  
  
"It is… not impossible. Fusing two schools of sorcery won't make the result greater, but it might hasten the process and make it easier for the Saints in charge of the Citadels to operate and maintain the arrays. Sunny and I will have to spend a lot of time side by side to work out the framework, though. I've… I've never considered large-scale runic arrays thoroughly before, but it should not be entirely different from the sorcery of the Ivory Island and the Chain Breaker."  
  
Nephis sighed.  
  
"Time… it all comes down to time, doesn't it?"  
  
She fell silent for a moment.  
  
"Still, that is something worth investing time in. Our cities will come under siege eventually — when that happens, there has to be a way to keep the population safe while the champions repel the enemy. Sunny, I would be grateful if you and Cassie made that project a priority."  
  
Sunny smiled.  
  
"Sure. I can spare an incarnation or two."  
  
In fact, he was glad to receive this opportunity.  
  
Sunny did not pursue fame or recognition. Being forced into the shadows by the revelation of why Weaver's Lineage had been forbidden by the gods suited him fine — if not for the fact that he could not exert as much influence from the shadows freely as he would have wanted to.  
  
Humanity was protected by two Sovereigns, but one of them was severely constrained in what he could do to actually help people. So, working on fortifying human cities in the Dream Realm was a good way to apply his power for the benefit of all in a secretive, but efficient manner.  
  
Sunny's expression turned somber as he continued his tale, describing the eerie encounter with the Cursed Demon and the days missing from his memory. Then, he told Nephis and Cassie about the battle against the Rat King and how he and Kai had utilized the inherent vulnerability of that Cursed Beast to destroy it.  
  
As he did, he summoned the shade of the Rat King to illustrate his point…  
  
Strangely enough, the appearance of a large, feral-looking black rat on his palm did not impress the two women that much. In fact, their reactions did not seem enthusiastic at all, for some reason.  
  
It was almost as if they did not like this adorable black cutie-pie!  
  
But why wouldn't they?  
  
'Weirdos…'  
  
Dismissing the Rat after giving it a few head scratches, Sunny considered his words and described the final battle of Ariel's Game — the battle against the Spirit of Doubt, Puppeteer itself.