2443 Summary of Everything  
  
Sunny had spent more than a decade uncovering the dreadful secrets of the Dream Realm and slowly piecing together its truth. The road to the knowledge he now possessed had been paved with blood and smoldering ruins, and very few people — if any at all — knew as much as he did about the hidden nature of the world.  
  
Which was not to say that others had not searched for the truth with just as much determination, and that no one else had a claim to the forbidden knowledge he harbored.  
  
The late Sovereigns had known countless secrets, for example. There was Nephis, as well… she knew nearly as much as Sunny did, having spent the years they had been apart pursuing truths of her own. He did not have a monopoly on arcane knowledge, and neither did the world stand frozen while he was away.  
  
It was just that Sunny had an overwhelming advantage when it came to solving the chilling mysteries of the past… or at least used to have. That advantage was his former innate Attribute, [Fated], which had put him on a collision course with Weaver and other main characters of the end of the world all those years ago.  
  
However, Nephis had a great advantage of her own. That advantage… was Cassie. There was hardly a person in the world better suited to learning the lost and forgotten truths than her — so, Nephis and Cassie had learned quite a few of the same secrets Sunny had, in the years of his absence.  
  
Later, the three of them put their knowledge together.  
  
…Now, however, Sunny was once again far ahead.  
  
Because this time, the secret he had learned was truly world-shattering.  
  
It was a secret to end all secrets, as well as the answer to numerous mysteries that had been plaguing them for years.  
  
So, Sunny told them everything he had learned in Ariel's Game.  
  
How Weaver had challenged the Demon of Dread to a Death Game. Who the Nine were … how Weaver died for the first time by Orphne's hand. How she killed the Demon of Fate once again in the Shadow Realm, how the Nightmare Spell was completed by consuming the gods…  
  
And why.  
  
Of course, he could only tell them the truth without explaining how all of it related to him personally — Cassie had already deduced a lot about who Sunny was and had been from the gaps in her memory аnd the things she did not seem capable of remembering, while Nephis had her suspicions as well… but still, neither of them could retain the knоwledge of what they had known about him in the past.  
  
When he finished talking, a stunned silence reigned in the council chamber. A snowstorm was raging outside the window, obscuring the starlit sky… the chamber seemed darker than before, with shadows nestling in its corners, and no one dared to speak for a long while.  
  
Eventually, it was Sunny himself who broke the silence.  
  
"Aahh... I've been chasing this truth for so long, you know. It almost feels unreal, to finally know it all — well, most of it, at least. I… I don't quite know how to feel. But I do know that knowledge is the origin of all power. So, it feels like we have grown immensely more powerful despite remaining the same, I guess."  
  
Cassie was frozen still, her expression distant. She seemed to be thinking about something feverishly, thousands of thoughts swarming behind her beautiful, unseeing eyes.  
  
Sunny shuddered to imagine what was happening in the little, devious head of hers.  
  
Nepis, meanwhile, was somber and focused, looking at Sunny with silent, but scathing intensity.  
  
After a while, she inhaled slowly, and then spoke quietly:  
  
"So… let me get this straight."  
  
She stood up and walked to the window, watching the snowstorm rage behind the transparent crystal pane. Her voice sounded just as aloof as usual, but there was a wealth of hidden emotion in it now:  
  
"A long time ago, at the dusk of the Golden Age, the gods had grown distant and indifferent, neglecting their duties… what people considered to be their duties, at least. In their neglectful absence, an empire founded by War God and presumably enjoying his patronage launched a series of bloody conquests, slowly spreading across the mortal realms like a plague. That conquest continued until they encountered a small, peaceful nation… a culture that worshiped no gods, but instead built temples to fate itself."  
  
She turned and looked at Sunny with a frown.  
  
"That culture was conquered and wiped out, but not before sending out nine fated heroes… or monsters, depending on how you look at it… on a quest to avenge their people. Avenge their people by slaying the gods."  
  
Sunny nodded and continued:  
  
"But how can mortals hope to defeat the gods? The Nine were no match for them, and so, they set out to ignite a war between the daemons and the gods, knowing that it would bring the Empire of War — and all of existence with it — to ruin. In that way, they became the architects of the doom that swallowed the world."  
  
Nephis smiled darkly.  
  
"Only there was one daemon who refused to participate in the Doom War. That daemon, in fact, knew what the Nine were trying to achieve all along, as well as that there would be no winner in the war… that everything would be destroyed by it, with only corpses left in its wake. So, that daemon devised a plan of their own, a plan to twist fate."  
  
She inhaled deeply and finished in a cold, grim tone:  
  
"Weaver created the Nightmare Spell, let it spread unnoticed among the desperate refugees of the end of days, and then manipulated one of the Nine into slaying them in the Shadow Realm, where the Void Gate stands — the Void Gate that had been opened by someone during the final battle of the Doom War. Weaver's death was a catalyst that completed the Spell, allowing it to consume both the gods and the daemons... and realize its true design."  
  
Cassie finally stirred, tilting her head a little and whispering:  
  
"To lull the Forgotten God, who was released from the Void, back to sleep. And then infect the humans who found shelter in the orphaned Divine Realms in an attempt to nurture new gods… gods who were taught to defy fate, and would therefore be able to destroy the Forgotten One once and for all in the depths of the Seventh Nightmare."  
  
Neph's expression turned cold.  
  
"...Only it did not work out quite like Weaver had hoped, until now. Every Divine Realm infected by the Spell succumbed to the flood of nightmares and was devoured by the Dream Realm, after all, their civilizations annihilated and consumed by Corruption. The people of the Twilight Sea, the civilization of Godgrave, and the rest — all of them are gone, and we are all that remains. The last sparks of the Flame."  
  
Sunny sighed, then nodded.  
  
"You do understand what it means, don't you?"  
  
Cassie was the one who answered:  
  
"It means that humanity is fundamentally wrong about the mechanism and the purpose of the Spell, for one. In truth, what we call the Nightmare Spell is really two connected, but separate processes… we had suspicions, of course, but now it's confirmed. The Forgotten God sleeps, dreaming a nightmare — vestiges of his dreams spill into reality, slowly infecting all of existence. That is where the Nightmare Seeds come from, tainting everything around them with Corruption. And when the Seeds bloom, the Forgotten God's Nightmare continues to spread — Gates open in new realms, and those worlds are then integrated into his own Divine Realm… into the Dream Realm."  
  
Sunny leaned back, looking into the distance.  
  
"So, the Nightmare Spell does not create the Nightmare Seeds, and neither does it create Nightmare Creatures. Rather, it is… like an interface built atop of it all, through it all, like a symbiotic — or maybe parasitic — presence. It constructs Nightmares within the Seeds and grants its carriers a way to access these Nightmares in order to destroy the Seeds from within. That is why those... those who do not carry the Spell cannot challenge a Seed — if they approach one, they will simply be exposing themselves to Corruption."  
  
Cassie drew a shaky breath.  
  
"That is one of the main functions of the Spell. The second function is to nurture its carriers in various ways and help them walk the Path of Ascension at a speed unthinkable for natural Awakened… in the most ruthless, but also quite an effective way."  
  
She exhaled slowly before adding:  
  
"The third of its main functions…"  
  
Sunny ended the sentence.  
  
"Is the most fundamental one, which lies at the root of it all. It is to keep the Forgotten God asleep."  
  
He paused for a moment, and then said with a hint of fascination in his voice:  
  
"Many questions about how the Spell functions remain, of course. For example, what powers it? Does it consume a bit of the soul fragments of evеry living being slain by its carriers, perhaps? Or is it using the Nightmare of the Forgotten God as a perpetual battery to fuel itself? Is it still intact, or has its mechanism been corrupted over the eons? How exactly does it create the Nightmares, and what is the nature of the phantoms populating them? I am pretty sure that the Spell was not woven out of essence strings, but from the Strings of Fate themselves… is that why it seems omniscient, possessing the knowledge of both the past and the future?"  
  
Sunny shook his head.  
  
"Weaver, that sinister daemon… they pulled quite a stunning trick back then, at the end. Didn't they? Compared to what the Spell is, even the act of slaying the gods — and the daemons — almost seems to pale in comparison. I mean, who could have guessed that killing the gods had been merely the means to an end, not the actual goal? And who could have been brazen enough to treat their deaths that way?"  
  
He sighed, suddenly feeling suffocated.  
  
Sunny was Fateless now… but that did not seem to free him from Weaver's grasp. The nebulous daemon had envisioned a role for their inheritor — their epigone — and even after being torn from the tapestry of fate, Sunny was still marching to the beat of their drum. That was because Weaver did not need to manipulate his fate in order to control him. They could simply manipulatе the entire world and leave Sunny no choice but to go where the Demon of Fate had wanted him to go. Even though he was not Fated anymore, the weight of the decisions Sunny had already made ensured that his future choices would be in line with what Weaver had envisioned.  
  
'That damn daemon…'  
  
He exhaled slowly.  
  
"All of it is fascinating, and there's a lot we still don't know. But these details are not exactly important right now, are they?"  
  
Nephis, who had kept quiet until then, gave him a poignant look.  
  
"What is important, then?"  
  
Sunny met her gaze, choosing his words carefully.  
  
In the end, he spoke in a tone that was a little softer than usual.  
  
"Well… you are. Your goal has always been to destroy the Spell. Now that you know that it is not as malignаnt as we believed, and that its existence is necessary to keep the Forgotten God from swallowing us all, doesn't it change anything? Or rather... doesn't it change everything?"  
  
Nephis studied him for a while, her expression unreadable.  
  
Then, she pursed her lips slightly and turned to the window.  
  
"...It doesn't really change much, though."