2474 The Devil's Therapist  
  
Saint's private office was smaller than her space at the mental hospital, but better furnished. She prepared a cup of coffee for the patient — a simple act that put most people at ease, easing them into conversation. She usually offered tea to other patients, but considering the detective's chronic insomnia, coffee suited him better.  
  
Naturally, the coffee she made was flawless. Every movement was measured and precise, designed to achieve the optimal result in the most efficient way.  
  
Placing the elegant cup in front of the pale man, Saint took her seat opposite him and opened her notebook.  
  
She would only be receiving a symbolic remuneration for this session. But thаt was fine, because she had never been driven by money.  
  
Saint was not driven by compassion or kindness, either. In truth, she had extended an offer to continue treatment to this untidy man for a simple reason — professional pride. She hated leaving things unfinished and flawed, so the thought of letting him go without truly helping him felt distasteful.  
  
"You look more fatigued than usual today, Detective. Has your insomnia worsened?"  
  
He looked at her for a while, then shook his head.  
  
"No. It's just that… the Demoness and the Demon King's Son. It took them fifty-six episodes to get together, can you believe that?"  
  
Saint offered him a faint smile and nodded, writing a short sentence down in her notebook.  
  
The detective fell silent, studying her closely.  
  
She had noticed him staring before — few people could ever resist stealing glances her way — but today, his gaze was different. It was more inquisitive, somehow.  
  
"You've returned to duty. That must have been quite a change of pace."  
  
He lingered for a while, then nodded.  
  
"Yes, well. It was an eye-opening experience. Especially after I met my new partner."  
  
Saint silently raised an eyebrow, prompting him to continue.  
  
The detective smiled.  
  
"It was a bit ironic, really. We had gone through fire and water, she and I — and yet, she did not remember me at all before. But when we met this time, it was I who did not remember her. Luckily, she reminded me."  
  
Then, his expression suddenly livened up.  
  
"Oh. Actually, Dr. Saint… I had a real breakthrough thanks to her. My partner, I mean — you probably don't remember, but you two know each other. You arm-wrestled once… ah, my poor table…"  
  
Saint frowned subtly.  
  
What was he talking about?  
  
She did not show much emotion on her face, though.  
  
"What kind of breakthrough?"  
  
The detective gave her a strange look. "Oh… that... I really wish you didn't ask that question, doc."  
  
His tone sounded a little embarrassed. He remained silent for a short while, then winced.  
  
"Do you remember all those nightmares I told you about?"  
  
Saint nodded.  
  
'Is he finally able to sleep soundly? That's great!'  
  
The detective took a deep breath, then let out a heavy sigh.  
  
"Well, you see… I realized that they weren't nightmares at all."  
  
Saint looked at him, encouraging him to tell her more.  
  
He offered her a pale smile.  
  
"Instead, they are the actual reality, and this place is one huge illusion."  
  
Saint blinked.  
  
"Excuse me?"  
  
The detective nodded.  
  
"In reality, I am a demigod known as Sunless, the Sovereign of Death, the Dark Lord of the Forgotten Shore, and the commander of the Shadow Legion. I am nearly immortal and possess seven bodies, each capable of destroying entire continents. Of course, most people assume that I was killed by the radiant goddess of humanity, Changing Star, the last daughter of the Immortal Flame. But actually... she is my lover. Even if we recently had a fight while discussing the fate of the world."  
  
Saint remained silent for a while. Then, she started to scribble something furiously in her notebook with an inscrutable expression.  
  
'Oh, no. It's a complete breakdown? Schizophrenia? Delusion of grandeur? But there were no signs! Just PTSD and a small collection of mild personality disorders...'  
  
The detective, meanwhile, continued.  
  
"Yeah, so, anyway… I am also the heir of Weaver, the Demon of Fate, currently on a quest to collect all seven fragments of their forbidden lineage. One of those fragments is hidden in the mirror labyrinth below the ruined castle of the Demon of Imagination, which was where I went in the company of Effie… Saint Athena. Actually, this whole city is an elaborate illusion contained within the Great Mirror that stands in the middle of the Mirror Maze. So, you see, I am one of the few real people here in Mirage City — everyоne else is a creepy monster only pretending to be human."  
  
Saint suppressed a scowl.  
  
'This is bad… that last detail is a common symptom shared by many violent sociopaths.'  
  
And what was that, his supposed companion was Athena? As in the stunning maiden goddess of Olympus? Was he fixated on inventing romantic dalliances with goddesses now?  
  
Where did that come from?!  
  
She inhaled slowly.  
  
"Do you… consider me not to be real, Detective?"  
  
The detective looked at her in dismay, then shook his head.  
  
"What? No, of course not! You are perfectly real, doctor. I mean, obviously, you've been brainwashed into believing that you are a mortal psychiatrist residing in Mirage City, which could not be further from the truth."  
  
He coughed.  
  
"In truth — in reality, I mean — you are the Onyx Saint, my most valued and loyal Shadow. You've been serving me faithfully for more than a decade, following my every command and satisfying my every whim… ever since I killed you. The original you, I mean. By the way, it occurs to me that I've never thanked you for that... so, thank you. It really means a lot."  
  
Saint slowly lowered her notebook and looked at the cold, darkly charming man.  
  
The man who had been oddly obsessed with a serial killer called the Nihilist ever since the two of them met.  
  
Suddenly, it occurred to her that they were alone in the building, with not a living soul in earshot.  
  
'He has completely lost it.'  
  
No… maybe he had been completely insane this whole time.  
  
How had she missed it?  
  
Saint looked around subtly, her gaze lingering on a decorative sword that hung on the wall — a garish gift from one of her patients, which she had not had the heart to throw out.  
  
"Detective… when was the last time you took your medication?"  
  
Maybe he was just delirious from the lack of sleep…  
  
He blinked a few times.  
  
"Oh, my meds? I stopped taking them when I remembered who I really am. Even if I am temporarily trapped in a mortal body, I am still a demigod, you know. Those pills just make me feel loopy."  
  
Saint sighed with regret.  
  
'I skipped lunch for this…'