

"Your Bill may be the key to saving my universe from the Court, and I need to ensure he's very much alive."

Amber soaked in the words and dwelled on them for a silent moment, what seemed like forever. "This 'Court of Azathoth'," he asked Durandal. "Can they possess human hosts?"

Durandal thought for a moment. "The W'rkncactner can, in a way, enter the minds of others and influence their minds. They might be able to do a full possession. And they have the capability to warp and twist living things into their own design, a mockery of things from other worlds."

"Believe me, I know that first-hand," Plume spoke, shuddering. "Not too long ago a few Outsiders tried to breach our chambers from a location called the Entralink. We fought them off with a bit of deceptive work. They were assisted from a person from our world, which is why Amber is asking this, I'm afraid. We need to know the full extent of their capabilities."

Amber nodded. "Which is why I'm loathe to just give away the knowledge of Bill's existence, including if he's alive or not."

Dome frowned. "He'd be better off dead in the first place. If he were alive, like you imply," It said, looking at Durandal, "He would have to answer to me first. And I'm not too keen on letting him just walk away for what he's done to us."

"Your tone implies a little more personal touch to your words, if you don't mind me saying," Durandal replied. "Trust me when I say holding on to your anger over someone who's wronged you can be a toxic thing. I once wronged my brother, Tycho, and in return he maintained a deep hatred of me over it, even when he died."

He looked in Dome's eyes. "What exactly did he do that wronged you so much? Being imprisoned in the PC system? I can scarcely think that's worth too much reprisal. Or was it the transformation into an Ariados? Being trapped in a body that felt so alien to you?"

Dome muttered a wordless curse under its breath as Durandal continued. "At the time, you were a legitimate threat to the world. I can and will accuse you, Dome, of being the inciting force behind all of this. Your clashes with Helix over the power of worship and faith nearly tore this world's civilizations to the brink of destruction over simple beliefs. You were affecting the fabric of the universe,

causing feedback loops in the cosmic code that caused fiber-thin cracks and loose threads in the surface.

"You sent people of innocent mind into depravity and heartbreak, multiple times. Hell, you even turned Pokemon against one another, making them into just as bad psychopaths as others. You didn't think your Martyr's words and actions escaped my purview, did you?"

"That's different," Dome stuttered. "Martyr's twisted my words around because of her hatred of the Voices. She doesn't know any better!"

"And you do?"

"I..."

"Of course, I remember now. You just recently travelled with a Voice Host yourself, didn't you? Red's little brother Abraham, right?"

"Yes, I have," Dome nodded. "And travelling with him opened my eyes to how I had been treating them. They're complicated little things. I barely understand them, and yes, they can be infuriating at times, but I know now they don't mean lasting harm, unlike your Court of Azathoth."

"But you still realize the damage your actions have caused, right?" Durandal posited. "You know what you did, and you're trying to make amends. If Bill were alive, don't you think he'd be trying to do that too, even to a world that rightly won't forgive him?"

"..."

Dome closed its eyes and sat back down in its throne beside Amber. It was quiet for the longest time.

"The reason I became a god," Durandal continued, "Is because I committed the same atrocities as you, only under different names. To attain my power I let thousands of stars and numerous galaxies die and fade away into the aether. Hundreds of civilizations, lost because of my hubris. I have each memory of every screaming child and family etched into my very soul. I barely sleep at night sometimes because I can still hear the crying.

"I knew the cost I had paid to gain my power, and I swore I would do two things with it: I would work endlessly to protect what was left, to raise them to the heights of their potential for their sake, to make them strong enough to never

make my mistakes, and I would fight anyone else who would abuse them like I had. Sounds familiar, doesn't it, Dome?"

He held out his hand. "You have a choice. Let go of the hatred, or be consumed by it."

Dome thought about these words for another forever, then spoke up.

"...If he were alive, then yes. You can take him."

Durandal smiled, and looked at Amber. "So you know the truth, do you? If he's alive, where is he?"