2110 Disobedience  
  
There was no pompous exchange of challenges, no proclamations, not even an insult thrown to rattle the enemy before the battle. There was no sign that the archer was preparing for a fight, like assuming a stance and cautiously probing Sunny's defenses.  
  
Instead, one second the mysterious shadow was standing a few dozen meters away, and the next, they were already upon Sunny.  
  
The obsidian knife glinted coldly as it tore the fabric of reality apart, aiming to plunge into his abdomen.  
  
'F—fast…'  
  
Sunny barely managed to deflect the blow by sensing, rather than being fully aware of, the coming strike. The splinter of the ivory fang met the obsidian blade and pushed it aside, sending a jolt of pain traveling through his arm.  
  
'...Strong, as well.'  
  
The nebulous slayer was terribly fast, and terribly strong. Perhaps in any other place, Sunny would have stood no chance against this adversary — but here in the Shadow Realm, the infinite abyss of shadows was imbuing him with dire prowess. It was not quite comparable to the augmentation of his shadows, but close to it.  
  
So, he could at least resist.  
  
Sunny deflected the obsidian knife to the side and blocked the bone knife by crossing two ivory blades of his own. Then, he attacked with three splinters of the ancient fang that remained.  
  
He had six hands at the moment, after all.  
  
But his nebulous enemy was elusive.  
  
Using flowing footwork, they seemed to disappear like a mirage, sidestepping all three of the counterattacks and somehow managing to flank Sunny at the same time. All that his improvised daggers managed to pierce were the wisps of ghostly smoke.  
  
'Crap…'  
  
Sunny moved his three left arms, trying to defend his side, and instantly lost two of them. Severed cleanly, the inky-black hands fell to the ground — but that, at least, had bought him enough time to reel back and avoid being skewered himself.  
  
He felt a cold chill run down his spine.  
  
Sunny had hoped that the mysterious slayer would not be as deadly up close as they were at range… but these hopes were now crushed thoroughly. The damned archer knew how to handle a knife, as well — in fact, they fought with an utterly chilling level of skill and intent.  
  
Their style was as lethal as it was straightforward. There were no embellishments, hesitation, or complicated philosophy to its deadly grace. Just pure lethality, inhuman ruthlessness, and absolute killing intent. An uncompromising aggressiveness that aimed to slaughter the enemy in the most swift and efficient fashion, discarding all else.  
  
Making all else seem unimportant.  
  
Which was not to say that the way the mysterious shadow fought was not insidious. In fact, they were like a personification of devious will — deception was a killing tool as well, after all.  
  
Even using his mastery of Shadow Dance to predict the enemy's movements, Sunny was struggling to keep up. That was because the archer was simply too fast and aggressive to react to this foresight, and even if he did, the predictions Sunny made seem to fail him half of the time.  
  
As if the enemy knew how to deceive his very perception, including shadow sense, thus making all attempts to gain insight fruitless. After all, trying to build anything on a foundation of falsehoods was an exercise in futility.  
  
That was why the bone knife, which was supposed to be flying toward Sunny's throat, suddenly pierced the breastplate of the Onyx Mantle just below his ribs instead. Still failing to understand how that happened, Sunny staggered back, which was why the sharp blade only cut his skin and a bit of muscle instead of plunging into his lung.  
  
He was still reeling from the unexpected failure to predict the sinister blow, but there was no time to think — that was because the mysterious shadow had not slowed down the onslaught of attacks even for a split second, pushing Sunny back with a rain of deadly strikes.  
  
They came at him from all directions, the swift figure of his enemy obscured and made even harder to discern by the ghostly black smoke.  
  
It was to the point that Sunny was not even sure which one of them possessed six hands instead of two… well, four, now.   
  
Defending himself desperately, he took a step back, then another. His entire body rattled from the immense strain of withstanding the ferocious, devastating blows of the enemy, and the situation only seemed to grow more dire and frenetic with each heartbeat.   
  
But that was fine, as well.  
  
After all, Sunny was not without tricks himself.  
  
His two severed hands were now laying on the ground behind the archer, having yet to dissolve into intangible shadows. And that was for a good reason — because just then, they suddenly moved and rose into the air, carried by two flexible shadow tentacles.  
  
Still grasping the splinters of the ivory fang, they shot at the archer's back with the speed of supersonic missiles.  
  
…And the bastard still dodged them, somehow.  
  
Granted, the mysterious shadow was at least forced to halt the chilling and seemingly unceasing assault to disengage, performed a strange mix of a spinning somersault and a cartwheel that had no right to look graceful, and yet did, rolled over their shoulder, and slid back on the glossy obsidian.  
  
There was no rule that limited Sunny to only using his bone blades, after all. In fact, he would be a fool to do so.  
  
Sparing the vague figure of his enemy a brief glance, Sunny called upon the shadows and unleashed a maelstrom of shadow chains, clawed hands, and bladed tentacles upon the nebulous slayer.  
  
…Or at least, he tried to.  
  
But he failed.  
  
That was because for the first time in a long, long while… the shadows did not respond to his call.  
  
Instead, they cowered and trembled, torn between the will of the Lord of Shadows and the cold threat of… whatever the mysterious archer was.  
  
An ancient shadow that had spent thousands of years in the desolate hell of the Shadow Realm, hunting down their kin.   
  
Sunny commanded them to move, and the slayer threatened them to stay still.  
  
He smiled darkly.   
  
"...Such audacity."  
  
Instead of responding, the archer lunged forward once again.  
  
Only this time, when Sunny commanded his remaining two shadow hands forward to block the obsidian knife… they jerked and halted, failing to respond to his will for a split second.   
  
That split second was enough for the stone blade to leave another hole on his hide.