2221 Dark Guide  
  
The journey across the crumbling hellscape of the battlefield had been a perilous nightmare. Sunny and Nightmare cleaved into the mass of Nightmare Creatures, besieged from all sides by the frenzied avalanche of abominations. Crimson blood and scarlet sap spilled on the white bone, and mangled bodies toppled to the ground…  
  
They were swiftly swallowed by the red sea of spreading moss, only to rise again moments later.  
  
Even locked in a furious battle with the King of Swords, the Queen did not miss the chance to create new puppets.  
  
Sunny opened a gap in the tide of monsters, and the Sword Army followed the dark rider. However, the horrors of the liberated jungle were not the only danger facing the soldiers — there was the army of puppets and the devastating hurricane of flying swords, as well.  
  
He had to find a path through the cataclysmic battle of the two Domains, avoiding the wider cracks that marred the surface of the fractured plain, the flashpoint in the obliterating confrontation between Ki Song’s puppets and Anvil’s swords, and the caged Titans.  
  
Even if he did, the danger still remained — at any moment, the two Sovereigns could plummet from the sky, causing a violent detonation on the ground. If the army was caught in that violent explosion of annihilating forces, the casualties were going to be horrific… the Saints would probably survive, and some of the Masters too. But the Awakened soldiers would become a cloud of crimson haze.  
  
‘What a mess…’  
  
Sunny used his spear and manifested shadows to slaughter frenzied abominations. Nightmare used his fangs, his horns, and his hooves to furiously rip them apart. The aura of dread surrounding the black steed weakened the hungry Nightmare Creatures, which made the two of them even more deadly than they already were.  
  
Far behind, Sunny’s other incarnations were struggling to preserve the fragile formation of the advancing army side by side with other Saints of the Sword Domain. One of his avatars was protecting the rear, one was fighting on the right flank, аnd one was fighting on the left. Saint and Fiend were holding back the flood of Nightmare Creatures, as well…  
  
Nephis and her miraculous flames were at the head of the army, continuously healing the soldiers and following the path that he had carved.  
  
Somehow, unbelievably… they made it quite far.  
  
The casualties were heavy, and the formation of the Sword Army had turned into a complete mess, all pretenses of order obliterated by the carnage of the great battle and the complicated terrain of the fractured plain. But they still managed to torturously extricate themselves from the worst of the scarlet flood and made it to the epicenter of the clash between the dead army and the storm of swords.  
  
That was perhaps even more dangerous than being surrounded by a sea of frenzied Nightmare Creatures.  
  
Neither the puppets nor the flying swords were hostile to the human soldiers — however, they did not seem concerned about collateral damage, either.  
  
There were cracks leading to the Hollows here, as well, and the jungleUpd was attempting to escape to the surface from them, too… but most of the horrors that escaped the darkness were swiftly obliterated by the violent aftershocks of the harrowing battle between the two Sovereigns.  
  
The army was only actively besieged from the rear now — liberated from the dire need to fight the Nightmare Creatures, it closеd ranks and concentrated on defense, the officers exerting their Aspect powers to protect the Awakened soldiers from the chaos, the mayhem, the destructive shockwaves of distant collisions, and the rustling streams of stray swords.  
  
Success… was limited, at best.  
  
The ground was still quаking, the deafening cacophony of the battle was still unbearable, and the world still resembled a crumbling hell. In fact, now that the soldiers were not just witnessing the clash between the Supremes, but were in the midst of it, the chilling catastrophe of their clash had only become harder to conceive of, fathom, and endure.  
  
But they did endure.  
  
Even then, it was in no small part thanks to Sunny. He had not volunteered to become a guide for the reeling Sword Army merely because of how strong he was, and how fearsome his steed was. Rather, he was the best man for the job because his shadow sense was able to envelop the entire battlefield.  
  
Therefore, Sunny knew where to go, what path to choose, and which directions to steer clear of in order to avoid complete annihilation.  
  
The battered army slowly advanced through the carnage. All pretenses of maintaining an orderly formation had long been abandoned, and bу now, it was nothing more than a vast mob… however, it was a mob of seasoned warriors, not panicking civilians. Faced with a horror too great to be fathomed, the soldiers had simply abandoned fear, somberly concentrating on the task at hand instead and refusing to think about anything else.  
  
Perhaps that was why they had survived.  
  
‘I… need to hurry…’  
  
Sunny was concerned about the Song Army, as well.  
  
After all, Rain was there. Cassie was there, too, bound by the invisible strings of the Queen’s power.  
  
As he was carving a blood path through the mayhem atop Nightmare and fighting to defend the splintering Sword Army, he was also tensely observing Rain. In the end, Sunny had no choicе but to emerge from her shadow and reveal himself among the soldiers of Song for the first time since his sister had become one of them.  
  
Almost at the same time, he finally broke through the tide of abominations and came in view of the battered expanse of the Queen’s soldiers.  
  
He regarded them for a moment from Nightmare’s back, streams of blood running down the onyx surface of the Mantle.  
  
The sight of him sitting atop Nightmare must have been quite terrifying.  
  
The Song Army had done better than the warriors of the Sword Domain, but they too were on the verge of drowning in the scarlet flood. Neither of the sides were going to weather the calamity alone…  
  
Truthfully, even if they joined forces, their chances were not great.  
  
But wasn’t it funny?  
  
These people had been ready to kill each other not too long ago, but now, their best chance to survive was to fight side by side with each other.  
  
‘I can’t tell if that is poetic or ironic…’  
  
Perhaps it was both.  
  
Somewhere behind, the vague silhouette of the Ivory Island revealed itself from the storm of swords, looming above the Sword Army as if trying to shield it from the fury of the Supreme battle above.  
  
Raising his spear, Sunny leaned forward and tossed it at the soldiers of Song.  
  
They did not even have time to react.  
  
Tearing the air, the dark spear instantly breached the remaining distance…  
  
And nailed a monstrous spider that had been lunging at Seishan to the ground.  
  
Spinning swiftly, she spent a split second to stare at the spider, then turned her head and looked at Sunny.  
  
He met her gaze coldly, remained motionless for a moment… and then gave her an exaggerated bow.  
  
Behind him, the banners of the Sword Army fluttered in the hurricane wind.