2235 Feeble Flame of Hope  
First came the cold.  
Then came the darkness.  
It rose from below, swallowing the land, devouring the heavens, and blotting out the light of day…  
The soldiers, who had been tormented by blinding light and suffocated by heat for many long months, let out sighs of relief and basked in the cool embrace of shadows. Luminous Memories swiftly ignited above the drowning army, and they fought against the rising tide of Nightmare Creatures with renewed vigor.  
Of course, it was a bit strange for snow to rise from the Hollows and for deep darkness to envelop the world… but the soldiers had seen and survived too many bizarre events here in Godgrave to care about yet another one. All of them, both those who had Awakened before the Chain of Nightmares and after it, were seasoned veterans now. They had been honed and tempered by the war, experiencing enough horrors to make them numb to eerie strangeness.  
All they knew was that the Lord of Shadows had something to do with it, and that he was assisting Changing Star.  
Changing Star herself was out there, far away in the distance, standing between the King and the Queen. Her radiant figure was like a pure white beacon in the ocean of darkness, and although few could hear her speak, everyone understood what she was doing… attempting to do.  
She was trying to stop thе mad battle between the two Sovereigns to spare the dying soldiers and save them all. The last daughter of the Immortal Flame had always been the voice of reason in this appalling war — in fact, she was the only one who had protested against it. And now, her voice was their only hope.  
Perhaps the Supremes would listen…  
If not, perhaps Changing Star would find another way to end the war.  
That faint hope burned in the hearts of the desperate soldiers, and they clung to it desperately, even while knowing full well how futile it was. Hope was a resilient thing, after all… it was far more resilient than reason.And there was fuel nurturing its feeble flame, as well.  
The advance of the liberated jungle, which had threatened to drown the two great armies minutes before, was slower now. The dreadful battle of the Supremes, which had threatened to destroy the very ground beneath them, temporarily came to a halt.  
For a few moments, the soldiers allowed themselves to believe in salvation…  
But then, as they cast their gazes ahead, to where Changing Star was standing, their expressions changed.  
Their eyes widened, and their faces became twisted by horror.  
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Not long before that, Sunny walked down the steps of the Nameless Temple, looking at Anvil coldly.  
At the same time, a bright flame flared from Neph's hand, forming into a beautiful silver blade. The Blessing flared to life, its incandescent radiance fusing with her own and making it much more brilliant, thus causing the surrounding shadows to grow deeper.  
Anvil did not pay Sunny attention, staring at the brilliant sword as if enchanted by it.  
"...You forged this blade?"  
His voice was full of a strange, subdued emotion.  
As Sunny walked down the steps, his incarnations rose from the shadows behind him. One, two, three… eventually, seven identical figures in fearsome black armor stepped onto the weathered bone.  
Seven cold voices resounded like a choir, fusing in an eerie harmony:  
"Yes."  
"No."  
A quiet laugh resounded above the fractured battlefield, and six incarnations of the Lord of Shadows suddenly turned into six rivers of pure darkness, flowing into the seventh. As they were absorbed by it, his usually subtle presence grew impossible to ignore, brimming with a cold and sinister power.  
The darkness, which had seemed impenetrable before, turned even deeper and more unfathomable.  
As the shadows wrapped themselves around him, Sunny smiled behind Weaver's Mask. Having been scattered around the Dream Realm for so long,he had missed the feeling of being embraced by his shadows… he had grown tired of not being able to enjoy his true power. Now that he enjoyed the familiar boon of sbeing augmented by his invaluable helpers, the future seemed a little brighter.  
"I am not going to enjoy killing you, King of Swords."  
Anvil stared at the Blessing for a few more moments, then turned to Sunny.  
"No, you won't."  
His next words were addressed to Nephis:  
"So, are you really going to challenge me as a mere Saint, girl? How bold… how brave. How misguided."  
Nephis regarded him calmly, brilliant radiance burning under her skin.  
Her voice crackled with the furious roaring of an annihilating flame:  
"You're just a Sovereign."  
Anvil chuckled.  
At the same time, the flesh golem moved, and every puppet on the vast battlefield simultaneously turned their heads, all staring at Nephis with empty eyes.  
The nearest of them opened its monstrous mouth and spoke, its voice resounding above the fractured plain. A moment later, another dead abomination continued, their hollow, inhuman voices brimming with chilling amusement:  
"Ah… I am feeling ignored. Don't you have any words to spare for me, as well, little Nephis?"  
Neph shifted her gaze and looked at the grotesque flesh golem, white flames dancing in her eyes.  
Her tone did not change.  
"You should have killed me a long time agо. Now, it's too late."  
With that, she spread her white wings and prepared to attack.  
The Crushing was pressing the Sovereigns into the ground, but it was sparing her and Sunny. Controlling it with such precision was not easy, and would not be possible for much longer — but in that short time, the physical power of their terrifying enemies would be severely diminished.  
Sunny and Nephis had to use that time to if not kill, then at least gravely wound the Sovereigns.  
However, fate had other plans in store.  
As Sunny reached into the shadows, shaping them into a weapon, Anvil raised his sword.  
His voice was cold and even."If you want to face me, girl, face me yourself. Don't rely on toys."  
With that, the cursed blade hissed, cutting the air.  
Sunny wanted to dodge, but the strike was not aimed at him. Neither was it aimed at Nephis.  
Instead, Anvil seemed to be cutting the sky.  
And something in the sky was severed.  
Looking up, Sunny could not help but flinch.  
'How…'  
His hand trembled.  
Out there, in the sky, the Ivory Island…  
Was falling.