2280 Hidden Dagger  
  
Now that his original body was no more, Sunny's existence was split between seven incarnations. He could maintain all seven avatars indefinitely or release control of some, returning control to his shadows.  
  
One incarnation remained in Bastion, accompanying Nephis and keeping an eye on Rain. It also served as a point of contact between Sunny and the Ivory Tower, allowing the public and the clandestine forces of the Human Domain to coordinate their actions better.  
  
'Human Domain…'  
  
As far as Sunny was concerned, it was a name that lacked necessary gravitas - and he was a known authority on giving things great names. No one had listened to him on this issue, though, for some reason.  
  
In the beginning, people used to call Neph's Domain all kinds of things - the Star Domain, the Light Domain, the Immortal Flame Domain… however, Nephis had consciously chosen to renounce these names in favor of a more general title, separating the identity of the new human empire from her own.  
  
Names held power, after all.  
  
More importantly, she was looking toward the future. In the future, more human Sovereigns would emerge, while Nephis herself could ascend to a higher Rank… or perish while trying to. The human unity she and Sunny had won in Godgrave had to be able to withstand their absence.  
  
In any case, while one of Sunny's incarnations was hiding in the very heart of the Human Domain, the rest of them were far away, on the Forgotten Shore.  
  
His main avatar was playing the role of the Dark Lord, residing in the gloomy throne room of the Marvellous Mimic. He controlled the shades working on the restoration of the city and dealt with issues having to do with the Shadow Clan.  
  
The Shadow Clan was a force made up of exceptional elites, each possessing an array of rare talents.  
  
For example, there was Corsair, their newest recruit. He had a service record that would make most people faint - a good reminder that while Sunny and the members of his cohort had been having their dreadful adventures, innumerable outstanding people all over the world had been living their own storied lives in the harrowing reality of the Nightmare Spell as well.  
  
Despite how exceptional Corsair was, however, he was not an outlier among the members of the Shadow Clan. Most of them had a dossier as thick and as unbelievable as his.  
  
Sunny had chosen each and every one of them himself, after all.  
  
Despite that, the overall power of the Shadow Clan was not that great - not in comparison to the renowned Awakened forces like the Fire Keepers, the Wolf Army, the Nightsingers, and so on at least. Most of its members were merely Аwakened, for one, with a handful of Masters leading them.  
  
There were several reasons for that. The most important of them was that it was easier to maintain secrecy while recruiting Awakened - there were far more Masters in the world these days, but they still were in the public eye. So, Sunny wanted to build a solid foundation out of talented Awakened, prepare them to the best of his ability, and then help those who were ready to climb the Path of Ascension.  
  
If all went well, in a few years, he would have dozens of Masters at his disposal, all trained and raised by the Shadow Clan. And eventually, who knew? Maybe he would even have his own Saints. In fact, perhaps he would be able to recruit a couple of Transcendent acquaintances even before that.  
  
For now, though, the power of Shadow Clan was sufficient. His warriors were not supposed to involve themselves in prolonged battles, anyway - they were supposed to strike from the shadows, eliminate the adversary in one fell swoоp, and disappear without leaving a trace.  
  
The Mark of Shadows gave them additional advantages, and he could even personally amplify them in case they were in danger.  
  
Combat power was not what made the members of Shadow Clan valuable, though. In truth, Sunny needed them for another purpose - just like his shade warriors, people bearing the Mark of Shadows were conduits of his Supreme shadow sense. Wherever they went, Sunny's perception followed.  
  
And since it was quite difficult for him to enter the waking world these days, the Shadow Clan agents served as his eyes and ears there.  
  
They were spread across all three remaining Quadrants, completing missions while gathering information. Better yet, the Mark of Shadows allowed Sunny access to their Soul Seas - which meant that the Shadow Clan was a force immune to Mordret's insidious powers.  
  
The Prince of Nothing had vanished into thin air, and there was no sign of him anywhere. However, Sunny could not sleep easy knowing that he was somewhere out there, no doubt concocting another frightening scheme. Even if not, it was better to be prepared for the worst.  
  
There was another threat the Shadow Clan was supposed to be a weapon against… perhaps not a sword, but at least a sharp and expertly hidden dagger.  
  
It was the third Sovereign of humanity, Asterion.  
  
The Dreamspawn.  
  
Very little was known about him, and even now that Nephis and her cohort had become rulers of the world, they could not find a lot of information about the mysterious Supreme. Anvil and Ki Song had been quite thorough in eliminating all information about him, as well as his followers.  
  
There was some knowledge about him left in the printed books, which were themselves quite rare in the modern day, but nothing detailed. Cassie was hard at work searching for the traces of Asterion, but even her formidable information-gathering talents were not bearing fruit.  
  
All they knew was that the Third Sovereign had been isolated and imprisoned on the moon. He could have very well perished there, but somehow, none of them believed that he had.  
  
Which meant that he could return one day.  
  
The lack of knowledge about a threat of that scale was quite infuriating… and the person who knew Asterion best, Mordret, was nowhere to be found. Without him, they were facing a dead end.  
  
In fact, they did not even know if Asterion was a threat. He could harbor no hostility toward Nephis and her Domain, even if he had played an instrumental role in her father's death.  
  
But just like none of them believed that Asterion was dead, they did not feel like he was a friendly force either.  
  
From everything Sunny had heard about the Dreamspawn, he was an eerie and sinister existence.  
  
So…  
  
The Shadow Clan was preparing to deal with the consequences of Asterion's return, should it ever happen. Even Sunny himself did not know what these preparations should look like, though… all he knew was that Asterion's Domain seemed to have something to do with knowledge of him, and therefore, depended on followers to spread.  
  
Asterion himself was not someone members of the Shadow Clan could fight, but his followers were.  
  
That was why the Dark Lord was sitting on the throne, his consciousness spread across myriad shades and various members of the Shadow Clan, absorbing information and watching out for signs of danger.  
  
Needless to say, he was quite busy while appearing to be very lazy.  
  
At the moment, Sunny was just about to send Kim and Corsair away.