2289 Paid Leave  
  
Sunny's incarnations stood at the very edge of the charred tangle, looking out on the rows of ancient barrows beуond.  
  
The land of barrows separated the Forgotten Shore from the Burned Forest, serving as the boundary between these two dark realms.  
  
One of the incarnations dismissed the heavily damaged Jade Mantle, allowing it to retreat under his skin… or rather, into his skin. Then, he smiled mischievously.  
  
'How much are you willing to bet that whatever is sleeping in these barrows will one day wake up and make us regret having turned our backs on it?'  
  
The other avatar shrugged arrogantly.  
  
'When it does, we will kill it, then bury it properly this time.'  
  
Sunny had not ventured inside the barrows after that ominous first time, preferring to keep watch on them from a distance. Naturally, he would have to deal with that threat sooner or later… but for now, he was willing to let the mystery of the ancient burial ground rest, since it wasn't actively bothering him.  
  
There was a reason why he suspected that the tall barrows represented a threat, and it wasn't just the eerie feeling they gave him. More important was the fact that the Dark Sea had never reached past the barrows, meaning that it had been wary of them.  
  
Naturally, it could just as well have been because of the sky above. Here, on the boundary of two realms, the starless sky of the Forgotten Shore gave way to a sky that still enjoyed the company of its sun, and was therefore infused with sunlight. But Sunny still was wary of the eerie barrows.  
  
Letting out a sigh, one of the incarnations asked:  
  
'So, what do you think?'  
  
The other pondered for a few minutes.  
  
'It wasn't bad, I guess? We did manage to kill the Queen, and the harvest of the lesser shades was quite bountiful. However… I am not satisfied. We are still lacking.'  
  
The fiгst incarnation nodded.  
  
'Indeed.' This invasion of the Burned Forest served several purposes. One was to strengthen the Shadow Legion, another was to search for unclaimed Citadels, the third was to explore the Dream Realm in preparation for the eventual integration of the waking world.  
  
However, no less important was the fact that Sunny learned how to wield his Supreme power here.  
  
His Supreme Ability, [Shadow Legion], was in a sense an ultimate expression of his Aspect. He was not even sure if it was really an Ability in and of itself - it could have been a logical conclusion of his other Abilities reaching their pinnacle, instead.  
  
The legion of silent shadows was his Domain. It granted him power, nurtured his soul, and gave weight to his will.  
  
The [Shadow Legion] Ability, meanwhile, allowed him to unleash his Domain upon the woгld.  
  
He could summon the shades from the depths of his soul, give shape to them, and control them as his loyal soldiers… which felt like an evolution of his [Shadow Step], [Shadow Manifestation], and [Shadow Control] Abilities. The shades also served as vessels of his consciousness, inheriting some traits from his Transformation Ability as well.  
  
However…  
  
There were limitations to this power.  
  
Unlike the puppets of Ki Song or the swords of Anvil of Valor, the silent shadows were independent entities. Therefore, Sunny could not control them directly - he could only give them commands, which the shades followed to the best of their ability.  
  
Their ability to follow commands varied greatly among the members of the Shadow Legion, though. After all, most of his legionnaires were beasts and monsters - creatures lacking intelligence and awareness. And even those of the shades who were truly sentient lacked the cohesion one would expect from a trained army.  
  
In other words, even though Sunny was calling his army the Shadow Legion, in truth, it was more of a Shadow Mob - not much different from the mindless swarm of the Black Millipedes, and even inferior to it in some regards.  
  
The situation was somewhat improved by the presence of certain champions. Saint could act as a general, helping him control the Shadow Legion better. Daeron of the Twilight Sea was capable of rallying the human shadows behind him. The Remnant of the Jade Queen seemed to hold authority among the weaker shades…  
  
But each of the champions could only truly control a small number of shades in their vicinity. There was no overall unity, let alone discipline and cohesiоn.  
  
And even Sunny's formidable mind could not command each shade individually, guiding them with intricate precision.  
  
So, things like orderly battle formations, complicated maneuvers, and fine tactics were beyond the scope of what the Shadow Legion could do… for now.  
  
Sunny had been learning how to lead it into battle better for the entire year, but he was still far from achieving acceptable results.  
  
One of his incarnations smiled and patted the other on the shoulder.  
  
'Well… at least we have the Ember Queen now. She alone should be able to control the millipede swarm. So, you'll be fine.'  
  
The other glanced at him arrogantly.  
  
'Naturally. Why wouldn't I be fine?'  
  
Sunny laughed, then let out a sigh and threw one last look at the Burned Forest.  
  
He was not going to miss this place…  
  
Especially because he was staying in that place. One of his incarnations was, at least.  
  
'Then my job here is done. I guess I'll get going.'  
  
His other incarnation looked at him with no compassion.  
  
'Get lost, then.'  
  
Sunny glanced at himself, a betrayed expression on his face.  
  
'Wow. How heartless. Don't you have any pity on your poor self? I'll be all alone out there… surrounded by gorgeous princesses and hanging out with Kai…'  
  
His other incarnation scoffed.  
  
'Bastard. Go before I change my mind and volunteer myself.'  
  
Sunny smiled naughtily.  
  
'Alright, alright! Gods… can you at least lend me a Shadow? I probably can't take Saint, and Fiend will draw too much attention. What about Nightmare?'  
  
The other incarnation stared at him chillingly.  
  
'You can take the feral one.'  
  
Sunny scratched the back of his head.  
  
'Slayer? Well… it might work, I guess. Like a field trip. A paid vacation?' With that, he chuckled and headed for the distant barrows.  
  
As Sunny was walking away, he waved at himself.  
  
'You're going to miss me when I'm gone!'  
  
Then, he stared at his own back and snarled.  
  
'As if! And why are you walking, idiot? Just turn back into a shadow!'  
  
Soon, one of the incarnations disappeared from view. The other studied the eerie barrows, then sighed and turned around to the charred expanse оf the Burned Forest.  
  
'Say hi to Kai when you get there, fool. Godspeed.'  
  
Despite the quiet grumbling… he couldn't wait.