2290 False Alarm  
  
Far away in Bastion, the morning meeting was coming to an end. Effie gave Sunny one last glare and left, while Cassie whisked Nephis away to attend to her imperial duties. This time, he did not follow.  
  
Instead, Sunny closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, concentrating on his shadow sense.  
  
'So, I'm finally off to Ravenheart…'  
  
He was not going to have to cross the Hollow Mountains again to reach it, but the journey would still take some time and be unpleasant. After all, he had to return to the waking world and endure being rejected by it. Still, Sunny was in a good mood.  
  
He was looking forward to finally exploring the Jade Palace, and on top of that, he was curious about the city itself. Ravenheart did not exactly feel like home, but Sunny had spent almost four years there, hiding in Rain's shadow. There were numerous places in that stark city he felt nostalgic about. He was also curious to see how Ravenheart had changed in the wake of the Raven Queen's fall.  
  
But most of all, hе missed Kai.  
  
Sunny had reconnected with Nephis and Cassie after being erased from the memories of the world, and he had also become somewhat close to Effie again - first as Master Sunless, then as Neph's shadow consort. But he had barely spent time with Jet and Kai in the past two years. They only knew him as the cold and sinister Lord of Shadows - a mysterious ally who had joined their cause not long before the war began.  
  
'I wonder how he is doing?'  
  
Sunny knew that Kai had managed to conquer Ravenheart without spilling a single drop of blood. The local population was quite fond of him - well, obviously! - but it still had to be difficult, dealing with the Song sisters in the wake of the dissolution of their mother's Domain.  
  
'Well, I'll see soon.'  
  
As he shifted his attention, Sunny felt Bastion boiling with life far below him. His shadow sense enveloped most of the city, allowing him to monitor various things and learn of any potential dangers in advance - not that there had been any threats here, yet.  
  
Apart from the nights when the moon was full. But they had that particular danger under control.  
  
There were too many people and too much movement in the city to fathom it all - Sunny could try, but his senses would be speedily overwhelmed. His mind had grown much more powerful over the years, however - both because he climbed high on the Path of Ascension and because he had plenty of practice handling countless tasks at the same time. He was not the same person who had almost collapsed after spreading his shadow sense across the outskirts of NQSC.  
  
Sunny was even tempted to summon Weaver's Mask and activate the [Where is my eye?] enchantment one more time. It had almost killed him the last time he used it, but who knew? Maybe he would survive its lethal burden this time.  
  
What would he see in the endlessly vast, overwhelming, terrifying tapestry of fate? Would he see himself severed from its infinite complexity, existing separately from all that had been, was, and ever would be? Was he going to rеcognize the events of the future and of the past in the complicated weave of the strings of fate?  
  
Or would he die a miserable death, all seven of his heads exploding into a bloody mess at the same time? Sunny did not know, and he was too wary to attempt it… for now.  
  
Somewhere out there, one of the four remaining pieces of Weaver's lineage was waiting for him… the Mind Weave. Sunny had decided not to tempt fate before recovering it.  
  
For now, though…  
  
Even though he could not actively pay attention to everything happening in Bastion, he could sense it passively and turn his attention to any unusual disturbance. He could also focus on particular places and individuals selectively.  
  
Right now, he was searching for Гain. His sister was especially easy to discover due to the Mark of Shadows. Because of it, he was almost always aware of where she was - as lоng as she remained in the vast area his shadow sense enveloped.  
  
Sunny did not actively follow Rain most of the time, though, preferring to give her some space. After all, he was not an utterly overprotective brother…  
  
And even if he was, who could blame him?  
  
His sister was in the habit of enlisting in suicidal wars and brawling with deadly Nightmare Creatures!  
  
And if some slimy profligate bothered her, she couldn't even kill him!  
  
She couldn't hurt a fly. Well, actually, she could hurt a fly quite gruesomelу. But she couldn't end its vile, lecherous life!  
  
Who would not be protective of a sweet, kind sister like that?  
  
'Where is she? Wait… why is she dressed like that?'  
  
Sunny opened his eyes wide.  
  
Far below, Rain was making her way across the crowded streets of Bastion. She must have worked through the night with Beth and her team, but instead of wearing her usual practical clothes or the Puppeteer's Shroud, she was wearing a pretty black dress instead, its hem barely reaching her knees. She was also wearing earrings - not even enchanted ones - and completely impractical, cutesy shoes. Her hair was done up and held together with an onyx pin.  
  
Sunny could not tell through shadow sense, but he was sure she had also applied light makeup. His face paled.  
  
'A - alarm!'  
  
Oblivious to the turmoil in her brother's heart, Rain was enjoying the morning sun while humming a melody with a happy smile. Soon enough, she reached her destination - a luxurious cafe situated on the most beautiful stretch of the Lakefront Promenade. Walking through the door, she paused for a moment and looked around.  
  
Then, her smile widened, and she waved.  
  
'There you are!'  
  
Sunny let out a relieved sigh.  
  
'Oh, it's them. False alarm.'  
  
Two gorgeous young women were waiting for Rain at a table that had the best view. One had tan skin and ashen hair, her off-shoulder grey dress revealing the smooth line of her delicate collarbone. The other had fair skin and glistening blonde hair, her amber eyes burning in the golden light of dawn. Her white dress was light and tastefully adorned with lace, making her look like a fairy tale princess on an outing.  
  
They were, naturally, Tamar of Clan Sorrow and Telle of White Feather. Today, the three noble girls had discarded their usual enchanted armor, donned pretty dresses, and dolled themselves up to the best of their ability to have a nice breakfast out on the town and remind themselves that they were, indeed, girls - and not Awakened battle machines.  
  
Rain reached the table and sat down with a radiant smile.  
  
'Sorry I'm late!'  
  
Telle stared at her for a while, then shifted her gaze to Tamar's bare shoulder. Her eyes narrowed.  
  
'Did… did you guys get matching tattoos?'  
  
She pursed her lips, looked at them with a peculiar expression, and added in a small voice:  
  
'Without me?'