2315 Army of Three  
While Kai was away retrieving Slayer - and hopefully not being killed by her - Sunny was busy as well. He was maкing a bow for Kai, manifesting it from the shadows.  
  
One would think that making a bow was quite easy. All Sunny needed was to manifest a long narrow bar and make it bendy, then string it. Naturally, manipulating the internal structure of manifested shadows to imbue them with a suitable level of elasticity actually demanded an intricate level of Shadow Manifestation mastery - but Sunny was more than capable of doing just that.  
  
Once, he could barely control the outward form of manifested shadows, but by now, he could make them into pretty much anything he wanted. However, there was a difference between simply making a bow and making it worthy of a Transcendent archer. It was not even a matter of enchanting the bow. Before that, the structure of the bow itself demanded careful consideration - Sunny had studied that obscure craft in the past, and he delved into it even deeper while crafting bows for Rain and Slayer.  
  
For example, there was the choice between a more traditional recurve bow and a more advanced compound bow. Compound bows offered more power and convenience, but Sunny had shied away from crafting them in the past due to how difficult they were to maintain and care for in field conditions. A weapon needed to not only be deadly, but also reliable. Especially so in the Dream Realm, where the environment itself was often the adversary.  
  
These had been his considerations in the past, but now that Sunny was armed with the knowledge of how the nature of a weapon affected its capacity to carry Will, he also suspected that wielding a compound bow would be a detriment to a Transcendent archer.  
But even if he wanted to create a recurve bow, which was much simpler in structure and was therefore a more faithful emissary of the archer's will, things were not easy either. That was because, in his opinion, a good recurve bow had to be a composite one. Instead of a single length of wood, it had to be composed of layers of different materials, all glued together for optimal results.  
  
The simplest composition commenced with a wooden core, a softer wood used for the bending parts of the limbs, and stiffer wood used for their tips. Then thin plates of horn, which stored energy better when compressed, would be glued to the belly of the bow. Finally, animal sinew, which possessed greater elasticity than wood, would be glued to the back of the bow. All of that allowed for more energy to be stored when the bow was drawn, and for that energy to be released in a more optimal way when the string was released, resulting in more powerful and deadly shots.  
  
So, Sunny had to carefully manipulate the manifested shadows to imbue them with qualities that resembled different types of wood, horn, and sinew. Actually, since he did not have to limit himself to only reproducing naturally existing materials, he could play around with these qualities to achieve the best result. Luckily, he had already done his research when crafting a bow for Slayer. He also had a good idea of how strong Kai was, exactly - so, he could create a truly powerful weapon for his friend.  
  
Additionally, there was a matter of how he wanted to manifest the shadows. Making them permanent would be easier, since he would not have to maintain their form either consciously or constantly, but that way, the bow would be much weaker, somewhere between the Ascended and Transcendent Ranks. So, Sunny decided to sustain the manifestation personally.  
That way, Kai would be wielding an ostensibly Supreme weapon - something he would need desperately before too long, no doubt.  
  
Manifesting the varied types of shadows into proper shapes and fusing them together was an intricate task. Sunny worked meticulously, using his two hands to craft the weapon. At the same time, he used four more hands to weave strings of shadow essence. He could not enchant the bow just yet since there were no soul shards in his possession to anchor a weave, but a few would hopefully fall into his hands soon. Sunny wanted to be prepared for when that happened.  
  
'Look at me… am I not the most benevolent of Tyrants? Who else would sit on the ground and personally craft weapons for their pawns?'  
He chuckled. But that was simply the first step. Here inside Ariel's Game, Sunny was a general in charge of an army. His army consisted of only two soldiers, but it was still a start. He would arm his soldiers, enable them, and lead them to conquer the entire board.  
  
By the time a magnificent dragon with scales as dark as midnight landed on the slope of the fuming volcano, carrying a gorgeous Shadow on his back, the bow was almost ready. Slayer jumped down with the grace of a dancer, walked over to where Sunny was sitting, and silently retrieved her arrow from the ash. His gaze was as cold ever, full of hidden malice.  
As soon as Kai assumed his human form, Sunny tossed him the bow.  
'Here. String it.'  
Kai caught the black bow and stared at it for a few seconds, his eyes widening faintly.  
'What a fearsome aura…'  
Placing one end of the bow on the ground, he used his shin to secure it and bent the long bow with seeming ease, stringing it in one smooth motion.  
  
Naturally, in truth, bending it was not easy at all. People usually assumed that archers were less imposing than swordsmen, as far as physical power went, but really, it was the opposite. An average archer had to be far stronger than a melee fighter since drawing a powerful bow demanded immense strength - and Kai, despite his deceptively elegant appearance, had never been merely an average archer.  
'Poser.'  
Witnessing how unburdened the charming Saint looked while stringing the Supreme bow, Sunny almost regretted not making it even more potent. However, he knew that Kai was simply showcasing perfect technique. Naturally, his chiseled muscles were taut and straining under the ivory armor, his veins bulging. A drop of sweat that rolled down the charming Saint's face was proof.  
  
Shaking his head, Sunny looked at Slayer.  
'Hey. How about you share some arrows with this handsome young man?'  
Instead of answering, Slayer raised the arrow she was still holding in her hand and silently moved it across her neck.  
Her message was clear…  
'Want to die?'  
Sunny chuckled.  
'Alright, alright. Gods!'  
Reaching into the shadows once again, he went about crafting deadly arrows.  
  
Now, creating a good arrow was also not an easy feat. But luckily, Sunny had had a lot of practice.  
  
Looking at Kai, he smiled.  
'You know… one time, I was falling into a flaming sea. So, I drew my bow, and shot myself out of it. Worked like a charm!'  
He was referring to his fall into the Sky Below, naturally, and the desperate attempt to avoid burning in the sea of divine flames by wrapping his shadow around a flying arrow and using Shadow Step to appear next to it.  
  
Kai had been studying his new bow with an enamored expression. That expression speedily crumbled.  
Looking at Sunny with trembling eyes, he said:  
'Wait, wait… this one does not even make sense! How can it be true?'  
Sunny glanced at him with reproach.  
'Do not question the truth, Nightingale. The truth does not exist to be convenient, nor does it need to be sensible. It simply has to be true…'