2324 Enemy Move  
  
Sunny wanted to see how Kai would fare in a battle against Great abominations. The crystalline insects seemed like good practice… naturally, there was a possibility that the entire hive consisted of Cursed Ones, instead. But if thаt was true, the three of them were already dead. There was nothing much to do.  
  
Kai stared at Sunny with a stunned expression. 'You're… really not going to do anything?'  
  
Sunny smiled pleasantly. 'How can you say that, buddy? I'll do plenty, naturally… enjoy the view, relax, appreciate the weather. Oh, I'll craft new arrows while you waste the ones I already made, too. So make every shot count.'  
  
Kai kept looking at him for a few more seconds, then turned to look at Slayer. He did not say anything, but his expression was quite telling. It was as if Kai wanted to ask… 'That's what you're dealing with on a daily basis?' Slayer spared him a short look and shrugged.  
  
Sunny, meanwhile, leaned back and closed his eyes. 'Let me tell you, Saint Nightingale… my previous disciple set quite a high bar. Ah, she was such a joy to train. What other teacher can boast that their student earned a True Name before even becoming an Aspirant? So, no pressure, but please don't disappoint me. I have high standards because of her!'  
  
Kai sighed and nocked an arrow on the string of his bow. 'She is my student, as well.' Sunny blinked a couple of times. 'Huh?' Kai smiled faintly. 'A girl who earned a True Name before becoming an Aspirant… you mean Rain, right? The only person in the world who Awakened without the Nightmare Spell. I was her archery tutor for a short while back in NQSC, numеrous years ago. I think Effie introduced us. Small world, huh?'  
  
Sunny cleared his throat. 'Right,' 'Oh… I see. I think she mentioned knowing you.' 'I was the one who convinced you to give her lessons, fool!' Naturally, Kai did not remember that. He took a deep breath, raised his bow, and slowly drew it. Then, he spoke evenly: 'Strike true.' His clear voice was not loud, but it somehow managed to drown out the howling wind. The stalwart authority contained within it moved the world, making the world listen. Sunny sensed a faint flow of essence, and the arrow he had crafted suddenly seemed much more than it had been before. 'Hmm…'  
  
As Kai allowed the string to escape his relaxed fingers and sent the arrow flying, Sunny remembered his battle against the Dread Lord. 'Actually, I might have been wrong.'  
  
Kai seemed to be plagued by doubt, which did not lend itself well to being a Sovereign. But, on the other hand, the very nature of his Aspect forced him to constantly practice exerting his authority… in a way. A Supreme like Sunny could bend the world to his will. But Kai did not have to… the world simply listened to him, following his commands voluntarily. Was that preparing him for Supremacy, or was it a detriment instead? Sunny was not sure, and he had no time to ponder this issue at the moment, either. What he was sure of, though, was that a giant tentacle would not rise from below the clouds to destroy Kai's arrow - not this time. His certainty was based on the fact that when the tendrils of snow turned into crystal bridges, he was suddenly able to extend his shadow sense forward, to the lonesome peak that was now hiding in the embrace of a snowstorm.  
  
Sunny could sense the entire ice hive, now. And what he sensed did not make him happy. 'Oh, they are Great Beasts, all right.' There were about a hundred of them. Each was the size of a bull, with a small thorax and a large abdomen. Their legs were thin and delicate, but frighteningly powerful. The bodies of the insect-like abominations seemed like they were made out of glass, and glancеd deceptively fragile. They were strangely breathtaking…  
  
Sunny knew that they would glisten gorgeously in the sunlight. He also knew that once they drew closer, he would see gnawed bones in their transparent bellies… possibly even a human skull or two, Gods only knew what these nightmaгe creatures looked like soon after feasting on the flesh of their enemies. The sight of the bloody paste sloshing inside their crystal stomachs had to be indescribably gruesome… and Sunny hoped to never learn what nectar these creatures produced, and what kind of hives they built when not trapped in a desolate realm made by a daemon.  
  
Had it been Ariel who turned the crystalline insects into a figure, or Weaver? Whoever it was, they had done a great favor for the world by imprisoning these abominations here.  
  
Kai's arrow was still flying when Slayer raised heг bow. Sunny saw lean muscles roll under her ebony skin, drawing taut like steel cables, as she pulled the string. Her graceful figure was like a work of art sculpted from smooth obsidian, with every little detail carved with obsessive care. A moment later, she released the string, and a powerful gust sent her long braid fluttering in the wind. Sunny shivered, feeling a cold killing intent wash over him. Reaching into the shadows, he went about crafting another arrow.  
  
'Did you feel that?'  
  
Kai responded without looking at him: 'Feel what?'  
  
Sunny smiled faintly. 'How utterly focused on one thing and one thing only our killer gorgeousness is… on killing whoever it is that her arrow is aimed at.'  
  
Kai frowned.  
  
In the next moment, his arrow hit the target. It was an amazing shot, really - very few people would be able to hit a moving target from dozens of kilometers away, despite the raging wind. However, it was all for naught. Because Kai's arrow simply bounced off the crystalline insect's gorgeous carapace.  
  
His expression dimmed. Then, suddenly… Slayer's arrow struck the exact same Nightmare Creature, piercing its gemlike compound eye and making its head explode into a million glistening shards. Sunny pursed his lips and glanced at his Shadow with reproach. 'Listen… with you aiming for the eye, it is hard for me to illustrate the point. Couldn't you have pierced its carapace, instead?'  
  
Slayer gave him a cold, murderous look. Her inky-black eyes were quite expressive, saying… 'How about I pierce your caprice, instead?' Sunny coughed. 'Fine, fine…' He outstretched a hand, but then remembered that he could not summon the Endless Spring either.  
  
Sunny sighed. 'What are you guys waiting for? Keep shooting. There's a hundred hungry Great Beasts out there, you know. They'll be here in less than a minute… how numerous do you think you can kill before then?'  
  
No matter how many it was, he knew that it would not be enough.