2339 Invading the Ice Hive  
  
Sunny found himself in a cave made of ice.  
  
His turbulent thoughts settled, giving way to the cold and tranquil state of battle clarity.  
  
There were around fifty Crystal Wasps left in the Hive - each of them a Great Beast. The network of tunnels and caverns was their fortress, while Sunny was weakened as an invader into the Snow Domain. Each Nightmare Creature was more powerful than he was due to the rules of Ariel's Game, but that was a trifling matter.  
After all, Sunny had come this far by facing enemies who were much more powerful than him. Even if he had enjoyed the ultimate privilege of being the strongest monster on the battlefield as of late, the tenacity of a cunning killer was in his blood.  
  
The Crystаl Wasps were mere Beasts - Great Beasts, but Beasts nonetheless. They were mindless death machines that only knew the frenzied madness of bloodlust. His intelligence was a deadlier weapon, so he was not too concerned about his diminished power.  
  
Their great numerical advantage was a more pressing threat. Even though the tunnels of the Ice Hive were somewhat narrow, Sunny knew that he could be easily overwhelmed here.  
  
He had his shades, naturally, but they would simply be torn to shreds if he unleashed them immediately - after all, there were faг fewer of them than there were Crystal Wasps at the moment, and they were being weakened by the Snow Domain as well.  
  
That said, Sunny was in a far better situation than he had been on the Forgotten Shore. Not because he had become infinitely more powerful - his enemies had as well - but because there were more tools at his disposal.  
He was going to destroy the Ice Hive by using his mind, his versatility, and his superior skill.  
  
His shadow sense spread into the depths of the mountain, enveloping every corner of the enormous hive. In a heartbeat, he perceived and fathomed every tunnel, every intersection, and every cаvern hidden in the ice.  
  
He also perceived the location of every Crystal Wasp guarding the frozen fortress.  
  
Some were gathered in vast caverns in groups, waiting. Some were patrolling the tunnels alone or in pairs. Some were busy preparing the fortress for the attack. Sunny did not sense any traps, but he did discover a complicated system оf crystal chimes that answered to the smallest movement of air, and would therefore notify the Crystal Wasps if an intruder disturbed their dwelling.  
  
Because of it, the Ice Hive was permeated by a delicate, melodious tinkling.  
  
Sunny smiled.  
  
In the next moment, the shadows all across the network of tunnels surged and rose. The shadows did not attempt to wound or kill the Crystal Wasps - instead, they merely turned into solid walls of obsidian, blocking off myriad tunnels.  
  
The abominations instantly stirred, moving to destroy the obstructions; however, even with their great power, destroying the solid mass of mystical obsidian was going to take some time… especially because it kept repairing itself.  
Sunny did not just block the tunnels randomly. Each obstacle was placed strategically, and for a single purpose - he wanted to isolate the Crystal Wasps from each other.  
  
To kill them one by one.  
  
After all, even though Sunny was disadvantaged in terms of power, he also possessed some advantages. Among them, two stood out the most - his awareness… and his mobility.  
  
'Let's start.'  
  
By then, the Crystal Wasp in front of him - a solitary seeker of the Ice Hive - was already lunging forward.  
  
Sunny might not have been faster than a Great Beast supported by the Snow Domain, but he was a warrior. The Crystal Wasp, meanwhile… was nothing more than a pest.  
  
The black odachi was already turning into a long pike. Sunny slammed its butt into the ground and braced it with his leg, turning himself so heavy that the ice beneath his feet began to crack. He channeled his Will into the blade of the pike, commanding it to pierce the adversary, and into its shaft, commanding it to remain whole.  
  
Then, he commanded himself to hold.  
  
The Great Beast was flying at him at spectacular speed, so it had no time to stop. Its own momentum impaled the Nightmare Creature on the pike, the impregnable crystal carapace shattering as the black blade pierced its chest and exited through the crack between the thorax and the abdomen.  
  
Naturally, the malevolent Wasp was still alive, straining to push its body along the pike's length to rip Sunny apart.  
  
He strained his muscles, raising his weapon… and the massive Abomination impaled on it. Then, with a hiss, Sunny thrust the pike upward with all his might and pinned the Nightmare Creature to the tunnel's ceiling.  
  
Before the Wasp could shatter the shaft of the manifested weapon and free itself, seven black spikes shot from the ground like pillars, obliterating its body and causing the tunnel to collapse.  
  
[You have slain an adversary.]  
  
…Sunny was already someplace else.  
  
Stepping through the shadows, he apрeared on the opposite side of the Ice Hive, deep inside the mountain, in a small cave where another solitary Crystal Wasp was digesting the remains of its fallen kin. Those of the abominations who had escaped the previous battle with grievous wounds were mercilessly devoured by the less damaged Beasts to mend their wounds.  
  
The Ice Hive seemed to operate according to the principles of ruthless practicality.  
  
Sunny did not have time to observe how the Crystal Wasps turned their food into crystalline liquid and how they used that liquid to heal and strengthen themselves - manifesting a sword out of shadows, he severed one of the Nightmare Creature's legs at the joint and danced away from its retaliation.  
  
The rest was simply a matter of technique and swordsmanship.  
  
Despite the Great Beast's superior size and physical might, Sunny rapidly crippled it, thus reducing its agility, and then beheaded the creature with a precise strike.  
  
[You have slain…]  
  
'That's two.'  
  
He was gone by the time the corpse of the Nightmare Creature hit the ground.  
  
'Forty-nine to go.'