2340 Conquering Tyrant  
  
Sunny began with the Crystal Wasps who had been caught in his shadow maze alone. The obsidian barriers he had erected were strong, but not as strong as they would have been outside the Snow Domain - the enraged Great Beasts would destroy them sooner rather than later, so he had to act rapid.  
  
His hunt was rapid and brutal.  
  
Using Shadow Step to instantly move between distant areas of the Ice Hive, he picked the stragglers off one by one. His combat skill and indomitable killing intent were more than enough to slay the fearsome crystal abominations, even if clashing with so numerous Great Beasts in quick succession was rapidly depleting his stamina.  
  
In a narrow tunnel, Sunny severed a menacing Crystal Wasp in two with a razor-sharp odachi, and then pierced its head through the eye when the upper half of the Nightmare Creature kept crawling at him in a murderous frenzy.  
  
In an ice cave where drops of water were falling into a vast and clear pool from a forest of crystal stalactites, he kept another Great Beast at a distance with a spear for a few seconds, then found an opening and split its abdomen open with a vicious strike. Its head shattered under his boot a second later.  
  
In a passage so narrow that a single Crystal Wasp could barely fit inside, Sunny closed the distance to a frenzied Great Beast, diving past its scythe-like legs, tore its carapace open with the gauntlets of the Jade Mantle, and shattered the delicate flesh beneath with his fists. The melodious sound of wind chimes was drowned out by the clangor of battle, thunderous thunderclaps, and the loud ringing of shattering crystal.  
By the time Sunny was done dealing with the solitary Nightmare Creatures, he was faintly out of breath. The entire slaughter had taken him no more than a couple minutes, and he had never stopped moving, seamlessly stepping between the shadows as if the sequence of brutal clashes was one uninterrupted battle.  
  
'Thirty-seven to go.'  
  
That was how many Crystal Wasps there were left in the Ice Hive. Sadly, things were going to get harder from now on - the rest of them were grouped together, and as he dealt with smaller groups, the larger ones would break through the shadow barriers and fuse.  
  
But that was alright.  
  
Because by killing the solitary abominations, Sunny had made sure thаt the number of his shades swelled. It had to swell a little more, though.  
  
'Fourteen more will do.'  
  
Fourteen Great Beasts, such a trifle!  
  
Wincing as if in pain, he assumed the form of the Shadowspawn and dove into the shadows, holding a black odachi in each of his two pairs of hands.  
  
Shooting from the darkness in a large vertical cavern, he jumped onto the wall and ran up its icy length, his claws sinking into the hard ice. Dim, diffused light was streaming from somewhere far above, and the two Crystal Wasps waiting on the wall instantly moved, rushing down to obliterate him. Because of where the source of light was located, their long shadows reached Sunny before the nightmare creatures themselves could. He slashed at their shadows with both of his swords, causing the Wasps to let out ear-piercing screeches and fall down, crashing into the distant floor of the cavern while convulsing in agony - by the time they recovered enough to move again, he already plummeted down and shattered one with the unbearable weight of his body. There was a deafening boom, and the floor of the cavern cracked as a cloud of ice paгticles and crystal shards rose into the air. A split second later, Sunny emerged from the mass of pulverized ice, his two swords lashing out to pierce the vital points of the remaining Nightmare Creature.  
  
[You have slain…]  
  
He dove into the shadows, carrying the twitching corpse with him. Emerging in a cave where two more Crystal Wasps were furiously attacking an obsidian wall, he tossed the corpse at one of them and attacked the other.  
  
[You have slain.]  
  
And so it went.  
  
'Ah… I'm tired…'  
  
Even at this breakneck speed, Sunny felt nervous that he would not be able to slaughter the entire Hive before the sun disappeared behind the horizon.  
  
What would happen if the Ash Domain's move came to an end before the Snow figure protecting the square was slain? Considering how hastily the Crystal Wasps retreated from the volcano in the morning… nothing Sunny would want to learn.  
  
Soon enough, he ran out of pairs of nightmare creatures to kill. His lungs were burning, and his heart - both of them, since he was still in the Shadowspawn form - were beating wildly. There were a few cracks on the Jade Mantle, and a few hideous cuts on his body.  
  
He did not bleed, naturally, but the insidious cold was seemingly seeping under his skin, making him feel even weaker.  
  
'Damn it…'  
  
Sunny let out a low growl.  
  
By then, the obsidian barriers had already fallen, and the remaining Wasps - more than twenty of them - gathered in a vast cavern, ready to rush like a crystal avalanche to find and destroy the intruder. But Sunny did not make them wait.  
  
Instead, he stepped into the shadows one last time and emerged in the cavern, looking at the two dozen nightmare creatures from behind the vizor of his jade helmet.  
  
…It felt quite unnerving, to say the least, to be stared down by a swarm of Great Beasts.  
  
'Who are you to dare stare me down, Beasts, no, forget it. There's no time for that!'  
  
Sunny grinned.  
  
'That should be enough.'  
  
With that, he turned into a shadow.  
  
And from that shadow, a torrent of ash rolled like a billowing cloud, splitting into helical strands to envelop the swarm of Crystal Wasps.  
  
A moment later, the ash solidified into Obsidian Wasps - close to fifty of them, against two dozen Great Beasts.  
  
Two for each Nightmare Creature left in the Ice Hive.  
  
Sunny assumed a tangible form once more, abandoning the towering body of the Shadowspawn in favor of his own speedy and slender body.  
  
His smile was cold and cruel.  
  
'Didn't I say it? Death is inevitable.'  
  
His Obsidian Wasps rushed forward, and he lunged at the nearest Nightmare Creature as well.  
  
…Before too long, the Ice Hive was no more, each of its crystalline inhabitants becoming a soldier in his growing army.