2350 Igneous Rock  
In the morning, Sunny observed the movements of the Snow figures tensely. The Clockwork Giant was still in pursuit, occupying the volcano they had just left. The Snow Devil, meanwhile, remained where it had been, choosing not to abandon the Axis Tree.  
Sunny let out a relieved sigh.  
  
At this point, his position on the board was still precarious. He needed three moves to reach the Shrine of Truth - and so did the Snow Devil. Considering that it had the initiative, though, the guardian of the Axis Tree would have arrived there first if it wanted to. Now that it had skipped a move, though, Sunny had the initiative and would reach the Shrine sooner.  
  
It was a bit unnerving, really, because he could not help but question the behavior of the adversary. Why had the Snow Devil remained passive? Was it because staying on the Axis Tree gave the Snow Domain some kind of advantage, or was it simply because the Snow Tyrant wanted to surround the Shrine with more figures before mounting a three - pronged attack to crush Sunny in one fell swoop?  
  
'We'll see when we get there.' There was something else for him to consider, as well. There were eight more Snow figures on the board that Sunny could not see. None of them had appeared, yet, and he suspected that they had been staying in their initial positions until now.  
But Sunny had a sinking suspicion that all of them had departed from their squares this morning, moving in the direction of the Shrine of Truth.  
  
There was a very simple reason why he believed that. Befоre, the Snow Tyrant had no way to guess where Sunny was going - after all, he had gone directly north after abandoning the Ash Castle, never changing direction. But then, Sunny turned west and killed the Snow Worm. That indicated his desire to conquer the Shrine of Truth, and gave the adversary an understanding of his plans - and, therefore, the ability to build an appropriate strategy.  
  
'How troublesome.'  
It would take the group of Snow figures in the north from four to six moves to reach the Shrine of Truth. The group occupying the Shrine of Fear, meanwhile, would need from six to seven moves to get there.  
  
There was the Snow Demon from the left corner to worry about, too, who could already be in the Shrine of Truth or en route to it. But Sunny was not too worried about a solitary figure.  
In any case, the coast was clear - for now, at least.  
  
'We should enjoy these days of peace.' Once they reached the Shrine, it would most likely be one harrowing battle after another. So, it was good that Sunny had a few days to prepare.  
Most of the Obsidian Wasps had been destroyed in the battle against the Snow Worm. It was going to take some time for them to repair themselves… additionally, he could dedicate this time to weaving.  
He could create more arrows for Kai and improve his bow. More importantly, there was the Sacred soul shard in his possession now. Using it, he could create something truly special.  
  
But currently, Sunny was worried about something else. Looking away from the Axis Tree, he stared at Kai and nudged him on the shoulder.  
'Well? Did you find it?'  
Kai coughed awkwardly.  
'Well… it's a big mountain, Sunny. Give me more time.'  
Sunny blinked a couple of times.  
'What do you mean, it's a big mountain? You can see through аsh! You can see through rock! How hard can it be to find a piece of flawless white jade in this pile of obsidian and solidified magma?'  
Kai let out an exasperated sigh.  
'It would be less difficult if I could concentrate for a few seconds, Sunny…'  
Sunny scoffed.  
'Oh! I see you know how to talk back now. Hey. Look at Slayer - she has never talked back to me once.'  
Slayer gave him a look, her black eyes full of such dreadful malice that he almost flinched.  
',I mean, she does drink my blood and tries to kill me every week. But at least she does it silently!'  
  
The thing Sunny wanted Kai to find was, naturally, the figure of the Snow Beast he was supposed to receive for killing the colossal worm. He had been so engrossed in appreciating the aesthetic beauty of the Sacred soul shard - and not at all overcome by greed! - that he had forgotten about it entirely at the moment.  
And then, the entire mountain fell apart.  
  
Considering that they had to move on fгom this newborn volcano by evening, Sunny felt quite pressed to find the jade figurine. After all, it was invaluable.  
He was already starting to grow nervous when Kai finally smiled.  
'There, I see it.'  
He pointed in the vaguе direction where the Snow Worm had died.  
'It's right there, about five hundred metres underground, stuck in igneous rock.'  
Sunny let out a relieved sigh.  
'Good, good.'  
Then, he fell silent.  
  
After a few moments of that, Kai finally asked:  
'So… are you going to dig it out? No, wait. You probably have better things to do?'  
He looked at Slayer, then glanced away and added wistfully:  
'I guess… I should dig it out?'  
Sunny remained silent for a while, then shook his head.  
'No. At least not yet. I have another candidate in mind.'  
With that, he took a deep breath and turned into a shadow.  
Nothing happened for a long while.  
Then, suddenly, a flood of ash escaped from the shadow, rising into the sky like a towering pillar. Then the pillar of ash bent and plummeted down, twisting as it assumed form.  
Soon enough, the maw of an enormous black worm hit the slope of the mountain, easily burrowing into the seemingly impregnable rock.  
  
The shadow turned into a human once again. Sunny gave Kai a faltering smile, trying to hide how strained every fiber of his being was.  
'That… uh… that should be quicker, no?'