2356 Grand Design  
Sunny allowed his body to become a shadow, returning to his natural form. This time, however, he went a step further.  
  
Letting go of the familiar image of himself, he set the shadow free. Unleashed from the confines of a human silhouette, his shadow swelled and suгged in all directions, covering the spacious interior of the Shrine of Truth in an instant. Then, it burst from its gates like a dark tide.  
In a matter of seconds, Sunny had become vast enough to swallow the entire volcano - up to the point where its slopes disappeared into the sea of clouds, at least. His shadow covered the gargantuan bowl of the caldera and the ash-covered slopes, flowing into each crack and crevice. He enveloped the luminous depths of the main vent, too, as well as the suffocating confines of the secondary fissure vents.  
  
Slayer shifted silently and placed a hand on the hilt of her sword. Kai simply glanced around, lingered for a few seconds, and closed his eyes to rest.  
  
Sunny, meanwhile, summoned the shade of Abundance. The giant worm rose from the depths of his soul and bit into the rock, crawling through the solid mass of the volcano to a wide tunnel through it. The shades of Obsidian Wasps scurried behind it, clearing the tunnels of debris.  
  
Sunny concentrated, and his vast shadow stirred, numerous arms growing from its black depths. His essence flowed like a torrent, and his countless hands wove it into black strings. He had considered for a long time what he would weave for the upcoming siege.  
  
In truth… Sunny was not as confident in the outcome of the battle as he had made it look. Fighting three Snow figures, including a Demon, was a perilous task - especially considering how few advantages he had. The Crystal Wasps had been weakened when they attacked the Ash Castle. But that was because, at that point, the Ash Castles had been bordered by two squares of the same color. The Shrine of Truth, however, would be surrounded by the Snow Domain from all sides during the battle, which meant that the invaders would not be weakened that much, or perhaps at all. Sunny and his companions would not be suppressed either, unlike how they had been during the battles against the Ice Hive and Abundance, but that was all there was to it. The odds were not in their favor.  
  
So, Sunny needed to prepare. And the Sacred soul shard that had fallen into his hands was one of two precious resources he had - the other being the jade figurines. What would be the best use for it? Should he create a deadly weapon for himself? A powerful charm that could be enhanced by the Jade Mantle? A tool that would allow him to pull off some insidious trick? There were numerous options, but none of them would be as impactful as he wanted. There was another problem, as well - time. A Sacred Memory was worthy of a truly sophisticated enchantment, but weaving an intricate enchantment was a long and complicated process. Sunny was not sure that he would be able to complete something so elaborate before the Snow figures descended upon the Shrine of Truth. So, the enchantment had to be relatively simple, just scaled to an entirely terrifying level of power.  
  
No weapon, charm, or tool he could think of would be able to produce the results he needed while bound by these limitations. So, Sunny decided to do something else. He decided not to create a Memory at all.  
  
Instead… He decided to enchant the mountain itself. All of it, from the deepest part of the caldera to its steep, ash-covered slopes. The Sacred soul shard would serve as the core of his grand enchantment, while the tunnels Abundance created would become channels for the strings of shadow essence, forming the complicated patterns of an enormous spellweave. That spellweave would turn all of the fuming volcano into a magical fortress whеre Sunny would face the Cursed warriors of the Snow Domain, and slay them all one by one.  
  
Of course, creating such a spellweave was not an easy task. The paths carved by Abundance were crude when compared to what Sunny could weave when creating a Memory. So, he could only imbue the mountain with a relatively simple enchantment. But that was alright. He had just an enchantment in mind… a perfect solution to numerous of the problems facing him. The scale of forces involved was so distressing that Sunny could not be sure that his great masterpiece would survive a single battle. But that was alright, too… as long as it served its purpose, he would have a few more powerful shades to assist him during the next siege.  
  
'So much work…' He sighed silently. Controlling Abundance was difficult, commanding the Obsidian Wasps on top of that was straining, and he had to weave the strings of essence to boot. 'I better hurry, though.'  
  
The night passed rapidly. In the morning, the Clockwork Giant and the Snow Demon both moved one square north, just like Sunny had predicted. And at the same time, a third figure arrived at the peak of the snowy mountain to the north, closing the blockade. It was another Snow Beast - one of the two who had been protecting the Snow Castle, it seemed.  
  
Ignoring the newcomer for the time being, Sunny concentrated on excavating the volcano and forming the grandiose spellweave. He had to control the flow of lava to prevent it from flooding the network of tunnels, but that had proven easy enough to accomplish with a bit of foresight. In the end, he managed to finish the enchantment with just a few hours to spare before the next dawn.  
  
Assuming the human form for the first time since his candid conversation with Kai, Sunny let out a long sigh and wiped the sweat off his brow. He was terribly tired. But there was no time to rest…  
  
Standing up, Sunny lingered for a moment, and then took out the two jade figurines from inside his armor. They lay on his palm, feeling cold to the touch. Sunnу exhaled slowly. "Let's deal with you two, then."