2376 Missing Time  
  
'I'm hurt…'  
  
The first thing Sunny felt was pain. He was supposed to be in pain, considering that both his body and soul had been ravaged by the Wolf. But the mild suffering he had been enduring without even paying attention to was gone, replaced by a new and unfamiliar agony.  
  
His entire body was in pain.  
  
The pain was not concentrated in one spot, but instead emanated from a dozen different sources, fusing into one odious sensation. Therefore, Sunny had to conclude that he was seriously hurt.  
  
',Since it hurts, I'm still alive.'  
  
That was good news, at least. He opened his eyes slowly.  
  
The black sky hung above him at an angle, awfully close. It was also made of scorched stone, with deep cracks running through its broken surface. Additionally, it was moving.  
  
No… it was not the sky. He was staring at the ceiling of the Shrine of Truth. Or was it a wall? In any case, neither the ceiling nor the wall of the Shrine were moving. Instead, it was Sunny himself. He was being dragged across an uneven stone surface, its ridges biting into his back.  
  
'What, the hell?'  
  
The last thing he remembered was asking Kai to describe the Snow Demon. How did he end up back in the Shrine?  
  
More importantly, why was he being dragged, and who was dragging him? Craning his neck, Sunny looked up.  
  
Someone was holding his wrist in a vice-like grip, using it to drag his body across the stone like a sack of synthpaste. That someone was shrouded in a veil of ghostly smoke, which made discerning their form difficult. Sunny recognized them instantly, naturally. It was Slayer… however, Slayer looked much worse than she had before. Her light armour was torn and scorched, dark smoke was seeping from myriad ghastly wounds on her ebony body, and one of her arms was hanging limp, seemingly broken.  
  
'What happened to Slayer?'  
  
No, more importantly… What happened to him?  
  
Sunny finally regained his senses and evaluated the situation. What he sensed sent him into utter shock.  
  
First of all… the ceiling above him was indeed the wall of the Shrine of Truth. And it was indeed looming above him at an angle - that was because the entire Shrine was tilted, half of its vast interior drowned by lava. Slayer was currently dragging Sunny up the slope of one of the pillars, away from the radiant lava.  
  
Secondly, there were several arrows sticking out of his body. The body itself was in even worse form than Slayer's, riddled with torn wounds and lacerations - new ones on top of the old ones. And most shocking of all, his entire right arm was missing.  
  
',Where did my arm go?'  
  
Where was his arm? Sunny was so shocked that he remained motionless, allowing Slayer to drag him to where the pillar met the ceiling. Letting go of his wrist, she straightened and observed the interior of the Shrine darkly.  
  
Everything was too odd. Sunny simply could not understand what had happened, and what the situation was.  
  
He let out a pained groan and sat up, then evaluated his condition somberly.  
  
His wounds were quite severe, and his arm was indeed missing. Luckily, Blood Weave had prevented him from bleeding out, so his life was not at risk. His essence was nearly depleted, though, and his soul seemed to have sustained dire damage, as well.  
  
His head ached horribly. Sunny had no words to describe his feelings.  
  
'Something really bizarre must have happened.'  
  
Manifesting a bit of shadows to create a replacement for his missing arm and hand, he grimaced and pulled one of the arrows out from between his ribs. He stared at it, then glanced up at Slаyer.  
  
"Mind telling me why one of your arrows was sticking out of me?"  
  
Naturally, he would not have failed to recognize an arrow of his own exquisite making. She regarded him silently for a while, then raised a hand and extended four fingers.  
  
Sunny frownеd.  
  
"Four? What is that supposed to mean?"  
  
Then, he glanced down and sighed.  
  
"Oh. You meant that there were four of your arrows sticking out of me, not one… duly noted."  
  
Grimacing from pain, he pulled the rest of the arrows out, hesitated a little, and handed them back to Slayer. Instantly, his body felt a hundred times lighter.  
  
'That… that knave! She used my own enchantments against me!'  
  
Indeed, the four arrows in question were meant to immobilize the adversary, or at least slow them down. So, Sunny could at least surmise that his Shadow had not tried to kill him. She had merely tried to debilitate him.  
  
He glanced at his missing arm. The stump was not bleeding, and the wound was messy. Not at all a clean cut… so, something else must have torn his limb off.  
  
That was a relief.  
  
'How is this a relief? One of my limbs is missing!'  
  
Sunny groaned. Still, he would have been quite cross if it turned out that Slayer had cut off his arm. It was better to think that something else had rended it off.  
  
There was a hole in the wall of the Shrine where there had been none before, and through it, he could see the dark sky.  
  
It was night.  
  
',It had been morning just a few moments ago.'  
  
Sunny concentrated on his shadow sense, then turned his head and glanced at the nearby pillar. Kai was hanging from it, impaled by two black arrows, his mouth covered by a makeshift gag. He was alive, but unconscious. Sunny studied his friend for a bit, making sure that he was alright, then turned to Slayer once more.  
  
When he finally spoke, his voice sounded a little strained:  
  
"So… do you want to tell me what happened to the day that is missing from my memory?"  
  
Slayer stared at him chillingly for a while, then raised a hand and extended two fingers.  
  
Sunny sighed.  
  
"What do you… wait. Two days that are missing from my memory?"  
  
She nodded silently and sat down, tiredly leaning her back against the wall.  
  
Sunny paled.  
  
'Two days…'  
  
If two days had passed, then the Snow Demon and the two Snow Monsters had already launched their attack.  
  
The battle was over?