2384 Rat Legion  
  
The only thing worse than a profane legion of Cursed rats… was a profane legion of Cursed rats that grew larger and larger the more you killed them.  
  
'D - disgusting…'  
  
Sunny did not really have any negative feelings towards rats. In fact, he found them to be quite admirable creatures… kindred spirits, even. Loathsome rats whose flesh and souls were twisted by the loathsome darkness of Corruption, though, were an entirely different issue.  
  
Currently, an avalanche of these repulsive vermin was about to swallow him and Saint, and worse of all, there was no obvious way to defeat them.  
  
Luckily, Sunny always planned contingencies, and today was not an exception.  
  
His plan A was to simply annihilate the swarm of rats in battle.  
  
His plan B, though, had been developed precisely in case the swarm of rats proved to be too immense to be eradicated with pure violence.  
  
'I hope Kai does well…'  
  
The avalanche of Cursed rats was almost upon them when Slayer slashed her sword again, cleaving a wide path through it. She dashed forward, moving through the crimson haze, as the rats flowed past them on both sides.  
  
The murderous Shadow remained calm - gleeful, even - but Sunny felt a strong desire to shudder.  
  
There were too countless rats rushing down the slope of the mountain for each of the vermin to run on the ground, so they simply climbed atop of each other in a demented frenzy. Their mass formed towering walls on both sides of Slayer, rolling past her like a real avalanche of writhing grey bodies, berserk eyes, and needle-sharp teeth.  
  
The worst part of it all was that the breach created in the rat swarm by Slayer's strike was quickly closing as the old rats mindlessly pushed forward and the new rats came into existence, threatening to bury her under their squirming mass.  
  
And since the whole mountain was infested by the innumerable swarm, there was nowhere for her to escape.  
  
At that moment, an arrow hit the mountain higher up the slope, instantly causing a titanic explosion. A annihilating mixture of light, heat, and sound pulverized myriad rats, clearing a wide circle of bare rock from them.  
  
As innumerable tons of snow were displaced by the explosion and an actual avalanche rolled down, Sunny opened a path through the shadows for Slayer. Before the wall of rats looming above them toppled and buried her, she stepped through the shadows and escaped into the safe circle created by Kai's arrow.  
  
The shallow crater left by the explosion was surrounded by the walls of rabid rats, as well, and was only destined to exist for a few seconds.  
  
Before it was erased by the carpet of grey bodies, Slayer cleaved a path through the rats again. And before that path was swallowed by the swarm, a second arrow fell some distance away, causing another explosion and clearing another patch of empty land.  
  
The chaos continued. The writhing mass of grey bodies flowed like a flood, devouring the entire mountain, while Slayer moved through it and brandished her sword. Arrows rained down on the quaking peak like a heavy artillery bombardment, pulverizing innumerable rats. Slayer's blade cut down even more, and the stench of blood permeated the air.  
  
The mountain would have become like a monstrous, harrowing slaughterhouse if not for the fact that torn, bleeding remains of innumerable rats were immediately devoured by their countless brethren… who only grew more countless as seconds flew by, enraged and emboldened by the nightmarish slaughter.  
  
Sunny was, honestly… at a loss.  
  
He had rarely encountered an enemy who grew exponentially stronger the more it was slaughtered, eviscerated, and killed. Slayer and Kai were dealing grievous wounds to the swarm, but the more wounds they dealt, the vaster the swarm became.  
  
'Whаt a vicious little menace.'  
  
He was not sure what role he was supposed to play in this battle, apart from opening paths through the shadows for Slayer.  
  
Abundance had possessed a singular vessel, at least. Sunny had not been able to suppress its Will, but he managed to slowly poison it with his own. Additionally, he prepared tools to disarm the immense worm in advance.  
  
The rats, however, were myriad. There was no single vessel for him to target, and therefore, he was not sure how to suppress the concept of ceaseless propagation that the swarm embodied. Neither did he know what opposite concept he could have channeled if not for his role of augmenting Slayer.  
  
And he did not have much time to think… time was not on his side, after all.  
  
Not only would Sunny have to retreat once the sun disappeared beyond the horizon, but the swarm would simply become so vast as to be inescapable long before that.  
  
He even considered using that very power of the Rat King against it. What if he inflated the number of rats on the mountain to such a degree that the entire mountain collapsed under their weight? There was certainly a poetic lesson hidden in that approach, and it could have even worked in some other circumstances…  
  
But not now.  
  
After all, Sunny needed the mountain to remain standing, because he could not conquer it if the mountain was gone.  
  
And if he failed to conquer the mountain, two Cursed Devils would descend upon him come morning.  
  
That was a clash he wanted to avoid at all costs.  
  
So, in the absence of a clear way to defeat the vile swarm of Cursed rats… Sunny could only put his faith in Kai.  
  
'Come on, buddy. You can do it.'  
  
He had left Kai on the roof of the Shrine of Truth for a reason. Sunny had suspected that the Cursed Beast would possess a power that defied reason, and he had also suspected that its power would have something to do with numbers. Something like that was not difficult to guess, after all, because the worst part about a swarm of enemies… was that they were a swarm.  
  
And the world almost never failed to deliver on its worst promises.  
  
So, Sunny had given Kai a special task. He wanted to exploit the power of the Snow Tyrant against its emissary…  
  
Kai had to find the invisible string with which the Tyrant controlled its Beast.