2396 Evening Star  
  
As Sunny walked across the bridge, bringing the Ash Domain with him, the huge black moth perching on the peak of the distant white mountain shifted a little. Its size was so immense that, from a distance, it seemed as if the mountain itself moved.  
  
Suddenly, he could sense something vast, ancient, and utterly alien gazing at him. It was as if everything about him was revealed under that frightening gaze - the entity studied him with a dispassionate thoroughness, like one would study a strange and curious specimen after dissecting its body.  
Then, the entity seemed to lose interest. The heavy gaze followed Sunny, but it felt far less penetrating than before.  
  
He glanced up at the titanic black moth's face, if it could be called that. It was covered by what looked like soft black fur, with two enormous spherical eyes protruding from it on either side.  
  
Its maw was hidden from sight, and its two enormous antennae swayed faintly in the wind. Apart from the fact that each was hundreds of meters in length, they looked like the long cushy eyebrows of a wizened sage.  
  
The Puppeteers stayed motionless, and it was that lack of movement that made the sight of a titanic moth so eerie. Sunny would have been less tense if the Tyrant tried to threaten him or showed a hint of preparing for battle. But the creature stayed still, simply looking at him impassively.  
'It's not taking me seriously at all.'  
  
The sea of clouds below was glowing, painted in a million shades of maroon and crimson by the sunset. Sunny took a step and activated the enchantment of the Evening Star - the shadows surrounding him seemed to grow darker, and the veil of ash more impenetrable. He felt more powerful.  
  
He was more powerful, in fact, albeit not by much. For now.  
  
The enchantment of the Evening Star was immensely potent, but simpler in execution than many he had woven before. That was because Sunny had chosen not to rely on the usual patterns he had memorized or developed while designing it. Instead of meticulously weaving the paths and mechanisms its enchantment was to follow, he wove the very concept of what it was meant to achieve into the pattern instead.  
  
Sunny based the spellweave of the Evening Star on two simple concepts: abundance and power. The Evening Star was meant to grant its master an abundance of power. Not the physical strength, soul potency, mental fortitude, оr even willpower, but simply power - in all its shapes and forms.  
  
Sunny did not need to meticulously design how that effect would be achieved precisely because he had based the spellweave of the Evening Star on concepts as opposed to sorcerous principles.  
  
After all, the Evening Star was a Sacred Memory. The ways in which it functioned were not as important as the very fact that it did. It did not work by adhering to cleverly designed patterns of cause and effect - instead, it worked because it bent the world into a state that supported its effect. The effect came first, while the cause followed.  
  
That was how Sacred beings exerted their power, so Sunny had surmised that that was how a Sacred Memory should function, too.  
  
The shift in the approach to designing a spellweave was so different from everything he had done before that it was hard to wrap his head around it. But once Sunny shifted his perspective and saw the foundations of sorcerous mechanics in a new light, the patterns he envisioned were actually simpler than what he had been creating before.  
  
Of course, a sorcery like that could only be strengthened by a master whose Will could shoulder its burden. But as a Supreme Titan, Sunny was more than qualified to do just that.  
  
Granted, creating a Memory that was simply supposed to make its master more powerful would not have been very useful. There were limits to his Will, after all, and even if there were none, a simple sorcery like that could not bend the laws of the world too much. The effect would have been negligible.  
  
That was where the artificial limitation he had built into the spellweave of the Evening Star came into play. By limiting the Sacred Memory himself, he allowed it to bend the laws of existence much more than it would have been able to otherwise - as long as proper conditions were met. It was as if he was focusing its power into a narrow ray instead of unleashing it upon the world as a diffused wave.  
  
The limit Sunny had placed on thе enchantment of the Evening Star was as follows: its potency depended on how bright the world around it was. This Sacred Memory was almost entirely useless when surrounded by radiance and light. it grew exponentially more powerful the darker its surroundings were, though, and reached full potency in utter darkness.  
  
And since Sunny could only attack the Snow Castle at sunset, the Evening Star would enhance him more and more the closer nightfall came.  
  
The augmentation of a Sacred Memory was already immensely powerful. However, there was also the [Underworld Armament] trait of the Jade Mantle to consider - the trait that enhanced the effects of any charm slotted into the tenebrous armor.  
  
In short, the longer Sunny survived in the battle against the Puppeteer, the stronger he would become. Any augmentation was important, but this one, in particular, was especially vital due to the fact fighters usually grew exhausted and weakened by the end of a vicious battle - in that state of fatigue and vulnerability, every drop of power was especially precious. So.  
Hopefully, the Puppeteer was in for an unpleasant surprise. Of course, Sunny was quite certain that the detestable creature had a few surprises in store for him, as well.  
  
All his senses grew taut as he approached the end of the bridge. All his muscles tensed in preparation for a furious, fatal battle.  
  
Sunny inhaled deeply, then gritted his teeth and stepped onto the snowy slope of the towering mountain.  
  
He had expected a destructive mental attack to slam into him immediately - possibly even some kind of profane assault that he could not even imagine, let alone describe. He had prepared himself for anything or so he had thought.  
  
But he was wrong. Because what happened next left Sunny completely stunned, and more than a little bit rattled.  
  
Instead of a tyrannical assault, what met him on the slopes of the Snow Castle was a voice.  
  
The voice resounded from all around him, subtle and strangely soft.  
  
It said:  
  
"Welcome, liberator. Oh. I've been waiting for so long."