2404 Fifth Step  
  
When Sunny thought about it, a Stone Saint was оne of the best possible shapes he could attempt to assume to master the fifth step of Shadow Dance - even if he did not consider the nature of the battle against the Puppeteer.  
  
After all, Saint was his first Shadow. She had spent close to a decade by his side, saving his life countless times - just as he had saved heгs. Saint was not only his most loyal follower, but also his battle companion and, at numerous points, had been his teacher. There were few beings in the world he knew better than he knew Saint. Not only that, but Sunny had also taken her into the embrace of shadow countless times, and as his power strengthened her, he had fathomed the Stone Saints in great detail - body and mind.  
  
Additionally, Sunny already shared a degree of kinship with these stonelike creatures. After all, he commanded the Jade Shell and the Jade Mantle - a piece of Nether's inheritance had already become a part of him. So, if Sunny wanted to assume the shape of another creature to the point of manifesting its Attributes, a Stone Saint was a good choice.  
  
He had mastered the first step of Shadow Dance by shadowing Nephis, whose battle style he knew the best. And now, he was going to master the fifth by shadowing Saint, whom he was familiar with on a level that was only possible between the Sovereign of Death and one of his Shadows. This was going to be different from anything he had done before. Sunny had plenty of experience assuming forms different from his own, naturally, but those were merely imitations. Even the Shadowspawn Form, which he had mastered more than any other, transformed only his appearance and the physical structure of his body. The rest of him, things hidden from view, remained the same. Today, though, Sunny had to delve much deeper into personifying someone other than himself. Imitation was not going to cut it. He had to become the genuine thing.  
  
And so.  
  
Sunny summoned the image of Saint into his mind and allowed the Shadow Colossus Shell to crumble. At the same time, he released his own shadow to occupy the same space. His vast shadow rose like a tidal wave and billowed, suspended on the cusp of manifesting into matter, but not quite tangible yet. Sunny thrust himself into a foreign mindset, substituting the essence of his being with one that belonged to someone else.  
  
He was not a creature of flesh and bone born in the outskirts of NQSC. He was not a shadow of that mortal man, either.  
  
'I was born in the Underworld.'  
  
Deep in the cavernous halls of his dark domain, the last child of the Forgotten God had created Sunny from stone to quell the fire burning in his resentful heart. However, that fire only grew hotter. Designed to bring peace, Sunny and his siblings were instead born into an endless war.  
  
'I was raised on the battlefield.'  
  
He was proud. He was strong. He was a warrior. He was proficient in all forms of combat, having wielded all manner of weapons to wage war upon the gods. On a thousand blood-soaked battlefields, countless weapons sang in his hand - and by listening to their cold songs, he had learned how to fashion himself into a weapon, too.  
  
'I know no surrender.'  
  
There were beings out there who could destroy him - however, there were none who could bring him to his knees. His stonelike body was nearly indestructible. His spirit was indomitable. His conviction was as firm as a mountain, as clear as crystal. His ferocious heart knew no submission, only loyalty.  
  
"I."  
  
He was an orphan. His creator was long dead, and his siblings had all been either destroyed or consumed by Corruption. Now, Sunny was alone. Forlorn, forsaken.  
  
Until.  
  
Sunny slowly manifested himself into existence. His flesh was neither stone nor flesh. Instead, it was something in between, possessing the same stonelike quality as the Jade Mantle. Instead of a heart, a furnace of divine flame burned in his chest. Instead of blood, ruby dust flowed in his veins. Impossibly thin diamond strings permeated his body like nerves, creating an intricate and gorgeous sorcerous array. Essence flowed through them, giving him life. Giving him power.  
  
'I am a Stone Saint.'  
  
The vast shadow finally manifested into a dark colossus, towering at least two hundred meters above ground. His powerful body was encased in a fearsome suit of black armor, which had been forged by the Prince of the Underworld - his father - himself. Two fierce crimson lights were burning in the darkness that nestled behind the visor of his helmet.  
  
His stonelike body was heavy as a mountain, but could also become as light as a feather. His every move carried crushing weight, and strengthened by the Evening Star, he felt as if he could tear down the word. His mind was deep and unfathomable. His will was indomitable.  
  
Sunny knew then he had succeeded. He had shadowed the Attributes and Abilities of a Stone Saint. [Battle Master], [Stalwart], and the rest. Some of them, like the [Flame of Divinity] and the [Underworld Armament], he had already possessed, but they permeated his being differently now.  
  
He was now a being similar to Saint, but not Saint herself. After all, Stone Saints were individuals, just like humans were. Each of them possessed their own unique skills and followed their own paths, and while they shared natural affinities - and affinity to true darkness, for example - they were not the same. Saint was a Transcendent Devil who commanded true darkness and had recently learned to control the concept of nothingness to further her goals. Sunny, meanwhile, was a Supreme Titan who commanded shadows. So, the Stone Saint he had become was a Supreme Titan and a ruler of shadows, as well. The Fifth Step was complete. Everything was as it should have been.  
  
No. something was still missing.  
  
'Why am I unarmed?'  
  
Reaching into the shadows, Sunny pulled a giant sword and a giant shield out of them.  
  
Looкing up at the Cursed Tyrant and the Sacred shade battling each other. He raised his sword and struck it аgainst the rim of his shield twice, each strike resounding above the crumbling mountain like the ringing of a gigantic gong. Announcing his unshakeable resolve to the world, challenging whoever dared to stand against him, and heralding death and destruction to his enemies.