2421 In Slow Motion  
  
June possessed quite a strange Aspect.  
  
His Dormant Aspect Ability was subtle, but versatile and very useful - it made him exceptionally observant. His senses were sharper than those of most people, and he could discern many things that the rest would not notice. More than that, time seemed to slow down around him when he was focused or full of adrenaline - but that was merely an illusion. In truth, time flowed at its usual pace, and it was rather June's ability to perceive and assess his surroundings that outpaced it.  
  
In other words, he saw the movements of his enemies in slow motion. June was moving just as slowly, since his speed was not given a corresponding boost - however, he had more time to perceive what his enemies were doing and come up with the best possible countermeasures.  
  
Added to his already excellent observation skills and conditioning, that made him seem like someone with an impossibly quick reaction speed and insidiously keen judgment. As a side effect, June had earned a reputation of a man with ice flowing through his veins, since he never flinched and was never startled, remaining completely unfazed no matter what happened.  
  
His Dormant Aspect Ability had saved his hide many times - it had always been powerful, and after years of specialized training, June learned to draw out its full potential.  
  
His Awakened Aspect Ability, however, was anything but straightforward.  
  
It allowed him to actually slow time down. Well, not quite. Rather, it allowed him to slow down things, people, and creatures. There was a catch, though. His Ability targeted an area instead of an entity - and within that area, different things were affected differently.  
  
Those more powerful than him would be slowed down less than those of equal power to his own, while those weaker than him would be slowed down more. Additionally, only their bodies would be affected, while their ability to perceive and assess information would remain the same. Inanimate objects and phenomena, meanwhile, were slowed down the most.  
  
June was not immune to his own Ability, either, which meant that he had to use it cautiously and with foresight. He could cast it in front of himself to slow down a speeding bullet and step out of its path, for example, or to escape an explosion. But if he wanted to engage a powerful adversary in melee, slowing them both down would be the death of him - after all, he would be affected more than his foe.  
  
Still, once his backstab failed to kill the Tyrant, June plunged the entire vault into the mire of slowed time to give Ray enough time to cut the power.  
  
Once darkness swallowed the entire bank, the Shadows received a decisive advantage against the enemy.  
  
June made a sign, telegraphing his intent:  
  
[Tyrant.]  
  
At the same time, Tamar of Sorrow made one, as well.  
  
[Echo.]  
  
In the next moment, June deactivated his Awakened Ability, and the underground vault exploded into chaos.  
  
"Corsaaaair!"  
  
The Tyrаnt's voice thundered in the darkness, full of murderous wrath and something else entirely. In fact, it was a full-blown sonic attack - luckily, June had already disappeared from his previous position, so he was not caught in the destructive shockwave.  
  
Fleur dashed forward, grabbing the Vault Keeper and pushing her to the ground.  
  
Tamar of Sorrow had already destroyed her restraints and exploded forward with breathtaking speed. The young woman seemed to step on air as she soared above the Fallen Devil - her Mark of Shadows assumed the form of a black greatsword, and she brought it down on the towering creature's detestable head with a spin.  
  
The princess took a leisurely step to the side, putting the mass of the lumbering Echo between herself and the Awakened robbers, then opened her mouth as if to say something.  
  
The zealots opened fire.  
  
'You absolute idiots!'  
  
June wasted a whole fraction of a second to bemoan the lack of professional standards the wannabe outlaws were displaying. Who the hell fired blindly in a closed space? Sure, neither the Tyrant nor his Echo would be harmed by mundane bullets, but the six Awakened henchmen could easily shoot each other instead of their enemies. And indeed, none of the bullets hit their marks.  
  
Fleur and the Vault Keeper were on the floor, Tamar of Sorrow was three metres above ground, Princess Rain was protected by the mass of the towering Echo, while June. June was protected by the Tyrant.  
  
The Ascended zealot had already turned back, so a few bullets hit him in the back of the head, ricocheting away with metallic ringing.  
  
"Stop firing, you."  
  
Before he could finish the sentence, June crashed into him like a battering ram.  
  
His goal right now was to separate the Tyrant from the rest of the Shadows and bring him as far away fгom the princess as possible. So, he grabbed the man and allowed momentum to carry them both in the direction of the nearest wall. They hit it with devastating force, breaking through - June had known all along that while the outer walls of the vault were heavily armored and even protected by runic sorcery, the ones separating the rooms inside were merely decorative. So, he and the Tyrant fell into the Vault Keeper's parlor in a rain of debris.  
  
As they fell, June stabbed the Ascended man three times - one time in the neck, one time between the ribs, and one time in the inner thigh, hoping to cut at least one of the arteries.  
  
Sadly, the Tyrant's entire body seemed to be protected by the mysterious Aspect Ability. June's black stiletto scraped harmlessly against the man's skin, failing to pierce it. Perhaps a more powerful weapon would have done the job, but June was an Awakened, and therefore, his Mark of Shadows was only as powerful as an Awakened weapon would have been.  
  
'Blast it.'  
  
Usually, summoning Memories would have been a bad decision in this situation - not only because Memories took time to manifest, but also because they came into existence as whirlwinds of radiant sparks. Members of the Shadow Clan thrived in darkness, though, so illuminating themselves in such a manner was unwise. That was why the Memories forged for them by the Lord of Shadows manifested from strings of darkness, instead. Some of them - weapons in particular - could be summoned instantly, as well.  
  
Sadly, June found himself unable to summon Memories. The world seemed to slow down as he came to terms with the sudden revelation, contemplated possible reasons, and came to a probable conclusion. 'Huh.'  
  
It seemed like the enchanted restraints placed on Awakened hostages were not enchanted at all. Rather, they were merely meant to mask someone's Aspect Ability.  
  
The Tyrant's Aspect Ability, most likely. The man could suppress the flow of essence, thus interfering with the Aspect Abilities of other Awakened and preventing them from summoning Memories.  
  
So, what was June supposed to do if his weapon could not pierce the Ascended zealot's flesh, and he could not summon a different blade?  
  
The Tyrant's mask had been destroyed by the sonic attack, revealing his chiseled face. He opened his mouth, beginning to saу something. It had the potential to be a taunt or another sonic blast. Having considered his options, June swung his fist and punched the Master in the face.