2422 Shadows VS Zealots, Fight  
  
Striking the Tyrant with a fist felt like striking armored alloy. which was not too bad, since June had had the unfortunate experience of ripping from an APC or two with his bare hands before.  
  
No matter how strong an Ascended was, they were still beholden to the laws of physics. The Tyrant was thrown down, the back of his head cracking the floor. Before he could recover, June struck him again, and then again, and again.  
  
His arms moved like pistons, his fists falling down like hydraulic power hammers. He could not stab the enemy to death, so blunt force trauma and concussive force were the next best thing - June put as much strength as he could muster into each punch, making sure not to shatter his own bones in the process.  
  
Being a member of the Shadow Clan was not without its perks, but there were drawbacks as well, possibly the most significant of them was that servants of the Dark Lord did not belong to the Flame Domain anymore, and were therefore devoid of Changing Star's grace. Miraculous flames were not going to descend to soothe their pain and heal their wounds, so they always had to be cautious.  
  
More cautious than those who walked in the light were, at least.  
  
'Come. on!'  
  
The Tyrant seemed a little dazed, but not at all as hurt as June had hoped he would be. Worse still, the man was already coming to his senses. There was blood pouring from his nose and from his mouth, where a tooth or two must have been dislodged, but his eyes had regained their murderous glint. Three moments had already passed since the moment the power was cut, even if it felt like much longer. That meant that things were about to get far more difficult for the Shadows.  
  
It took some time to summon Memories, but those of them that produced light were usually the simplest and weakest of them, which meant that they could be summoned rapidly. If even one of the zealots had reacted quickly, the darkness that gave June and his people a decisive advantage could be dispelled at any moment.  
  
But June had to concentrate on the Tyrant. Now that the man had regained his senses, trying to crack his skull with a barrage of blows was not an option anymore - engaging a Master in hand - to - hand combat was a dangerous idea at the best of times, but trying to grapple one was pure suicide.  
  
So, June disengaged and jumped back, activating his Awakened Ability once again to slow the Tyrant down. His essence felt sluggish, but his control of it was refined enough to break through the unknown hex. The Ascended zealot still moved with a speed that left June appalled, jumping to his feet and summoning a whirlwind of spаrks to illuminate his surroundings.  
  
To June, the innumerable sparks seem to drift slowly through the air. He studied his adversary.  
  
The Tyrant was older than he had assumed, his unshaven face pale and harsh. His equipment was mundane, offering no additional protection. Being stabbed, shot in the back of the head, slammed thгough a wall, and repeatedly punched in the face did not seem to have affected him in any significant manner.  
  
Blood flowing from his nose and his mouth was going to compromise his breathing, though. The man was left - handed, but his right eye was the dominant one. He also protected his left side slightly, most likely subconsciously, hinting at an old wound that was still letting itself be known, or at least a psychological habit. Not much to work with.  
  
June sighed, deactivated his Awakened Aspect Ability, and lunged forward.  
  
Outside the devastated parlor, numerous things had happened in these three long moments.  
  
The Fallen Devil had lost half of its tentacle and was pushed to the corner of the rоom by Tamar's fierce assault. Her black greatsword was a Memory forged for her by Sunny himself - its enchantments were quite perplexing, making the brutish weapon exponentially deadlier the faster its wielder was moving and granting it far greater power if the wielder was completely airborne, not touching the ground at all. That and the element of surprise allowed Tamar to push the towering Echo back. Now, however, the Devil had regained its wits and was about to launch a counterattack.  
  
Rain, meanwhile, had used the first second to assign herself an Epithet. As an Awakened, she could maintain two at the same time, so she granted the same Epithet to Fleur, too.  
  
It was quite a easy one.  
  
"Fleur, now!"  
  
As the Vault Keeper pressed herself into the floor, the two young women rushed toward the robbers. The darkness was only broken by the muzzle flashes and ethereal glow of swirling sparks of light, so the enemies could not really aim at them. Still, six automatic rifles produced a lot of bullets.  
  
Rain was hit in the shoulder. Despite the Epithet she had assigned herself, she was not entirely bulletproof. A direct strike from a heavy railgun would have probably punched right through her body. She would not have been able to protect a mundane person from being killed by less destructive firearms, either - after all, it was not in the nature of mundane people to be immune to bullets.  
  
But she was an Awakened instead. Awakened did possess some measure of resistance to mundаne weapons, so the Epithet she had given herself did not have to fundamentally change her nature. It simply had to enhance a quality that she already possessed, so the effect was more than potent enough to allow her to shrug off the hit and continue to move forward as if nothing had happened.  
  
The same held true for Fleur, even if the Epithet assigned to her wаs not tied to a True Name, and was therefore less effective.  
  
Both of them reached the zealots in one piece. What happened next was quite predictable. Rain and Fleur were exceptionally skilled Awakened warriors with fully saturated cores and rich, harrowing experience of fighting a war in Godgrave under their belts. More than that, they could see in the dark, while their enemies could not.  
  
The only difficulty was that Rain could not kill their opponents, and had to subdue them while keeping everyone alive instead. The robbers were already summoning luminous Memories, as well.  
  
And yet, none of them managed to benefit from that light.  
  
By the time the first lantern manifested itself into existence, all six assailants were already either dead or unconscious. Rain and Fleur had bulldozed through them at breathtaking speed, moving as quickly and subtly as real shadows would.  
  
All in all, it took them no more than six moments. And on the seventh second.  
  
Tamar hissed, stepping on air to push herself back. The Echo still managed to reach her with its claws, sending the young woman rolling across the floor. At the same time, Corsair was tossed through the broken wall - instead of crushing into the ground, however, he spun and landed on his feet, regaining his balance a split second later with an inexplicable level of nonchalance.  
  
The Tyrant and his Echo faced the three Shadows, sending a shiver running down Rain's spine.  
  
'I think. I better think of something quick?'