1653 Erebus

The monstrous Spire Messenger tore apart the gelid wind as it raced across the frigid vastness of the twilight sky. Behind it, a churning wall of dancing snow crawled slowly, devouring the world like a hungry beast.

There was a gaunt figure kneeling on the back of the flying monster, clutching at its black feathers with an onyx gauntlet.

Sunny did not look back, knowing that Serpent was much faster than the pursuing titan. In that, at least, they held an advantage.

'It will catch up soon enough, though.’

He was contemplating the results of sacrificing his swarm of thralls.

None of them had been able to withstand the lethal cold of the Winter Beast's domain for long, which meant that there was no type of resistance that could help Sunny survive there - at least none he could find in a short amount of time.

The thralls had perished swiftly, sapped of warmth of life. Their bodies fell into the snow, slowly turning into ice sculptures.

The conclusion, then... was that Sunny had to use something other than a living being to reach the heart of the snowstorm. That would suggest that an undead creature would fare better, but that was not true, There had been a few ghouls among the thralls, and they died just the same.

'But there is a much simpler solution.’

He didn't have to enter the heart of the sinister blizzard himself or send one of his Shadows. He could simply... use an Inanimate object.

A projectile.

Indeed, the simplest solution was most often the correct one. The best way to kill the Winter Beast was to simply bring down a deluge of ranged attacks on its head... or whatever it was that it had instead of a head.

Sunny had not been able to do something like that in the past because there was no telling where the titan's actual manifestation hid within the vast snowstorm. Now, however... his shadow sense could extend across many kilometers. Even if he failed to find the Winter Beast's precise location, he could at least pinpoint the general area.

‘That is if that thing even has a physical body. For all I know, it could be a sentient storm.’

That was one of the risks he had to face. The other problem was actually delivering a ranged attack across such a vast distance. Not only was it physically hard, but the fatal cold and the hurricane wind raging within the snowstorm would become an obstacle... the closer one got to its heart, the worse they became,

But where there was a will, there was a way

And if that will was killing intent..., someone was going to die by the end of their battle, one way or another.

Leaning forward to resist the frigid wind, Sunny smiled.

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Some time later, he was sitting on the snow, shielded from the wind by a wall of onyx scales. That wall, of course, was Serpent's side - his Shadow's Soul Beast form had grown truly Immense now that it was a Transcendent Terror.

Serpent was still far from reaching Daeron's size, of course, but it was rather daunting nevertheless. Its maw looked like it could swallow an entire military APC whole.

The two of them were in the middle of the icy plain that had been Erebus Field once. Most of the destroyed siege capital was buried under lava rock and snow, with only a few ravaged structures protruding above it like skeletal remains.

Sunny was sitting with the tall peak of Mount Erebus behind him. In front of him, far in the distance, the world was slowly disappearing beneath a veil of swirling snow.

The already dismal temperature was dropping by the minute, and the winds were growing more violent.

He looked disinterested, staring at the snow with a frozen expression. The deep darkness of his eyes was cold and placid... like the surface of an ocean ready to explode into a raging storm.

"It has finally arrived, huh?"

Sunny took a deep breath and finally looked up, studying the distant snowstorm. Its approach was deceptively slow, but he knew that the wall of snow would consume everything around him very soon.

Serpent hissed, the deep sound of its voice reverberating across the Icy plain.

“...It's time to start, then."

Sunny's words hung in the frigid air for a moment and were swiftly swallowed by the howling of the wind.

As split second later, though...

The world shook.

Cracks formed on the vast field of snow, and far behind him, the mouth of Mount Erebus suddenly exploded with a gargantuan pillar of ash. A terrifying gust of hot wind rolled across the desolate landscape, pushing back the cold for a moment. Then, the volcano shone with an angry red glow, and a fountain of incandescent lava shot skyward with a deafening roar.

Mount Erebus was erupting.

Of course, it did not just happen to erupt precisely when Sunny needed it. Instead, he had sent Fiend into its depths to find a ripe magma chamber and cause an eruption when the time was right.

With Goliath having already destabilized the entire region, doing so was not too hard. And with Fiend's robust steel carapace and fire affinity, he could survive inside a volcanic explosion without much trouble, Granted... the little hoodlum would not be happy with its master once he returned.

If both of them survived what was coming next, of course.

As the wall of swirling snow approached Sunny from the front, devouring the world, a rolling cloud of ash spread from Mount Erebus behind him. The stench of sulfur permeated the frigid air, cold wind crashing into a wave of heat in an invisible collision. Sunny's hair danced as a vast darkness swallowed the sky, plunging the icy plain in its shadow.

As everything around him became enveloped in shadows, a sinister smile appeared on Sunny's pale face.

He stretched, and then slowly rose to his feet.

The cold darkness dwelling in his eyes finally exploded, turning into vicious glee.

Looking at the approaching storm, Sunny raised his fist and said, his voice trembling with barely suppressed rage:

"Hey, Winter Beast... do you remember me?"

Then, his voice grew calmer, and colder, full of murderous wrath.

"...Probably not, But I remember you.”