1656 Into the Storm

The entire region where Erebus Field had once stood suddenly fractured. Vast fissures opened in the snow, widening with each moment. Immense sheets of snow tilted and slid underground, collapsing as they turned into billowing avalanches.

At the same time, the fissures glowed with angry red light, and torrents of lava shot from them, devouring the plain. The world was enveloped by a raging blizzard, so no one would have been able to see the awesome spectacle of the fiery cataclysm - Sunny himself only saw flowers of orange glow blooming here and there in the howling darkness.

He swayed, struggling to stay on his feet.

The chain reaction of chaos and destruction that the fourth salvo of the black javelins had caused was his measure in case a melee clash with the Winter Beast seemed unavoidable. The terrible heat of the molten lava was not going to put a dent into the titanic snowstorm, of course - in fact, the lava was already turning into volcanic glass.

However, more of it shot from underground. An immeasurable amount of snow had been instantly turned into great clouds of boiling steam, which then swiftly turned into a torrent of hail. The whole world was torn apart by the clash between the incinerating heat and the obliterating cold, becoming consumed by chaos,

The cold was winning, of course..., but it was also being weakened, even if not by much. Considering that Sunny was about to face the very worst of it, though, every little bit counted.

As for the sudden collapse of the snow field, that was Saint's doing. Fiend had been responsible for starting the volcanic eruption, but Mount Erebus was at a distance. If Sunny wanted to drown the Winter Beast in lava, he had to make sure that the whole region would crack open.

That was not that too hard to achieve, considering that the ruins of the siege capital buried under his feet were already unstable. With Saints creating channels for the lava to flow and deepening the already existing caverns, all Sunny had to do to cause a cascading collapse was deliver powerful shocks to shatter the meticulously prepared weak points in the icy crust.

After that, nature would take its course.

Of course, it was a bit degrading to use a great warrior like Saint to dig glorified trenches. But that was what made the Winter Beast so vile - its cold countered most of Sunny's powers and made it impossible for his subordinates to fully exert theirs.

'I'll just have to make sure it pays for that affront, as well.’

As he felt the very life being slowly sapped from his body by the killing cold, Sunny took a few more steps back and then inhaled deeply, ignoring the feeling of his lungs being cut by icy blades,

'Not that far, now….’

The darkness around him surged, shrouding his figure in a vast mantle. He allowed himself to turn Into an intangible shadow and then manifested himself back into the world, building a towering Shell around the dark incarnation.

This was the safest Shell Sunny could create, one that posed no threat of his mind being pulled into the abyss of formlessness. Because it was created in the image of himself.

Slowly, a dark giant rose above the quaking plain. It was gaunt, with long hair that billowed in the wind like a sable waterfall. His eyes were like two abyssal wells, and the expression on his inky-black face was both cold and savage.

The hurricane wind crushed into the immense chest of the Shadow Colossus and was repelled, howling mournfully as it died. Vast plates of stonelike metal encased his gaunt and muscular body, creating a fearsome onyx caгapace.

As the heart of the snowstorm drew nearer and nearer, the dark giant slowly lowered himself, his knee sending a net of cracks through the thick layer of impenetrable ice. Then, he leaned down and supported his immense weight with both palms.

Finally, the colossus grew still, his head lowered. His pose... was like that of an athlete preparing to explode into a run,

"Twenty seconds, huh?"

Sunny felt darkly fascinated by the immediate future.

That was how long his javelins had been able to survive in the outer reaches of the snowstorm. Some had made it most of the way into the heart of the profane blizzard before turning into shattered ice. He was much more powerful than a manifested shadow, though. He was a Transcendent Terror, both his body and his onyx carapace augmented five times over by the shadows.

Sunny was willing to bet that his Shell would survive long enough for him to witness the true appearance of the Winter Beast.

...He would probably have mere seconds to live after that, though. So, something had to happen in those seconds to end the battle in his favor.

'I like it!'

A strange, sinister, thunderous noise suddenly resounded in the raging blizzard.

It was the sound of the Shadow Colossus laughing.

Then, his laughter turned into a chilling growl, and the towering giant exploded forward like a dark tsunami.

An entire area of the snow field was obliterated by his initial push. A crushing shockwave spread from the point where Sunny's foot dug into the ice, but he was moving faster than it.

Faster, and faster, and faster still!

The shadow giant tore through the snowstorm as he ran, effortlessly leaping over the vastest of fissures and sending fountains of incandescent lava into the sky when he stepped in them, as if stepping into puddles. His speed increased more and more, until it was as if a black meteor was flying above the snow, moving parallel to it.

The bitter cold sank into the towering colossus, trying to shackle him and slow him down. But Sunny simply broke through the cold, even as he felt the outer layers of his Shell turn to ice.

The heart of the snowstorm was already in front of him. He dove into its terrible embrace, trying to accelerate even more.

In the end, the cold was just too much.

With his giant body impacted by its fatal force, Sunny couldn't keep up anymore. He lost his balance and fumbled, almost falling down. There was no time to take the next step.

And yet, his speed was so great that he was carried forward by pure inertia.

That inertia...

Was just enough to bring him into the eye of the storm.

There, Sunny finally saw the Winter Beast.

The frozen lips of the Shadow Colossus shattered into pieces as he bared his teeth in a vicious grin.

'Well, aren't you ugly…’