2099 Realm of Death  
  
Sunny wanted to be safe and assess the situation slowly, but at the same time, the motes of light drifting into the darkness from time to time reminded him that his soul was gradually falling apart. So, he cursed quietly and descended from the tall mound of obsidian dust to explore the area.  
  
Luckily, there was still nobody around. No one tried to pierce his heart with an arrow, either… instead, Sunny was surrounded only by silence.  
  
After investigating the devastated swath of the dark land, he grew more convinced that a battle had happened here. The forces involved were truly fearsome, reshaping the entire landscape, but there were no bodies left laying on the ground, no sign of blood, and no traces that could tell him what exactly had transpired.  
  
Except for one.  
  
Kneeling in the black dust, Sunny picked up something from the ground.  
  
A raven's feather… just like the fletching of the dark arrows he brought with him from the Shadow Realm the last time.  
  
After sifting through the dust for a few more minutes, he discovered a few more pieces of the arrow — the shaft was broken, and the obsidian arrowhead had shattered, seemingly failing to pierce the target.  
  
He studied the remains of the arrow with a somber expression. Another mote of light drifted into the black sky, its silver shine reflecting in the jagged obsidian for a short moment.  
  
'Huh.'  
  
It seemed that the mysterious archer had met something even more terrible. Sunny was not sure whether he was supposed to be happy or disturbed by the fact… not being ambushed the moment he appeared was certainly a nice surprise, but knowing that there were even deadlier beings nearby made him wary.  
  
On the other hand…  
  
That meant he had more things to kill, and these things were somewhere close.  
  
'No time to waste.'  
  
Standing up, Sunny studied the ground.  
  
The traces might not have told him how the battle had transpired, exactly, but they did tell him one thing — the direction in which the unknown adversaries left.  
  
So, Sunny followed in the same direction, running noiselessly through the darkness.   
  
The newfound power filled his body, and his speed was even greater than what he was usually capable of — which had already been quite astonishing, considering his Rank and Class.  
  
Traversing great distances each minute, Sunny swiftly moved across the desolate landscape of the Shadow Realm. The scenery around him did not change that much, or at all. The same dark hills surrounded him from all sides, and there was no sign of any life or movement. The black sky hung above him, illuminated by the distant storms.  
  
The devastation he had witnessed near the entrance to the Gate of Shadow persisted along his path. It was more subtle in some places and much more intense in others. Many hills of obsidian dust had been destroyed, and the ground itself cracked open, the shadows flowing into the cracks to populate them comfortably.  
  
The longer Sunny observed the signs left behind by the unknown combatants, the more disturbed he became. The power they exhibited was truly terrifying, making him feel more and more apprehension about having to face them in battle.  
  
At some point, Sunny suddenly froze, sensing the shadows ahead of him move. He hesitated for a bit, then used some of the surrounding darkness to reform his crumbling shield and stealthily moved forward.   
  
Traveling a few kilometers, he approached the source of movement and came to an abrupt halt.  
  
His expression changed subtly.  
  
Out there in front of him, scattered across the desolate land, countless black figures were moving slowly. Their shapes were vague and unclear, but unmistakably human.  
  
They were shadows.  
  
The shadows were walking in a single direction — the same direction he had been heading — with slow, unsteady steps. They belonged to living beings… or had belonged to living beings, at least. However, there was no spark of life about them, no hint of intelligence, no… intent. They seemed strangely peaceful, but also empty, like lost and muted echoes of what they had been once.   
  
If anything, what they resembled most were the silent shadows that populated Sunny's soul sea.  
  
These shadows, however, were emanating a soft shine. As they walked, trails of light particles were drifting behind them, rising into the sky. It was as if the black figures were wreathed in silver flames, dissolving slowly into the radiance.  
  
As Sunny watched, several shadows dissolved completely, turning into pure essence. The sparks of essence were then scattered by the wind, leaving only emptiness behind…  
  
A moment later, a few more shadows followed.  
  
Some disappeared swiftly, and some disappeared a little slower. But in both cases, It seemed that their time here was brief, and they were not destined to reach whatever destination they were seeking.   
  
Sunny studied the wandering shadows for a few more moments, then let out a sigh and looked away.  
  
It wasn't hard to recognize them for what they were.  
  
They were the shadows of the Awakened soldiers who had perished in the recent battle, and were being reduced to streams of pure essence by the Shadow Realm.  
  
'It's the realm of the dead.'  
  
Just like Odysseus had once descended into the underworld and met the shadows of the dead, so did Sunny now descend into the realm of death.  
  
It was just that these shadows were not interested in living blood, and would not regain their memories after drinking it. If anything, they seemed perfectly at peace in their slow annihilation, not paying it any attention.  
  
Sunny closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them again and continued on his journey. He passed between the wandering shadows, feeling eerily like one of them, and soon left them behind.  
  
Eventually, he noticed a strange anomaly just over the horizon.  
  
Out there, far ahead, a pale light seemed to illuminate the sky.  
  
Sunny leaped into the air, soaring dozens of meters high and landing on the crest of a hill. There, he remained motionless for a while, studying the distant light, then frowned and raced toward it.  
  
As he rushed stealthily across the sea of obsidian dust, the pale radiance seemed to move, as well. Luckily, his speed was greater, so it slowly drew nearer.   
  
Soon enough, he managed to discern the source of the beautiful light — it was a great plume of shimmering soul essence rising into the black sky. However, the torrent of essence was much smaller than the storm clouds moving in the distance, and did not possess any of their chilling fury, either.   
  
Increasing his speed, Sunny rushed forward like lightning and soon crested another tall hill.   
  
He finally saw the source of the pillar of essence...  
  
And flinched, taken aback.   
  
'...I'll be damned.'  
  
There, in the distance, a colossal shadow was walking across the desolate expanse, towering above it at several kilometers in height.   
  
It was the shadows of Condemnation.