2101 Creatures of Darkness  
  
The wounded being collapsed to the ground, covering it like a tattered veil of darkness. A moment later, the darkness rippled, and then something rose slowly from within it. From the distance, it looked as if an abominable shape was rising from the ground, still covered by the torn veil and pulling it up with it…  
  
But in truth, the eerie figure was not climbing out of the darkness. Instead, it was darkness itself, reforming itself into a new shape.  
  
Soon enough, a dreadful beast was standing on the obsidian dune, hundred of meters tall, its four mighty paws digging into the black dust with sharp claws. Its maw was like that of a wolf, and billowing tendrils of darkness fluttered in the air behind it like a tattered mantle.  
  
The great beast gazed upon the desolation of the Shadow Realm with lightless eyes, and then raised its snout to the black sky, letting out a harrowing wail.  
  
Even from a distance, Sunny felt a dull pain assault his soul after the wail washed over him.  
  
'Ah…'  
  
He shifted his gaze, trying to understand what the Rank and Class of the appalling creature were. What was its nature? Was it a shadow, as well, or something else entirely? Was it infected by the vile curse of Corruption, or not?  
  
Sunny was not sure that anything except shadows could enter the Realm of Death… or at least endure it for a while. Perhaps creatures of immense power, like Condemnation had been, could — but those were few and far between.  
  
So, reasonably, the dark drifters had to be either shadows of the dead, like the shadow of Condemnation was, or beings of shadow like him.  
  
However…  
  
There was something about them that made Sunny feel appalled and uneasy. Could they be Nightmare Creatures? He was not sure.  
  
Death had been created as a weapon against Corruption, and by dying, those afflicted by Corruption were cleansed of it. Therefore, the shadows of Nightmare Creatures were pure when they entered the Shadow Realm… and if beings of shadow were born from the shadows of the dead, then perhaps that was the reason why he had never seen one that succumbed to Corruption.  
  
Perhaps that was the reason why he had never met a shadow being in the Dream Realm, as well. After all, after thousands of years of desolation, only those twisted by Corruption population its harrowing expanse… the Nightmare Creatures.  
  
That said, nothing was truly immune to the profane influence of the primordial void… well, except for Nephis. Even Weaver had been forced to cut off their arm when exposed to Corruption, and so, Sunny was not going to bet his life on the notion that shadow beings could not be corrupted.  
  
Gazing into the very essence of the dark drifter…  
  
He saw something that he had not expected to see.  
  
He saw nothing.  
  
There was no light shining from the radiant soul cores. There was no vile corruption spreading from appalling nodes, either.  
  
Instead, there was only darkness.  
  
Not the vile darkness he had seen in the souls of countless Nightmare Creatures, but the cold and impenetrable darkness that made it impossible for him to see anything within the monstrous beast.   
  
True darkness.  
  
Sunny remained motionless for a few moments, stunned.  
  
'...Creatures of darkness?'  
  
Before, his view of the world had been quite simple. There were humans, and there were Nightmare Creatures — and that was it. But as Sunny traveled the Dream Realm and saw more, he learned that the world was not that simple.  
  
There were other kinds of being out there, somewhere, as well. There were Chaos Creatures — the Void Beings — who existed in the Void. There were also beings that were both divine and profane, and therefore did not fit either description, like the mysterious nephilim. There were beings of nothingness, too, whom he had encountered in the mist above the Hollow Mountains.  
  
There were also beings of divinity other than humans — the noble creatures, as the ancient people of the Dream Realm had called them. Among those, there were beings of shadow like himself.  
  
So, if there existed Shadow Creatures… wouldn't it be only natural that Darkness Creatures existed, as well?  
  
Like the horror Nephis had met in her Second Nightmare.   
  
If the dark drifters were indeed beings born of true darkness, though, Sunny had two questions… three questions, actually.  
  
First, were they divine or profane? True darkness had been born from the blood of a slain Void Being, after all. So, these predatory horrors could be both or neither. They could even be considered born of the Void, instead of only corrupted by its influence, like Nightmare Creatures were.   
  
Second, what were they doing in the Shadow Realm? Shadows and true darkness were natural enemies, so it was strange to see beings of darkness here — let alone see them preying on the shadow of Condemnation, trying to devour it piece by piece.   
  
How would they even enter the Realm of Death without being dead themselves? Sunny was not sure, but his suspicion that these were the outskirts of the Shadow Realm grew.   
  
And lastly, the third and most important question...  
  
How was he supposed to kill them?  
  
If the dark drifters were indeed beings of true darkness, then slaying them would not bring Sunny the windfall of shadow fragments he had been expecting. Nevertheless, he had to slay them — for no other reason than to prevent them from destroying the shadow of Condemnation, which he wanted to destroy himself.   
  
'That... is going to be tough.'  
  
He was not even sure how strong these creatures were, but something told him that they were dreadfully powerful — well, the only evidence he needed was witnessing how much the shadow of a Cursed Tyrant was struggling to escape their pursuit.  
  
And then there was the mysterious archer, as well.  
  
Even now that Sunny had observed the battle carefully, he could not see them — which was quite odd, really, considering that his gaze could pierce any shadow.  
  
He was wary of the archer even more than he was of the dark drifters.  
  
'Damn it.'  
  
Seeing another mote of light drift from beneath his armor, Sunny gritted his teeth and rushed forward.