2102 Adversary  
  
As Sunny rushed to reach the colossal shadow of Condemnation, he almost turned into a shadow to increase his speed and hide himself from view, acting on instinct. However, he did not — doing so would allow the Shadow Realm to ravage his soul and set him far back in the race against time.  
  
Of course, there was the other facet of Shadow Step, as well — the instant teleportation between shadows. However, Sunny was not sure that he could use it.  
  
Only now that he was in the Shadow Realm did he start to wonder how Shadow Step actually functioned. Did Sunny travel physically between shadows, or did he turn into a shadow when falling into their embrace, then was returned to his tangible form on the other side — all in an instant?  
  
There was one way to find out…  
  
Sunny dissolved into the shadows, then rolled out of them a few hundred meters further, pale and leaving a trail of essence particles in his wake. There was a pained grimace on his face.  
  
'I guess that answers the question. Maybe?'  
  
Using Shadow Step to teleport was even more harmful than turning into an incorporeal shadow. He had lost too many shadow fragments in that short moment.  
  
Muttering a stifled curse, Sunny jumped to his feet and continued running.  
  
Stripped of most of his powers, he felt like a caveman.  
  
But then again, cavemen had been great masters of violence themselves. He would just have to use simpler tools to accomplish his goal, and be more inventive about how he used them.  
  
As Sunny ran, the great beast of darkness lowered its wolf-like snout to the ground, and then suddenly exploded with motion. The long tendrils of darkness billowed behind it like a tattered mantle, and black dust flew into the air like mist from beneath its mighty paws.  
  
The dark drifter looked like a hound of the Underworld who had caught the scent of its prey.  
  
That prey, without a doubt, was the mysterious archer.  
  
However, they were not easily caught.  
  
As the great beast flew across the desolate expanse of black dust, a dark arrow silently shot at it from the shadows. As astonishing as its speed was, the massive being was faster — it veered off to the side, raising a cloud of dust and causing a tall dune to collapse.   
  
However, that was a mistake.  
  
Just there, the ground crumbled beneath it, and the monstrous being fell into an enormous pit. On its bottom, jagged pillars of obsidian were embedded into the dust, facing upward with sharp tips. The great beast plunged into the pit and was impaled by the spikes, making the world quake and letting out another chilling wail.  
  
It was not dead by any means. But it did sustain several deep wounds, and more importantly, fell behind — for a few moments, at least.  
  
The shadow of Condemnation marched forward, and the remaining dark drifters continued to dodge its attempts to crush them while tearing pieces of its titanic body with hungry maws.  
  
Sunny continued to chase them… the mysterious archer was doing the same, no doubt.  
  
The problem was that he still couldn't see the elusive hunter.  
  
'I have to get these things off Condemnation soon, though. At this rate, they'll swallow my prey whole.'  
  
Just at that moment, the archer finally revealed themselves.  
  
A new arrow suddenly streaked across the darkness — this one was different from the previous ones, shining brightly as it soared into the black sky. Breaching several kilometers in an instant, it left a trail of turbulence in the great plume of essence emanated by the shadow of Condemnation, and embedded itself in its shoulder.  
  
Unlike the black arrows, this one seemed to be carved from bone, its fletching fashioned out of beautiful, pristine white feathers.  
  
A moment later, a radiant silver string revealed itself in the trail left behind by the bone arrow, manifesting itself from pure essence.  
  
With one pull of the string, the mysterious archer sent themselves soaring into the sky.  
  
Sunny saw a vague silhouette flying across the darkness. It landed on the shoulder of the dark colossus and straightened slowly, finally revealed against the swirling torrent of radiant silver essence.  
  
The graceful figure of the nebulous archer was human in shape, but vague and unclear, obscured by wisps of dark smoke that fluttered behind it like a ragged cloak. It was a shadow, without a doubt… but quite a special one, emanating a sense of far clearer will, far sharper intent, and far more solid personality than even the shadow of Condemnation did.  
  
If Sunny had to describe the shadow archer with one word, it would be… slayer.  
  
Their figure was full of cold resolve, savage killing intent, and threatening grace.  
  
The archer spent a short moment standing on the shoulder of Condemnation, then swiftly bent down to retrieve the radiant arrow and disappeared from view.  
  
In the next moment, there was a sharp whistle of the air being cut, and one of the dark drifters attached to the body of the colossal shadow suddenly shuddered and fell down in a torrent of darkness, flailing its severed tendrils as it fell.  
  
Sunny gritted his teeth.  
  
'So much damn competition!'  
  
It would be bad if the dark drifters consumed the shadow of Condemnation. It would be even worse if the archer killed it, since as a shadow themselves, they would absorb all its power in an instant!   
  
But what was he supposed to do?  
  
Stripped of his powers as he was, Sunny was not confident of prevailing in a battle against the harrowing Darkness Creatures. He was even more wary of the archer, who seemed like a ruthless slayer forged by the desolate cruelty of the Shadow Realm into a deadly fiend.  
  
That horror must have spent a long time here — thousands of years, perhaps — slowly dissolving into pure essence while hunting down other shadows to prolong its existence. The mere fact that it still existed was a testament to how lethal the archer was.  
  
'If the archer can do it, then I can too.'  
  
Sunny's eyes glistened with dark resolve.  
  
His adversary must have been just as constricted by the nature of the Shadow Realm as he was. However, the archer was… scrappy, and resourceful. They scavenged the Shadow Realm for materials, crafted deadly implements from what was at hand, and prepared cunning traps to lure their prey into.  
  
So, Sunny could do that, too.  
  
Just as he thought that, his shadow sense detected something strange in the distance, just beyond the horizon.  
  
Looking up, Sunny lingered for a moment and smiled.  
  
A perilous idea entered his mind.