2122 Friendly Advice  
  
Sunny froze, suddenly feeling cold fear grasp his heart.   
  
It was a jarring transition to experience, from the cold resolve of ending an enemy's life — and all the confidence that came with it — to utter unease and a piercing sense of alarm.  
  
But what else was he supposed to feel when hearing a disembodied voice resound from the darkness of the Shadow Realm?  
  
Added to that was the fact that the voice had not spoken in the familiar language of the waking world. Instead, it had spoken in a dialect of the ancient language that the later civilizations of the Dream Realm used.  
  
Still holding the sharp shard of bone to the archer's throat, Sunny cautiously looked around. He spread his shadow sense in all directions, too, feverishly trying to find the source of the voice.   
  
There was no one.  
  
Feeling his mouth turn dry, Sunny lingered for a bit, and then asked in a hoarse voice:  
  
"...Who's speaking?"  
  
His other incarnation was similarly tense, ready to shield the original body from danger if need be.  
  
There were a few moments of silence, and then the voice answered in a nonchalant, somewhat friendly tone:  
  
"I am."  
  
Sunny blinked.  
  
'What the…'  
  
This time, he was able to pinpoint the direction from which the voice was coming better. It was very close.  
  
And low to the ground.  
  
His gaze explored the graveyard of serpents, until finally falling on something he had seen before, but did not pay a lot of attention to.  
  
A lone human skull laying amidst the serpent bones, attached to a partially destroyed human skeleton. There was no spark of life in the battered skeleton, and even when Sunny shifted his gaze, there was neither the radiance of soul essence nor the vile darkness of Corruption inside the old bones.  
  
However, as he watched, he noticed a tiny mote of light drifting into the air from inside the gaping black hole of the skull's empty eye socket.  
  
Just then, the skeleton spoke:  
  
"My, oh my! When you look at me like that, boy, I get shy."  
  
Sunny shuddered.  
  
The jaws of the ancient skull did not move, but the voice definitely… definitely was coming from inside it.   
  
He stared at the skeleton with wide eyes for some time, then forced himself to open his mouth.  
  
"I... know you, don't I?"  
  
The white skull, obviously, did not show any reaction.  
  
"Do you? Goodness gracious! How odd. Never have I imagined being known by such esteemed personas… I am nothing but a humble slave, after all."  
  
Sunny smiled darkly.  
  
"Well, what would you know… so am I."  
  
The skeleton laughed.  
  
"No, no… the likes of me can't even be compared to the exalted beings like you. A genuine divine shadow! Who would have thought that even after Shadow God's death, his shadows would continue to roam the world… my, oh my! How despicable."  
  
Sunny narrowed his eyes and remained silent for a while.  
  
Then, he said somberly:  
  
"You are Eurys of the Nine."  
  
Now, he was convinced that the talkative skeleton was exactly who he had assumed it to be. It was the mysterious creature Nephis had taken off a mystical tree in the Nightmare Desert to use as a guide.   
  
But how had he ended up in the Shadow Realm? According to Nephis, she had parted with Eurys in the outer reaches of the Underworld.  
  
The white skull stared at Sunny expressionlessly for a while, then said evenly:  
  
"Huh. So you do know me."  
  
Sunny lingered for a moment, considering what to do next. The skeleton had not harmed Nephis… but that did not mean that he would not or did not have the ability to harm Sunny. After all, not just anyone could endure thousands of years of a strange unlife, being nailed to a tree in a literal hell.  
  
It was unfathomable how Eurys was able to exist, to begin with.  
  
But first things first…  
  
Lowering his gaze, Sunny looked at the weakly struggling archer, then shifted his gaze back to the battered skeleton.  
  
"You said that you wouldn't have killed this thing? Why?"  
  
Eurys of the Nine chuckled.  
  
"Oh, it's just a piece of friendly advice, from one slave to another. Think about it, boy… she has been hunting down shadows for thousands of years here, in the realm of Shadow God, instead of quietly succumbing to death. Such a defiant spirit! What do you think will happen when you kill her, and her shadow enters your Soul Sea instead?"  
  
Sunny suddenly felt a chill run down his spine.  
  
He… had not considered that.  
  
There was definitely some truth to the skeleton's words. By all accounts, once a shadow traveled to the Shadow Realm, it was supposed to peacefully succumb to the divine will of its creator and be annihilated, turning into pure soul essence — like the shadows of the Awakened soldiers he had seen.  
  
Even the shadow of Condemnation, despite having seemingly retained some of its agency, simply followed the law of the Shadow Realm and attempted the pilgrimage to its supposed center, dissolving into essence in the process.  
  
However, the mysterious archer was different…  
  
Not only had they… she, apparently… defied the natural way of things by roaming the Shadow Realm as she pleased, but she had also refused to be annihilated, surviving for thousands of years by slaying other shadows instead.  
  
Sunny had long suspected that his Soul Sea was like a nascent, miniature version of the Shadow Realm. If so, the laws governing it would be much weaker, and much easier to defy, than the ruthless laws governing the Realm of Death.  
  
So, what would happen if he killed the mysterious archer?  
  
…Wouldn't he be just inviting a serial killer into his soul?  
  
He shuddered.  
  
Noticing his reaction, the battered skeleton let out a laugh.  
  
"I see you realized the danger. She has become quite feral, hasn't she? Such a shame… my, oh my! The person was so valiant and righteous, yet the shadow is so wicked and vicious."  
  
Sunny stared at the white skull with a frown.  
  
"You say it as if you knew her."  
  
Eurys remained silent for a bit, then laughed.  
  
"Why, of course! After all, she is one of the Nine."