2126 Spirit of Reciprocity  
  
Hearing those words, Sunny was taken aback.  
  
What… what was this familiar feeling?  
  
'Ah! I know!'  
  
Of course...  
  
It was the feeling of being swindled!  
  
Frowning, he studied the expressionless skull for a few moments. The skeleton did not move, and if Sunny did not know any better, he would have assumed that it was a completely mundane corpse. The only thing that betrayed Eurys's unusual nature was a rare mote of light that drifted off the white bones from time to time.  
  
…The same particles of essence rose from both of Sunny's incarnations, as well, reminding him that he was still on the clock.  
  
'That bastard.'  
  
So Sunny had to bargain with a shameless corpse in the middle of the Realm of Death, and worst of all, the corpse held all the chips.  
  
He grimaced.  
  
"You're the one who spoke to me first, were you not? So, if anything, it seems like your need is greater than mine."  
  
Eurys chuckled.  
  
"That was not because I wanted to speak, just out of the goodness of my heart. Well, I don't really have a heart, but you get the meaning — I simply wanted to save a naive boy from making a terrible mistake. Because I am kind and generous."  
  
Sunny stared at him dubiously.  
  
"Oh, yeah? Are you sure that you did not want to save this shadow here, instead? After all, you had kept quiet up until the moment I was about to kill one of you Nine. What a coincidence."  
  
The white skull scoffed.  
  
"One of us Nine? My, oh my! You must be confused, boy. She is not one of the Nine — she is merely a shadow of one of the Nine. A feral and mindless shadow, at that… an insult to the memory of my dear comrade, really, whose very existence offends and saddens me greatly. Ah, alas! If only you were strong enough to endure the consequences of destroying her…"  
  
Sunny scowled.  
  
"It sounds like you are a man of great integrity indeed, Eurys. And didn't you just mention your kindness and generosity? How admirable, how commendable. No wonder you helped Nephis… the nephilim… so selflessly. Someone as selfless, kind,and generous as you would not take advantage of a naive boy and try to swindle him, would you? "  
  
Eurys let out achortle.  
  
"That abominable girl? Why yes, I helped her… but that was merely in the spirit of reciprocity. She took me off that damned tree, after all, so I was obligated to return the favor. However, what have you done for me? Nothing… surely, there has to be a favor made for me to reciprocate in kind."  
  
Sunny stared at him for a few moments, then sighed in dejection.  
  
It wasn't often that he found himself on the losing end of a verbal battle. He was usually the most brazen person in the room, and meeting an even greater scoundrel was a rare occurrence.  
  
'How shameless!'  
  
Sunny looked at Eurys with resentment, lingered for a while, then said somberly:  
  
"So what do you want?"  
  
The mysterious skeleton remained silent.  
  
Eventually, he spoke:  
  
"Why, it's simple. You are a Shadow Slave, are you not? Someone who wields the power of Death. So, I want you to kill me."  
  
Sunny blinked a couple of times.  
  
'Huh…'  
  
The seventh incarnation tilted its head a little.  
  
His eyes narrowed.  
  
"Wait, wouldn't that just defeat the purpose? Dead men tell no tales. Who will answer my questions if I kill you?"  
  
Eurys let out a short laugh.  
  
"Well, I'll answer your questions before you kill me, of course. Look at me now — I am resting here in the Shadow Realm, patiently waiting to be destroyed. It is taking forever… however, if you can hasten the process, I'll sure spare you some time."  
  
Sunny considered his words.  
  
Eurys… was definitely lying about a lot of things, or at least not telling him everything. The mysterious skeleton already had the means to break the will of Shadow God and be destroyed — he could have surrendered to the mists of the Underworld, for example, and simply become nothing. He could also wait and slowly be annihilated by the Shadow Realm.  
  
But perhaps death and destruction were not the same. And perhaps Eurys was seeking a true death, which only Sunny could give him.  
  
Eventually, Sunny nodded.  
  
"Alright, I'll kill you. So start talking."  
  
The skeleton let out another laugh, this one sounding a little wistful.  
  
"I wish it were so simple, boy. Sadly, you are not nearly strong enough, yet, to kill me. So, come back after you become Supreme… better yet, Sacred. I'm not going anywhere, so you'll be able to find me right here."  
  
Finally, Sunny's expression cracked.  
  
"Become Supreme?! Do you think I have not tried?! How the hell am I supposed to become Supreme, you useless pile of bones?!"  
  
Eurys stared at him with what looked like amusement… which was quite a feat, considering that the white skull had no means to emote anything.  
  
Eventually, he said:  
  
"What is the big problem? I watched you slay that eerie Sacred shadow before. From what I've seen, you are already most of the way there — you have the Will, and you even know how to wield it. That is the hardest part. More than that, your nascent Domain is already fully formed, and its weight is crushing. Do I even need to mention how profound your connection to your source element is? Boy… I've never seen anyone as ready to become Supreme as you. The only thing you need is to take the last step."  
  
Sunny blinked, suddenly robbed of breath.  
  
What Eurys said… in hindsight, it rang true.  
  
He had indeed taken great strides on the path to Supremacy as of late. Hearing that he, too, possessed a nascent Domain was a bit surprising… but other than that, the mysterious skeleton was correct.  
  
Sunny had reached the precipice of Supremacy without even realizing it.  
  
The first and most important step… had probably been the very act of deciding to return to the embrace of civilization and take responsibility for the future, imposing his will upon the world.  
  
After all, that was what a Sovereign was — someone who bent the world to their will, thus claiming authority over it.  
  
Then, it was a series of smaller steps. Claiming a Citadel, establishing his rule over a vast swath of Godgrave.Slaying and subjugating Great Nightmare Creatures, forging his Transcendent Battle Art. Joining the Sword Army and observing the King of Swords to learn from his example… especially during Anvil's battle with Condemnation.  
  
Observing Rain and learning from her natural Awakening, as well.  
  
The most important step, surprisingly… had been connected to improving his mastery of weaving. It was forging the Blessing that had truly opened his eyes and broadened his horizons, teaching him how to wield his will.  
  
There were other important lessons and accomplishments, too. Numerous lessons, really.  
  
Nephis had her own way of reaching toward Supremacy, while Sunny had his.  
  
He was almost ready.  
  
All that he was missing was, indeed, one final step. A catalyst that would ignite all his previous attainments, fusing them into a throne.  
  
But Sunny had no idea what that catalyst was.  
  
He hesitated for a while before asking cautiously:  
  
"And what is that last step?"  
  
Eurys remained silent... then answered gingerly:  
  
"How should I know?"  
  
Sunny let out a growl.  
  
'...That bastard!'