2128 That Which Should Not Exist  
  
Sunny let out a tired sigh.  
  
Even the seventh incarnation rolled its eyes in exasperation.  
  
'Well, of course…'  
  
Honestly, he had expected to hear something like that. After all, he was still in the Shadow Realm, and while the imminent danger had seemingly passed, it would be foolish to expect that new perils would not reveal themselves soon.  
  
After cursing his fate — or lack thereof — for a few moments quietly, he asked in a resigned tone:  
  
"Oh? What is it now?"  
  
The ancient skull stаred at him with empty eye sockets. When Eurys spoke, his creaky voice sounded a bit wistful:  
  
"Look at me carefully, boy. How do you think I ended up in this state?"  
  
Sunny studied the skeleton silently.  
  
Eurys was sprawled on the ground, surrounded by broken pieces of ivory bones and half-buried in the obsidian dust. The bone fragments belonged to the remains of a Soul Serpent, but the human skeleton, too, was not intact.  
  
Half of his ribs were broken, one of his arms was entirely missing, and his legs were completely crushed. He was in quite a sorry state…  
  
Sunny did not know how powerful Eurys was, exactly, but he shuddered to imagine what kind of creature could have mutilated him so thoroughly.  
  
He glanced down, at the shadow archer.  
  
"...I gather it wasn't this one here who did such a number on you?"  
  
The skeleton laughed.  
  
"No."  
  
Eurys paused for a few moments, then spoke in a friendly tone:  
  
"As I mentioned before, there is an entrance to the Shadow Realm hidden in the Abyss of the Underworld. We are not too far from that entrance, meaning that these are the outer edges of the Shadow Realm. This is wherе the shadows of living beings arrive after death before undertaking a pilgrimage to the heart of the Land of the Dead."  
  
He sighed.  
  
"I was attempting the same, but… oh well. You can see how I ended up."  
  
Sunny raised an eyebrow.  
  
"What lies at the heart of the Shadow Realm, then?"  
  
The ancient skeleton struggled to shrug.  
  
"That, I do not know. I was curious to see,though! Such a tantalizing mystery. Since I am more or less dead, it would be a shame to miss the chance..."  
  
After chuckling with mirth, he grew more serious:  
  
"In any case, the outer edges of the Shadow Realm hide their own perils. Like the Creatures of Darkness who sometimes crawl out of the Abyss… one of them is drawing closer and closer, by the way. I thought I should let you know."  
  
Sunny cursed.  
  
'Damnation.'  
  
Right… there had been the fourth dark drifter, the Wolf, pursuing the shadow of Condemnation. Sunny had assumed that it was destroyed by the essence storm, but the creature seemed to have survived. Considering that it had been on the ground when the storm hit...  
  
'Did it burrow into the dust to avoid the currents of essence?'  
  
He looked around, gazing past the field of bones at the desolate expanse of dark dunes.  
  
Come to think of it…  
  
Sunny glanced at the new hill of black dust that had formed where the shadow Condemnation fell. The dust used to be solid obsidian… had the Shadow Realm been a land of glossy black stone once, before turning into a desert of dust?  
  
But that was beside the point. The point was that the Wolf was still alive, and drawing closer. It had failed to feast on the essence of Condemnation, but Sunny was right here. A Transcendent Titan was probably not as delicious as a Cursed Tyrant, but food was food.  
  
Remembering the Vulture and the Leech, he considered if he could slay the Wolf alone.  
  
Considering how tired and wounded Sunny was, it seemed problematic at best, and unlikely at worst.  
  
He grimaced.  
  
"So, am I supposed to run away from that Dark One?"  
  
Eurys stared at him silently for a moment.  
  
"Goodness… can you let me finish, boy? Who cares about those eerie things? I just remembered to mention it by chance. What I was going to say was that, while the outer edges of the Shadow Reаlm hide their own perils, the true horrors all dwell deeper, in its heartland."  
  
Sunny blinked.  
  
'...The essence storms and the Cгeatures of Darkness are not the true horrors?'  
  
Noticing his pale face, the mysterious skeleton scoffed.  
  
"You must have seen the shadows walking toward the center of the Shadow Realm, so think about it. The weaker ones get ground into streams of essence swiftly. The stronger ones last a little longer… then, who can endure long enough to reach the heartland?"  
  
Sunny's expression darkened.  
  
'He's right.'  
  
The shadow of Condemnation had not been destroyed by the Shadow Realm… it had been killed by Sunny. If he had not been there, it would have rebuilt its colossal body and continued marching forward, at least for a while.  
  
In fact, it might not have dissolved into essence entirely for years… hundreds of years, perhaps.  
  
So how many of such shadows were somewhere ahead, in the heart of the Shadow Realm?  
  
Or shadow left behind by even more powerful beings?  
  
He shivered.  
  
Eurys nodded.  
  
"Indeed. Out there, in the darkness, dwell the shadows of beings beyond your comprehension. Cursed, Sacred… Divine, Unholy. Those that have endured countless eons of annihilation, changing slowly in the process. This feral shadow right here has already given you so much trouble, so how are you going to survive them?"  
  
He paused for a few moments, then added in a troubled tone:  
  
"More than that… out there, ahead, exist things that should not exist at all."  
  
This was the first time Eurys seemed to drop his jovial demeanor entirely, which did nothing to lessen Sunny's alarm.  
  
He asked in a strained tone:  
  
"What things?"  
  
The white skeleton stared at him silently.  
  
Eventually, the voice resounded from its depths once again:  
  
"Creatures of Shadow… who have succumbed to Corruption. Oh, and they have sensed the scent of your Transcendent soul by now, without a doubt…"