2129 Calculated Risk  
  
Sunny was out of curses and out of tired sighs. He just stared at the expressionless skull for a while, then let out a short laugh.  
  
"Ah. I see. Is that all?"  
  
So, there were ancient shadows dwelling in the depths of the Shadow Realm… shadows so great and vast that even this place took eons to ground them into pure essence.  
  
Shadows of dead deities, both divine and profane…  
  
And some of them had succumbed to Corruption somewhere along the way, becoming monstrous beings that defied description.  
  
Sunny glanced at Eurys.  
  
"So… Shadow Creatures are not supposed to become Corrupted?"  
  
The mysterious skeleton hesitated for a few moments.  
  
"Well… it's not entirely impossible, I guess, but definitely unheard of. Unless one has been born as a Shadowspawn, Shadow Creatures come to be from the shadows of the dead. And death, as you should know, destroys Corruption. So, I have never even heard of a corrupted Shadow Creature — before witnessing one myself here. My, oh my! The world has really changed."  
  
Eurys let out an amused laugh.  
  
"In any case, unlike the shadow of my fellow member of the Nine, you have neglected to hide the scent of your soul when entering the Shadow Realm. They must have sensed it already. So, they will be coming for you soon. As such, I suggest that you run back to where you came from, boy, and return once you are strong enough to face them."  
  
Sunny smiled darkly.  
  
He was inclined to listen to that advice.  
  
Of course, there were a couple problems if he did… namely, the essence storm and the Wolf, who were currently between him and the Gate of Shadow. But he could solve these problems, somehow.  
  
Facing an Unholy being or two, however, was not something he could solve.  
  
Sunny sighed and glanced at the shadow of the archer, to whose throat he was still holding a sharp shard of bone.  
  
After lingering for a little while, he said:  
  
"I'll go. However, before that, I still have two questions I want to ask you."  
  
Eurys stared at him silently,neither confirming nor denying that he would answer them.  
  
The seventh incarnation gestured to the remains of the Soul Serpents towering around them.  
  
"Why are these here? What killed them?"  
  
The mysterious skeleton turned his skull a little, looking at the ancient bones.  
  
"Nothing killed them. This is just their resting place. This is where Shadow Serpents come after losing their masters, to follow them into death… a sentiment you are not familiar with, it seems, considering that you are still here and running around without one. My, oh my! How callous."  
  
Sunny hesitated.  
  
"Why is the Shadow Realm so inhospitable to Shadow Creatures, anyway? To be honest, I did not expect to suffer this much in my supposed homeland."  
  
Eurys laughed.  
  
"Isn't it the purpose of the Shadow Realm, to give solace and eternal peace to shadows? Ah, but not all shadows, of course — just those without a master, like the shadows of the dead. Or you, the shadow of a dead god."  
  
Sunny blinked.  
  
'What?'  
  
So, if he still shared Shadow Bond with Nephis, his soul would not be slowly crumbling in the Shadow Realm?  
  
Weirdly enough, it somehow made sense. Without a mаster, he was no different from the orphaned shadows that came to this desolate land after the beings casting them died. So, the Shadow Realm was trying to give him the gift of eternal peace…  
  
By destroying him.  
  
His eyes narrowed a little.  
  
"Wait. So I can summon my Shadows here, and they will be fine?"  
  
Had he been holding back for no good reason?  
  
Eurys shook his skull.  
  
"Those things you call Shadows are not exactly masterless, but they are not exactly real beings, either. They are a part of you, so they will be destroyed with you… much more thoroughly than you, really. Unless you complete them and turn them into real Shadow Creatures, I'd advise against bringing them here."  
  
Sunny raised an eyebrow, startled.  
  
"Complete them? What do you mean?"  
  
The ancient skeleton sighed.  
  
"Boy, they say that wisdom comes with age,but do consider that I spent most of my long existence nailed to a tree. What kind of wisdom do you think I was supposed to gain while hanging on a damned tree? I am not at all omniscient. How am I supposed to know more about the nature of being a shadow than you do? To answer your question, I have no idea. All I know is that unless they can exist independent of you, they are not complete Creatures of Shadow."  
  
Sunny stared at him silently for a while, utterly perplexed.  
  
So, according to Eurys, Saint and the others were not actual Shadow Creatures… yet? And that there was something he could do to complete them, thus giving them some kind of independence?  
  
Weren't they quite complete, already?  
  
And why would he even want to make them independent? The whole point of having Shadows was that they were always at his beck and call, ready to assist him with whatever he needed assistance with.  
  
It didn't make any sense.  
  
And he did not have time to deal with this issue at the moment, really.  
  
Shaking his head, Sunny looked back to the shadow archer.  
  
His face hardened.  
  
After remaining silent for a while, he said:  
  
"Then that leaves only one matter I still have to deal with. So, Eurys of the Nine… you told me that this one is one of the Nine, as well. What was her name, then?"  
  
Alethea of the Nine had been a sorceress and a pursuer of knowledge, so he could not imagine her becoming a feral huntress. The archer had probably been someone else.  
  
The white skull remained silent for a bit, then clacked its jaw.  
  
"She doesn't remember, so I don't remember, either."  
  
Sunny stared at him darkly.  
  
"Somehow, I found it hard to believe."  
  
The grinning skull just stared at him without saying anything.  
  
Then, Eurys grumbled:  
  
"Life is full of hardships, boy. What am I supposed to do about it? You said that you had two questions for me, anyway… and this is the seventh. I'm not giving you any answers for free anymore."  
  
Sunny frowned and counted…  
  
Why are these here?  
  
What killed them?  
  
Why is the Shadow Realm so inhospitable to Shadow Creatures?  
  
So I can summon my Shadow here, and they will be fine?  
  
Complete them?  
  
What do you mean?  
  
He gritted his teeth.  
  
'That bastard!'  
  
Looking at him, Eurys laughed.  
  
"Go find her name on your own. Maybe if you give it to her, she'll regain some of what she lost."  
  
Sunny muttered a curse.  
  
A few moments later, the mysterious skeleton asked with curiosity:  
  
"So… are you going to listen to my advice and let her be? Or do what you always seem to do and kill her? Let me repeat, just in case… doing so will be extremely dangerous. It is much better to just allow the Shadow Realm itself to finish her off."  
  
Sunny stared at the shadow of the archer.  
  
Eurys was right. Inviting this murderous shadow into his soul would be extremely dangerous, and it would be much wiser to let her live…  
  
For a bit more.  
  
Considering how severely damaged the archer was, she would without a doubt be destroyed by the Shadow Realm soon.  
  
It was just that Sunny did not believe that one bit. There were countless reasons that pointed to the fact that the archer would not survive even if left alone, but he had survived too many impossible situations to feel confident.  
  
That maniac… was a kindгed spirit, of sorts. Even though the world itself was against her, she would find a way to live on.  
  
He was sure of it.  
  
And, more importantly…  
  
Sunny was not one to let go of a grudge.  
  
He smiled darkly.  
  
"...I'll risk it."  
  
With that, he strained his hand, and cut the archer's throat with the sharp fragment of the ivory fang.