2134 Deadly Rewards  
  
The disappointing personality of the lazy shadow aside… overall, the trip to the Shadow Realm was a resounding success.  
  
And yet, Sunny could not get over it.  
  
'...But he's the shadow of the Titan Core! The youngest! The last one! The Titan!'  
  
He groaned.  
  
This time, it was not because of the pain, but rather because of a bitter feeling of resignation.  
  
Laying on the floor and nearly unable to move, he stared at the ceiling with a miserable expression.  
  
'Gloomy, Happy, Creepy, Haughty, Naughty, Crazy… and Lazy…'  
  
Sunny was full of regret.  
  
Not only because his last shadow was not as cool and heroic as he had hoped, but also because he belatedly realized how inconsistent his naming sense was.  
  
'Damn. If I'd known in advance, I would have made all seven nicknames rhyme.'  
  
But he was stuck with the seven fools now.  
  
After suffering in silence for a while, Sunny tried to send a mental message to Cassie, but she did not respond. Either she was asleep, or simply too busy to answer — these days, unless the message was important, Cassie rarely responded immediately.  
  
That was because the King of Swords was working her hard in the Hollows. The blind seer was not exactly a battle specialist, and yet, he sent her out with the other Saints time after time — well, it was no wonder. After all, having a powerful seer lead the charge was a great advantage when venturing into an unexplored and dire area of a Death Zone.  
  
Eventually, Sunny sighed.  
  
'Let's go over what I gained.'  
  
The first and foremost, of course, was his Titan Core.  
  
Becoming a Titan empowered him in several ways. The most obvious, of course, was the increase of his raw power — his body had grown stronger, and his reserves of essence had grown deeper.  
  
The changes were not game-changing, but also not insignificant. Every little bit mattered, and becoming more powerful by around one seventh of his overall strength could not be considered a little bit.  
  
Sunny summoned his runes and looked at the counter of shadow fragments.   
  
Shadow Fragments: [444/7000].  
  
He had lost some to the Shadow Realm, but gained much more than what had been lost. He had won the race against time.  
  
In fact, he had gained more than expected. If Sunny went by how many shadow fragments he had received for slaying Nightmare — a fellow Shadow Creature — then slaying the shadow of Condemnation, who had been a Cursed Tyrant, should have only brought him close to forming the seventh core… but not past that final threshold.  
  
But he had clearly received way more than two thousand fragments, which would have been a reasonable amount. Either the rules were different when slaying beings of the highest Ranks, or something else had transpired.  
  
'Huh.'  
  
…Perhaps he had not just absorbed the power of Condemnation, but also the power of the Condemned — of those unfortunate souls that had been assimilated by the cursed god over the ages, becoming its parts.  
  
That was the only thing Sunny could think of.  
  
Which, honestly, was a chilling thought.  
  
In any case, with the added fragments he had absorbed after slaying the Slayer — and ironic sentence to say, no doubt — the counter was not close to five hundred. There was a long way to go before he saturated his seven cores fully.  
  
Full saturation did not matter much in the grand scheme of things, though, since it would only result in a marginal increase of power.  
  
The other benefits Sunny had gained from becoming a Titan were much more important.  
  
One of them had already shown its usefulness — it was the fact that Serpent could assume the form of Titans that rested in Sunny's souls. Not only was it going to be of great help in the battle against the Sovereigns, but it would also be an ace hidden up his sleeve. After all, the only thing better than a powerful tool was a powerful tool that the enemy did not know about.  
  
Then, there was another benefit… the fact that he possessed seven shadows instead of six now, and could therefore augment his power eightfold instead of sevenfold.   
  
Considering that his overall strength had increased with becoming a Titan, as well, that was a considerable — and honestly quite frightening — jump in power.  
  
The power of a Transcendent Titan was no joke, and when augmented by seven shadows… Sunny shuddered to imagine what he would be able to do.  
  
And there would be two such creatures facing against the Sovereigns, no less — he and Nephis. Their chances had improved.  
  
Alternatively, these seven shadows could be used to augment one of his Shadows, including Serpent in the form of a Titan. That would be a terrifying sight to behold, as well.  
  
Finally, there was the last benefit of becoming a Titan. It was that he could command one more avatar now, and therefore be in one more place at the same time.  
  
Granted, Sunny felt reluctant to send any of his shadows away… now that the resolution of the war was drawing close, he felt a disquieting feeling that all hell cоuld break loose at any moment. So, he wanted to have the ability to face the unexpected at the peak of his power, and preferably at a moment's notice.  
  
'I'll have to consider this carefully.'  
  
Then, there was something else he had gained in the Shadow Realm — his most unexpected reward.  
  
It was all the knowledge shared with him by Eurys. There were too many striking revelations… as well as infuriatingly vague hints… in what the mysterious skeleton had told him.  
  
In hindsight, the bastard was quite a master of subtly changing topics and steering the conversation away from undesirable truths. Of course, Sunny had not been blind to this manipulation, but what could he have done? It was not like he was in a position to force Eurys to speak.  
  
In any case, he would have to go over everything that the skeleton had said and ponder it deeply. That was an important, but not urgent task.  
  
Finally, there was the most dubious of his gains.  
  
The Shadow Slayer…  
  
Sunny was lucky to have received such a powerful Shadow. At the same time, not only could he not use it, but he even had to protect himself from her. What was this situation?  
  
Not to mention that he could not help but feel a bit torn about whether he could even keep Slayer. After all, he had spent a big chunk of his life rebelling fiercely against having a master… so was it right to forcefully possess an unwilling Shadow?  
  
Honestly, he would rather not, even if she was not really a human, or even a person. Merely a shadow of one.  
  
But…  
  
It wasn't like he knew how to give Slayer her freedom, or if it was even possible. Everything Sunny knew said otherwise, in fact. He could not even summon her and let her be, which would be an illusion of freedom… because his new Shadow was a murderous psychopath whom he could not in good conscience unleash upon the world.  
  
Especially since she seemed hellbent on killing him in particular.  
  
So, unless Sunny kept Slayer… his only other option was to destroy her.  
  
But he was not ready to do that yet.  
  
Laying on the floor, Sunny sighed and stared at the ceiling.  
  
Then, he turned his head and looked at his left hand.  
  
There, a sharp piece of bone was still held.  
  
It was all that remained from the ivory fang of a colossal Soul Serpent whose skeleton lay among the black dunes of the Shadow Realm like a white mountain chain.  
  
This piece of bone had destroyed both the shadow of Condemnation and the slayer of the Shadow Realm.  
  
Technically, this was his final gain.  
  
As Sunny considered what to do with the piece of bone, he heard a door opening somewhere above, and gentle light suddenly reached into the darkness of the silent basement.