2453 Ex Nihilo  
  
When Sunny left the psychiatric hospital, the world was still being pelted by rain. The sky was discharging a seemingly endless deluge оf water, as if wishing to drown the city below.  
  
The gutters were overflowing, and the pedestrians were clinging to the sides of the streets, afraid to be given a cold shower by the cars that rushed by.  
  
Looking up, Sunny closed his eyes and offered his face to the rain, feeling the flowing water washing away the scent of blood from his nostrils.  
  
'At least the city will be cleaner because of the rain.'  
  
But then, there would be heat and humidity. The heat nevеr reached the roots of the city, though — there, in the damp darkness, everything that the water had washed away would begin to rot. The rot would give birth to vast swarms of vermin…  
  
Standing there with his eyes closed, Sunny smiled.  
  
'Swarms of vermin, huh.'  
  
As if this city had not already been infested by the worst kind of vermin of them all.  
  
People.  
  
Human vermin thrived in dark places, too, and just like trash, they were thoroughly rotten away from the light.  
  
Shaking his head, he walked to his car across the puddles. As he did, the image of the laughing woman with vermilion eyes surfaced in his mind. Why did he feel like he had seen her somewhere?  
  
Considering the usual clientele of the hospital, she had to be a scion of a wealthy family. Sunny rarely brushed sides with people like that, so he struggled to imagine where they would have met… unless, of course, he had seen her in a nightmare.  
  
A person with vibrant red eyes was exactly like something he would dream of. But how would a woman he had never met end up in his dreams?  
  
'I wonder whom she wanted me to kill.'  
  
Sunny sighed.  
  
Wealthy people usually ended up in an asylum for two reasons — either their family wanted to get rid оf them, or they were junkies. Considering the woman's age and unhinged behavior, the latter was more likely. Granted, she could have been drugged up as a result of being put in a psychiatric hospital, not the other way around… but that was none of his business.  
  
'Find Athena?'  
  
Wasn't Athena some kind of pagan goddess? Where would he even find someone like that?  
  
'Come on. You are not seriously thinking about what some crazy lunatic said, are you?'  
  
Sunny pursed his lips as he climbed into his car.  
  
He was pretty sure that he was hallucinating again — that was probably the reason the woman's eyes seemed vividly red. Insomnia and sleeping pills made it hard for him to differentiate dreams from reality sometimes, and the sight of blood was an old trigger.  
  
So, did he really have ground to stand on when calling someone a lunatic?  
  
As he was turning the key in the ignition, his phone rang. Glancing at the cracked and shattered screen, he smiled darkly and took the call.  
  
"Yes. Yeah… what, did he expect to get rid of me so easily? Sorry to disappoint, then. I'll be thеre today."  
  
Then, he paused for a moment, his tone changing subtly.  
  
"So, there's a new body… my, my, my. It is as if someone wanted to welcome me back."  
  
Ending the call and throwing the phone on the seat, he looked forward with a grim expression.  
  
"...Wait just a little bit more, bastard. I'll find you."  
  
The car growled quietly and sped away, wading through the rain.  
  
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"You must have really lost your mind, Detective. No, you really are crazy. How the hell did you pass the psych evaluation? Hey, you little shit. Look at me. Am I a joke to you?"  
  
Sunny, who was sitting in the office of the Homicide Division's Captain, looked at the grizzled old man in front of him and smiled.  
  
"A bit, yes."  
  
The man stared at him in shock.  
  
"What did you just say? Hey, Sunny… I could have put your crazy ass in prison for the stunt you pulled off back then. You know that, right? Bastard, you are only sitting here right now because of my respect for the former captain, who held you in high regard. What did she see in you, I have no idea, but I am in charge now. So, you are going to treat me with respect. Do you understand?"  
  
Sunny nodded.  
  
"I said that you are, indeed, a bit of a joke to me. I don't know that you could have put me in prison. And yes, I understand."  
  
He regarded the new captain somberly.  
  
The man was a veteran of the Mirage City Police… but he had been put in charge of the Homicide Division recently, and it was not for a stellar track record or capability. It was because the new captain was a man who knew his place and was trusted to make life easier for the higher-ups.  
  
In other words, he knew how to look the other way when needed. The man was not always corrupt, but he could be when orders to be corrupt came from above.  
  
Back then, Sunny had indeed made a mess that could have landed him in prison. However, that case was an extremely public one, and getting rid of him would have spelled a political nightmare. So, this aging man was put in the freshly empty seat of the captain and told to make the noise go away quietly. So even if he had wanted to get rid of Sunny permanently, he couldn't have.  
  
Sunny did not care one way or the other, though.  
  
"Well, anyway, I'll say it again. The body that was discovered by the river this morning? Put me in charge of that case, please… sir."  
  
The old man ground his teeth.  
  
"Why the hell would I give that case to you, of all people?! Are you positively insane, you little fiend?!"  
  
Sunny stared at him for a few moments, making the Captain shiver slightly, then grinned.  
  
"I am not insane. I have a paper to prove that I'm not, in fact. As to why you'll put me on that case — you know the answer as well as I do… sir. It's because, unlike the rest of your more compliant subordinates, I will actually solve it. You must be being pressured real bad to catch the bastard by now, aren't you? Once the press catches wind that there's a seventh victim, that pressure will only grow."  
  
The captain looked at him somberly.  
  
Mirage City was a diseased place at the best of times, but lately, it had been plagued by a new, vile malady...  
  
That malady was a demented, but insidious serial killer who left mutilated bodies in his wake while avoiding capture like a ghost.  
  
The Nihilist.