1471 Terror

[Your shadow is complete.]

Sunny let out a hoarse sigh and uttered a stifled curse. He was standing on one knee, pressing his fist against the stone floor of the tower. His face was pale as that of a ghost, contorted in a pained grimace.

The terrifying agony of having a new Shadow Core from in the depths of his souls was slowly subsiding.

He had risen to a new Class.

This was not the first time Sunny had gone through the familiar torment, but the sudden torrent of shadow fragments caught him entirely by surprise. He did not pass out from the pain, or even fell down... but it was far from pleasant.

'Gods... what happened?'

Standing up with a groan, he swayed slightly and summoned the runes.

Name: Sunless.

True Name: Lost from Light.

Rank: Ascended.

Class: Terror.

Shadow Fragments: [7/6000].

Sunny stared at the shimmering runes silently.

'Terror...'

He inhaled deeply.

It took him a few moments to come to terms with what he was looking at. There was no denying it, indeed — Sunny was a Terror now. A creature of dreadful power, second only to the calamitous Titans.

The elation of having become stronger — much stronger, and just when he desperately needed strength as well — was mixed with pain and confusion.

'How?'

Sunny raised his head and looked at the charred remains of Wind Flower's deathbed. The wooden frame was gone, replaced by a scattering

of embers. The stones were covered by soot. The beautiful Saint herself had become ash, erased from existence by his blade and the furious conflagration of divine flames.

A dull ache grasped his heart.

'Her gift...'

The [Dream Flower] had not been a natural Memory... that, Sunny was sure of. He did not know how Wind Flower could have influenced the Spell to make sure that he received it, but she had. The gift she had given him in the dream had become reality, containing the very essence of her Transcendent soul.

But still...

Sunny was unique among the Awakened because of his status as a shadow. Unlike most of his peers, he absorbed shadow fragments directly from those who died by his blade, as opposed to receiving them from soul shards. While there were some advantages to this situation, there were also drawbacks.

For one, killing creatures weaker than him was all but useless to Sunny. He also did not receive a portion of the soul fragments his enemy had accumulated when killing other Awakened.

That portion could be as little as zero if the murdered Awakened was inexperienced, or surpass a hundred soul fragments if they had fully saturated their core. Of course, the difference in Ranks also played a role.

Sunny assumed that Wind Flower's Transcendent soul core had long been fully saturated. Therefore, if a Master like him killed the beautiful Saint, they would have received twice the amount — at least two hundred soul fragments.

However, he had received more. Much more.

The last time Sunny had checked, he was still more than two thousand shadow fragments away from becoming a Terror. So... he had not just received a portion of Wind Flower's power. He had received all of it, with not a single drop wasted, and then a few hundred fragments on top of it.

She had put all of herself into the [Dream Flower]. She had turned her entire soul into a parting gift, so that he could inherit as much power from her as possible. She must have even sacrificed whatever Memories still remained in her Soul Sea after the bitter defeat in Verge, just so that

Sunny could become a Terror before facing Undying Slaughter and Devouring Beast in battle. How had Wind Flower been able to create the beautiful Memory? How had she known so much about him and his Aspect? Sunny had no answers.

Perhaps the Mad Prince had told her...

He stared at the smoldering embers of the incinerated bed for a few moments and sighed.

After a few moments of silence, Sunny whispered:

"Thank you."

Lowering his head, he remained still for a while, and then glanced at his shadows.

There were six of them now, all staring back at him silently. Gloomy, happy, creepy, haughty, naughty... and the new guy.

The sixth shadow was just like the other five, but also different. At first glance, it seemed the least eccentric of them. The new guy appeared rather normal and laidback... friendly, even.

But, for whatever reason, Sunny felt a cold chill run down his spine at the sight of it.

There was something eerie about the new shadow. It was as if its outward normalcy was hiding something — a deep, dark ocean of utter, unhinged, unbridled madness. The friendly demeanor was just a thin, fragile veil obscuring the demented depths of its dire and dangerous lunacy.

Sunny let out a long sigh.

"You... you are absolutely crazy, aren't you?"

The crazy shadow scratched the back of its head, twitched, shrugged, and laughed maniacally. Then, it abruptly returned to being normal and friendly. Only its fingers continued to tremble slightly, as if it was barely holding itself back from exploding into a storm of murderous frenzy.

Sunny closed his eyes for a moment.

'Well. Makes sense, really.'

Did it only seem that way, or was the crazy shadow standing a little closer to him than it had a moment ago?

He shook his head.

"Great. Back to your posts, then. Keep observing the forest... oh, and Gloomy. Show the new guy the ropes."

He was certain that the happy, haughty, and naughty shadows would not be able to handle their unhinged younger sibling. The creepy guy, meanwhile... why, Sunny could just see him becoming the crazy newcomer's admiring minion.

The gloomy shadow, though, would have no problem taming the lunatic. Gloomy was the true terror among his helpers... after spending one day with the original shadow, the new guy would not dare to create trouble.

Sunny almost felt pity for the sixth shadow.

...Said terror, meanwhile, glowered at him for a few moments, then shook its head contemptuously and beckoned the crazy guy to follow.

Soon, the shadows disappeared, leaving him alone.

Sunny lingered for a while, then took a few steps back and sat on the floor. Leaning his back against the wall, he looked at the smoldering embers with a hollow expression.

It was already a new day... the first new day Aletheia's Island had seen in countless years. Somewhere outside the walls of the tall tower, the dreadful prisoners of the island were busy slaughtering each other.

Soon, Sunny's companions would wake up. And then...

Then, the last act of this vicious play would begin.