1592 Humble Shopkeeper

As the city was slowly waking up, Sunny finished his coffee and leaned back, enjoying his last moments of peace. He did not have a lot of regular customers, but there were some. They were probably going to start arriving soon, which meant that he would be busy for the next few hours.

Before that, however…

He glanced at his shadow, his gaze becoming distant for a moment.

Then, a familiar voice whispered into his ear:

[You have slain a Great Demon.]

[Your shadow grows stronger.].

It was his own voice.

Sunny brushed his fingers across the black bracelet on his left wrist and slowly exhaled. The bracelet was a Memory he had created a while back… it was a crude knockoff of the Spell, replacing some of its simplest functions. Announcing his kills was one of them.

He shifted slightly.

'That… went better than expected.'

He had just killed a Great Demon.

Well, technically, it was his other self that had done it. His avatars were not beholden to the maximum range of Shadow Control, so there was a vast distance between them.

Currently, Sunny was simultaneously in three separate locations. His original body was here in Bastion, enjoying a peaceful life in the company of the gloomy shadow — he had kept that guy so that people had no reason to ask why he was walking around without a shadow at all. His second self was incarnated by the happy shadow, keeping an eye on Rain. His last avatar was far away, in one of the most dangerous regions of the Dream Realm, incarnated by the haughty shadow.

Haughty, naughty, creepy, and crazy were together. Saint, Fiend, Serpent, and Nightmare were with them, as well. Unlike the first two, the third Sunny knew no peace. He wielded the most power of the three and spent his days in eternal darkness, often clashing with dreadful abominations.

Of course, the three of them were actually one person. So Sunny had been enjoying a peaceful morning in Bastion, accompanying Rain, and battling the Great Demon at the same time, all along.

But he had grown good at compartmentalizing over the years, allowing him to at least pretend to live three separate lives.

So that thing is finally dead, huh.

It had taken him almost a month of meticulous preparations to finally attack the abomination in its lair. Sunny had expected to sustain heavy injuries, but the battle ended well. With the demon's death, there was no one left to challenge him in the immediate vicinity of the temple…

Sunny lingered for a moment, then summoned the runes. A field of familiar symbols appeared in front of him… the runes themselves might have been the same, but they looked a bit differently. He had designed this whole thing himself, after all, tying the enchantment to his memory, perception, and the black bracelet. So, Sunny had taken liberties to change the look and feel of the field of runes to his taste.

The runes read:

Name: Sunless.

True Name: —

Rank: Transcendent.

Class: Terror.

Shadow Cores: [6/7].

Shadow Fragments: [1591/6000].

His True Name had been lost in the Tomb of Ariel, and he could not earn another while banished from fate. As for his shadow fragments… seeing the measly number, which had been very slow to increase in the past four years, made Sunny a bit disheartened. But there was nothing he could do about it.

He had slaughtered countless Nightmare Creatures after becoming a Saint. Their blood would have been enough to fill the lake surrounding Bastion… the problem was, his soul only grew stronger when he killed Corrupted and Great abominations, which were not that easy to find, and harder still to survive.

So, he had only managed to slay a mere thousand of those, or so. Of course, if anyone heard Sunny being disappointed about only killing a thousand Corrupted and Great Nightmare Creatures, they would have slapped him across the face. But for him, it was a sign that he would not be able to become a Titan anytime soon — unless he found some shadow creatures to hunt, at least.

Sadly, Sunny had not discovered any in all these years. It seemed that shadow creatures had gone entirely extinct during or soon after the Doom War. Come to think of it, discounting Fiend, he had never encountered a corrupted shadow creature. Were there none, or had they remained somewhere far away, in a place that he wasn't able to find yet?

Shaking his head, he glanced back at the runes.

Memories: [Silver Bell], [Puppeteer's Shroud], [Extraordinary Rock], [Endless Spring], [Weaver's Mask], [Shadow Lantern], [Shadow Chair], [Overpriced Saddle], [Weaver's Needle], [Nebulous Mantle], [Handy Bracelet], [Quintessence Pearl].

There was no surprise there. Sunny made his living by creating Memories, but strangely enough, he was not in a hurry to create many Memories for himself. He did not need to seek power in them, because he himself possessed tremendous power. With Onyx Mantle and Soul Serpent, most of his needs were met.

Which was not to say that Sunny did not plan to forge himself new equipment in the future. It was just that what he wanted to create was too ambitious to be crafted in a hurry, and he had only opened up his shop a year ago.

For now, the only Memories he crafted for himself was the [Quintessence Pearl], which was basically an improved version of the destroyed Essence Pearl, and the [Handy Bracelet] — the poor replacement for the Spell. He also modified Ananke's Mantle a bit, renaming it the Nebulous Mantle in the process.

The Quintessence Pearl and the Handy Bracelet were simply for convenience, but the last one was of vital importance for him. After all, it was the Nebulous Mantle that allowed him to live in Bastion, pretending to be a mere Master. If people found out that the humble shopkeeper was a Saint… things would become complicated.

Sunny turned back to the runes.

Echoes: —

Shadows: [Onyx Saint], [Soul Serpent], [Nightmare], [Shadow Fiend], [Marvelous Mimic].

The [Marvelous Mimic] was what Sunny had called the latest of his Shadows, which was created from the modified Covetous Coffer and the shadow of the Mordant Mimic. It was the only Shadow that he kept with himself in Bastion instead of sending it to his third avatar.

The reason was that he needed it. It was next to him right now, actually…

The unassuming brick cottage where his shop was located was, in fact, not a cottage. It was the Marvelous Mimic, who had taken the shape of a picturesque house. Its interior existed in a separate dimension, which allowed Sunny to hide a lot of things below ground.

His house could also walk, swim, shapeshift, devour intruders, and produce soul coins. Among other things.

Sunny had lost his home in NQSC after his existence was erased from the tapestry of fate, so he made sure that his new home would be able to follow him wherever he went.

Smiling faintly, he glanced back at the runes.

They read:

Attributes: [Lord of Shadows], [Flame of Divinity], [Blood Weave], [Bone Weave], [Soul Weave], [Onyx Shell], [Fateless].

The [Master of Shadows] had evolved into the [Lord of Shadows] during his Transcendence. Its description was succinct…

[Shadows recognize you as their ruler.]

With it, all his Abilities had been strengthened and enhanced. The range of his Shadow Control was now north of forty kilometers, and he could extend his shadow sense just as far. He could remain the form of an incorporeal shadow indefinitely, and cover great distances with each Shadow Step. The depths and intricacy of what he could manifest wild shadows into had also increased tremendously.

In short… it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call Sunny a demigod.

Or rather, to call his third avatar a demigod. This version of Sunny was just a modest Master with a Utility Aspect who ran a cafe and sold Memories from time to time. All people could call him was… harmless.

Speaking of running a cafe, the customers would be arriving soon.

Sunny smiled and took a last look at the runes.

Aspect: [Shadow Slave].

Aspect Rank: Divine.

Innate Ability: [Shadow Bond].

Master: —

Aspect Abilities: [Shadow Control], [Shadow Step], [Shadow Manifestation], [Shadow Incarnation].

Aspect Legacy: [Shadow Dance].

Flaw: [Clear Conscience].

There was another string at the very end of the field, as well. It read:

…Citadel: Nameless Temple.

Those words did not mean that Sunny was anchored in a Citadel called the Nameless Temple.

They meant that he owned it. It was his Citadel, which he had personally conquered and claimed.

That was where his third avatar was, and that was the reason he had to kill that Great Demon. After becoming the lord of a Citadel, Sunny also became rather territorial.

No Nightmare Creature was allowed to exist in the vicinity of his temple, because there was already an apex predator living there. Preparing for the moment when the Death Zone turned into…

Well, anyway. That was for his third avatar to worry about. This Sunny had nothing to do with it.

Dismissing the runes, he stood up and stretched.

It was time to open the shop.