1650 Frozen City

Sunny did not know what he expected to see in Falcon Scott. He didn't even know why he felt compelled to enter it... and yet, he did enter it, walking along the silent streets with a distant expression on his pale face. He came here precisely because he didn't want to, reluctant see the monument to his failure. He owed to himself, and to those people whom he had failed to protect, to witness their final resting place in all its horrid glory.

Perhaps it was simply because now that no one remembered him, Sunny wanted to at least remember himself. Even the things he would have wanted to forget.

The city was pretty much exactly like he had imagined.

It was a frozen graveyard. The fatal cold of the Winter Beast's blizzard had killed everyone in what seemed like mere moments. The corpses were hidden inside the buildings or buried under snow, so the city seemed utterly empty.

They had not suffered, at least...

Some buildings had collapsed in the past months under the weight of the ice. Others stood like colossal gravestones... or frigid mausoleums, maybe, for those who had perished inside. Strangely enough, no Nightmare Creatures seemed to have entered the city to feast on the corpses. It was as though the Winter Beast had marked this place as its territory.

Sunny passed a few familiar structures... the barracks where the Irregulars had been stationed, the government compound, the dormitory tower where Beth and Professor Obel had lived. His mind was flooded with memories, which only made his mental state deteriorate further.

It was a strange thing, to be alone.

Now that Sunny was alone, erased from existence, he felt no compulsion to control his emotions or maintain the illusion of normalcy. There was no one to witness him fall apart, anyway, and nobody to get the wrong impression of him. There were no tethers connecting him to the world, yes... but, as it turned out, those same tethers had been like supports that held his mind together.

He must have looked quite disturbing from the side.

Only now that Sunny was truly and utterly alone did he realize how much of his habits and behavior had been dictated by the need to blend in with his environment... with human society. Now, he didn't have to bother with maintaining acceptable expressions, keeping improper feelings from his gaze, and saying the right words.

Or saying anything at all, really.

'Maybe I should do all these things, anyway.

He suspected that giving in to this utter freedom would make him slip into some sort of derangement eventually, but couldn't bother to care.

Finally, he reached the crumbled remains of the elty wall and spent some time gazing at the snowy fleld beyond.

Climbing over the wreckage, Sunny jumped down, turned his body light enough to walk on the snow, and left the ghost of Falcon Scott behind.

This was probably the last time he would ever see It. But that... was fine.

It was for the best, really.

Some time later, he reached the place where the last soldiers of the First Evacuation Army had died, killed by the deathly cold of the unnatural snowstorm. Their frozen figures were still there, those closest laying on the ground, those who had endured longer frozen like ice sculptures.

His motionless face seemed frozen, too.

He spent a while among them, looking at the horizon. The Winter Beast had retreated into the heart of the landmass, but the signs of its passage remained. Today, Antarctica looked much more like it had once, frigid and encased in ice. It was darkly fitting.

Sunny was still consumed by his thoughts when something moved under the snow, and a hideous creature lunged at him from below. He did not move, but shadows around him stirred and shot forward with incredible speed, catching the abomination in the air.

A moment later, It was gruesomely torn apart, a rain of hot blood falling on Sunny like crimson dew.

His expression didn't change, but his eyes gleamed darkly.

'Strange!

It was still strange, to kill a Nightmare Creature and not here the familiar voice of the Spell announce its Rank, Class, and name.

The snow all around him moved and exploded, dozens of grotesque bodies rushing to rip him to shreds. There was a whole swarm of abominations here... Sunny finally moved, a sinister smile contorting his face.

He was so fast that it almost seemed as if he simply disappeared in one place and appeared in the other. There was no weapon in his hand, and no need for one, either. The gauntlets of the Onyx Mantle were more than enough.

Falling into the savage battle style of the Barrow Wraiths, Sunny crushed the skull of one of the abominations with his bare fist. A split second later, he was near another, piercing its chest with his hand and crushing its heart. In a blink of an eye, he was already somewhere else, brutally tearing a monster's jaws apart.

Sunny fought ruthlessly and methodically, destroying the Nightmare Creatures in the most swift and brutal fashion... no, it couldn't even be called a fight. He wasn't a fighter right now - he was a butcher, or a ruthless executioner at best.

It took him no more than twelve seconds to obliterate the entire swarm. By the time he was done, the blood covering his onyx armor had already turned to ice.

The Nightmare Creatures were dead... but not all of them.

He had left one alive.

Now, the massive beast was writhing on the snow, struggling to burrow into it as shadows held it in place. There was no escape from Sunny, but the abomination was still desperately trying to run away.

Turning his head, Sunny studied the ugly creature and then took a step toward it.

"Where are you going? Who allowed you to leave?"

Approaching the abomination, he crouched beside it and stared into its frenzied eyes with a smile.

The creature's terrifying maw was less than a meter away from his face, but Sunny didn't care.

"You chose a wrong day to exist, wretch. Ah, but it's for the best. It's exactly what I need!"

He outstretched one hand, sensing the Soul Serpent slither forth. Soon, a torrent of darkness flowed from his fingers onto the snow, forming into a massive Shadow.

That Shadow was not a great serpent, however. Instead, it took the form of a towering creature that had two stumpy legs, an emaciated, hunched torso and disproportionately long, multi-jointed hands two of them, each ending with a set of horrifying bone claws, and another two, these ones shorter, ending with almost human-like fingers.

Its body was covered in ragged inky-black fur, and there were five glossy black eyes on its head. Beneath them, a terrible maw crowding with razor-sharp teeth was half-open, as though in anticipation. Viscous drool was running down the creature's chin and dripping into the snow.

The most unnerving part, though, were the strange shapes endlessly moving, worm-like, under the creature's skin.

It was the Mountain King. Or rather, a version of the Mountain King that looked as if it had been dipped into a pool of liquid darkness.

Sunny's cold smile widened a little, his dark eyes gleaming with sinister will.

"Go on. This one will be the first."

Serpent took a heavy step forward and grabbed the struggling abomination with its powerful hand. Then, one of the worm-like larvae moving under his skin crawled from under his claws and burrowed into the monster's flesh.

The Nightmare Creature froze for a moment, and then let out a chilling wail.

A moment later, its body contorted in a terrible convulsion,

Sunny grinned darkly,

"...But not the last, No, not at all.”