2206 Her Pride  
  
Morgan was almost certain that Soul Reaper, Raised by Wolves, and Nightingale had become aware of the loop. They did not seem quite capable of retaining their memories, at least not yet, but something — or someone — was informing them of what was going on at the start of each new day.  
  
The signs were subtle, but indisputable. Their reactions had changed subtly, and the words they spoke did not always match what they had usually said before. There was also that one time whеn Raised by Wolves had disappeared somewhere for almost an hour, then returned with a deep sense of discomfort hiding in the depths of her hazel eyes.  
  
Morgan noted all these changes, but stayed silent about them.  
  
It was not that difficult for someone locked in this loop to become aware of it. After аll, it was merely a bubble of repeating time — vast enough to encompass the ruins of True Bastion and the surrounding lands, but relatively small in the grand scheme of things. Time continued to flow outside of the bubble, and the world continued to spin.  
  
...If the Dream Realm even spun around an orbit, of course.  
  
Morgan was familiar with events that had taken place inside the Tomb of Ariel — not the least of all because of the strangely detailed exploration report published by an anonymous author, whom Clan Valor had failed to find despite great efforts. The hourglass enchantment functioned similarly to the Great River created by the Demon of Dread, but on a much smaller scale.  
  
In any case, while communicating with the outside world was difficult, it was not impossible. Morgan herself was receiving news of how the war proceeded in Godgrave from time to time... her brother probably had a vessel or two hidden somewhere outside the bubble, without a doubt. That was most likely how he was able to retain the memories of their previous battles, even.  
  
So, the government Saints could have very well received a communication from the outside world themselves — either a repeating one that informed them of the situation every day, or simply something that stayed with them as they returned to the past.  
  
In fact, it was not even necessary for the information to come from the outside. Mordret himself could have contacted them, striking some kind of deal.  
  
Morgan smiled faintly.  
  
Was that it? Was she going to be betrayed? Had he already infected her subordinates — not by consuming their souls, but simply by convincing them with sweet words?  
  
Betrayal was always a possibility. Every person had a key... some could be bought, some could be coerced. Some could be deceived, while some only needed to be given an opportunity to stab others in the back. Morgan had been on both sides of this equation enough times to know that trusting anyone fully was a foolish sentiment.  
  
That said, she could not quite imagine Soul Reaper or Raised by Wolves striking a deal with Mordret after fighting side by side with the surviving Saints of the House of Night for so long. Least of all Nightingale, the inflexible bore...  
  
So, their newfound awareness had most likely come from her dear sister, Changing Star. They had been members of her cohort once, after all, and although life led them to different paths, a connection like that was not easily broken by political affiliation.  
  
So... what was Nephis scheming?  
  
Suddenly, betrayal seemed even more inevitable.  
  
Morgan chuckled and looked at Nightingale with an amused smile.  
  
"No, I am not one of the Others. Come eat, everyone. The food is getting cold."  
  
Betrayal or not... she did not really care. So, Morgan pretended to be oblivious to their tense gazes and took the pan off the fire, ready to scoop the stew into the bowls.  
  
They ate their food, like they always did. And then, they prepared for battle, like they always did.  
  
And then, the moonlit ruins became a hellscape where monsters and demigods tore each other apart in a mad feast of destruction and blood, like they always did.  
  
The gargantuan forms of Typhaon and Knossos moved across the shallow lake. Streams of starlight rained from the night sky, devastating the land. The titanic form of a steel goddess plummeted from the slopes of the mountain and landed in the drowned city below, making the world quake. A cold mist was spreading from within the ruins, and the haunting song of a night dragon permeated the dark sky.  
  
Raising her sword, Morgan struggled with an overwhelming sense of déjà vu.  
  
Why was she persisting? Surely, this senseless, never-ending slaughter was too much for a sane person to endure.  
  
Her desire to win was nothing more than a malignant sense of obligation. Her desire to prove herself to others had turned to ash a long time ago, after she learned that those who would deem her unworthy were themselves not worthy of casting judgment on her.  
  
Her desire to earn the approval of her father... to not become a disappointment in his cold, uncaring eyes... had lost all meaning as well, at some point.  
  
Why was that?  
  
As Mordret's vessels were destroyed one after another, and her Saints fell one after another, their blood painting the ruins red, Morgan took a deep breath.  
  
Was it because she had become disappointed in him, as well?  
  
Probably, yes. Not that he would carе.  
  
So why was she fighting?  
  
A dark grin twisted Morgan's lips.  
  
Well... was it not simply because she liked it?  
  
Her desire to win might not have been as powerful as her brother's overwhelming, hate-fueled passion... but she had her pride, as well.  
  
She hated to lose.  
  
And that was reason enough for her to persist and fight fоr these ruins until the sky itself broke apart, and the pieces of the shattered moon fell down like a rain of fire.  
  
Simply because she was too stubborn to give up, and knew how to appreciate a good battle.  
  
A good war.  
  
'Yeah... I like it. It's nice.'  
  
Morgan was going to stop her brother — not for anyone else, but solely for herself.  
  
Pale moonlight reflected from the blade of her sword as Morgan jumped from the ruined wall to face Mordret...  
  
Like she always did.