2243 Embers and Ash  
Nephis dissolved into pain for a few brief moments…  
Each moment lasted аn eternity.  
The agony of her soul cores being torn apart was unfathomable. Knowing that she had only one chance, she did not hold back and went further than she had ever gone before, destroying not one, but six of them at the same time to fuel her fire.  
As a boundless ocean of furious flame that had been contained within her soul broke free with a deafening roar, she struggled with all her being to channel it instead of being consumed by it.  
She willed it into submission.  
The incandescent ray of white radiance fell into the billowing snow, and her shattered soul burned, mutilated, both enveloped in brilliant flame and on the verge of being extinguished. Humans were not meant to possess more than one soul core, but even if someone did, losing six of them would have instantly and utterly obliterated them…  
But Neph's soul was special.  
The web of cracks running through the fractured battlefield ignited with soft white radiance, illuminated from below.  
The explosion was simply too devastating, causing not only the shattered bone plain, but all of Godgrave to quake. It was dozens of times more powerful than the explosion that had destroyed Twilight, and far more powerful than even the terrible conflagration she summoned to destroy the First Seeker.  
Nephis had been merely a Master back then, after all. She was a Transcendent now, and so, the soul she was burning to fuel the flame was Transcendent as well.  
That was why Nephis had pushed Ki Song into the chasm. Had she caused the explosion on the surface and not in the Hollows, the resulting shockwave would have annihilated both great armies.  
Instead, it was the ancient jungle that burned.  
The Nightmare Creatures there — those who had been powerful enough to survive the lethal snowstorm — were wounded and weakened…  
They had been powerful enough to survive the snow, but they did not survive the flame.  
And as they died,a furious torrent of soul fragments poured into Neph's crumbling soul, mending it.  
She screamed as new soul cores were formed to replace the old ones.  
The damage dealt to her soul was too grievous, though, and she was still being ravaged by the Queen's power. So, these cores shattered as well, and new ones were formed in their place.  
Nephis felt like she was dying and being remade from the flames in an endless, harrowing cycle of rebirth. She lost herself in the disorienting torment of it all, feeling something inside of her being melted and fused by the immolating heat.  
Below her, the charred remains of the ancient jungle were like an incandescent hell. Black smoke veiled the vast chasm, glowing with angry white light. It seemed like nothing could have survived down there… surely, Ki Song would have perished…  
But even as Nephis felt that brittle hope, she knew that she had failed.  
Because the Spell had never whispered into her ear, announcing the death of the Queen.  
So, when colossal tendrils of smoke rose to catch her, Nephis was not surprised. Just… resentful.  
Still reeling and overcome by agony, she dodged and fell from the sky, landing on the surface of the ancient bone gracelessly. The winds howled, blowing the smoke away, and immense streams of blood were revealed below it, twisting as they coalesced into a vast crimson river and dove down.  
Nephis groaned.  
The Queen's titanic vessel had been destroyed, at least.  
A melodious laughter resounded above the fractured bone plain, making the brilliant radiance of Neph's spirit form dim a little.  
"Stunning… truly, littlе Nephis. You are so stunning. It is such a shame…"  
Nephis smiled bitterly.  
'...She's hurt.'  
It seemed like Ki Song was unscathed, but it had not escaped Neph's notice that countless puppets had turned to ash… and that the great гiver of blood stayed at a distance instead of drowning her. The Queen was definitely hurt by the explosion.  
Of course,she had not been hurt nearly as terribly as Nephis was.  
As if to echo her somber thoughts, the Queen's voice resounded once again, turning cold and ominous:  
"Sadly… it's time we end this charade. I'll still have to deal with Anvil after I am done with you, Changing Star — and it needs to happen swiftly, lest too many of my people die."  
Nephis pushed away the pain and straightened, looking at the glistening river of blood with somber resignation.  
"Don't pretend like you care."  
She had revealed her ace and accomplished nothing. So, the Queen would abandon caution and unleash her full power now, too — after all, she knew what her enemy was caρable of already.  
How terrible could it be?  
As Nephis watched, fury burning in her heart, the rivеr of blood rippled.  
And then, something eerie happened, making her take a step back.  
The remaining Titan puppets — all of them, including those that had been brought down by the prisoners of the Nameless Temple and the storm of swords — all followed the fate of the first, decaying into a flood of appalling, viscous crimson liquid.  
It flowed across the bone plain like a tide, and then formed a new vessel around the great river of blood.  
If Neph's partial Transformation possessed human eyes, they would have widened now, betraying a hint of stunned disbelief.  
A new, terrifying flesh golem slowly rose above the bone plain, easily dwarfing the previous one in size. The creature Nephis had fought was titanic, but this one… this one was simply colossal, towering above the fractured battlefield like a red mountain. It was at least a kilometer high, looking down at Nephis with an eerie, eyeless face.  
Nephis had been like a fly in front of the first of the Queen's vessels… in front of this one, she was like a speck of dust.  
How could a speck of dust defeat a mountain?  
Her radiant figure rose into the air, burning with blinding light.