2436 Lost Heaven  
  
A bright star ignited in the dark sky above Bastion. The people - those of them who were still on the streets, busy with fruitful endeavors or simply being festive after a hard day of work - glanced up in surprise, their eyes igniting with wonder.  
  
The star fell from the sky, growing bigger and brighter. Soon enough, it was like a flaming white meteor plummeting from the lightless heavens to the ground. Its light illuminated the night, chasing the darkness away and making the full moon shining high above seem pale in comparison. The silver radiance of the moon could not compete with the incinerating white glow of the falling star. The night could not compete with it, either.  
  
For a moment, it was as if the sun had risen above Bastion in the middle of the night, bringing with itself the stark beauty of daylight. Then, before people had the time to get scared, the flaming white meteor strike the surface of the lake.  
  
There was a blinding flash, and a gigantic fountain of boiling water rose into the air, evaporating into a vast cloud as it did. The entire lake shone for a moment, as if illuminated from within, and then grew dark once more. Just like that, the falling star disappeared without a trace.  
  
The waters of the lake surged and rippled, its surface growing restless - the perfect disc of the full moon reflected on its surface was shattered and erased, replaced by scattered fragments of silver light.  
  
On the other side of the reflection, Nephis shot out from the dark abyss of the lake and soared into the eerie sky of the True Bastion, her radiant wings unfolding to shine blindingly in the pale radiance of the shattered moon. She rose high above the vast ruins of the great castle, looking down as white flames danced in her eyes, suffused her skin, and licked her hair. Her fiery gaze felt cold and ruthless. There was no mercy in that gaze, no hesitation, no doubt, no hope of salvation. Just a firm and inescapable promise of being burned to ash by the boundless tide of purifying flames. She regarded the ruins of True Bastion dispassionately.  
  
The broken castle had been reduced to rubble by the battle between Morgan and Mordret. The lake, which had run dry as a result of their drawn - out confrontation, was full of water once again, shimmering eerily in the silver light of the shattered moon. Deep cracks ran through the mountain on which the ruins of the castle lay, full of stagnant water and overgrown with scarlet moss. There was a creature waiting for her in the heart of the ruins. A shapeless mountain of gray flesh towered above the rubble, covered by moss and brimming with a hundred revolting limbs that rose from it like a harrowing forest. A frightening, eerie presence emanated from the grotesque creatures, making the light of the moon seem reluctant to touch it. As a result, the creature was surrounded by a shroud of darkness. The winds avoided it, as well, so nothing disturbed the dead silence enveloping the ruins. It was as if the world itself was trying to escape it, revolted and frightened by the ancient fiend.  
  
As Nephis looked, innumerable grotesque eyes suddenly revealed themselves on the grey mass of the Cursed Demon, opening to look back at her with a dreadful, frighteningly alien lack of emotion. She held its gaze for a few long seconds, then folded her wings and dove to the ground.  
  
Landing on the edge of the water, some distance away from the Nightmare Creature, Nephis took a deep breath and then headed in its direction with steady steps. Something peculiar happened then, though.  
  
There was a rustle, as if the ruins themselves let out a long sigh, and then, a distant voice resounded from the depths of the crumbling castle.  
  
"I had a dream."  
  
The voice spoke in a long-forgotten language, sounding eerily human despite its low and otherworldly timbre. Nephis continued to walk, her expression never changing. The voice spoke again, full of indescribable, faint emotion:  
  
"I dreamt of being whole again."  
  
The innumerable appalling eyеs moved faintly, peering into her soul.  
  
"I dreamt of the sun being kind again."  
  
An eerie note found its way into the distant voice, making the world shiver. "I dreamt of having wings again."  
The harrowing forest of skeletal limbs stirred, blackened and charred.  
  
"You are not the one who forced that hateful dream upon me. You are not the one who stole it from me, either. Are you?"  
  
Nephis continued to walk, offering no answer.  
  
"And yet, I cannot forgive you. Those wings of yours, so beautiful."  
  
The appalling eyes of the Cursed Demon grew darker, and its voice grew cold and insidious, full of malice so vast that it made Nephis halt for a moment.  
  
"Blood of the Sun. Have you come to burn me?"  
  
The mountain of grey flesh moved, rippling as pieces of ancient stone turned to dust under its enormous weight. A hollow, mad, frightening laughter resounded above the ruins.  
  
"Shall I extinguish you, then? Or shall I curse you? Shall I tell you how the Sun was destroyed, how our heavens burned, how the land of the Moon was swallowed by ash, how we all fell, one after another? Shall I help you become everlasting, ever-changing?"  
  
The voice whispered then, growing feeble and faint:  
  
"Like me."  
  
Walking forward with a sword in her hand, Nephis answered evenly:  
  
"I am not interested in talking to you, Nightmare Creature. Why waste our breaths?"  
  
The blade of the Blessing shone with a blinding light, turning white-hot and luminous.  
  
"All I am interested in is ending you. So, prepare to die."  
  
Raising her sword, Nephis pointed it at the Cursed Demon. She was a Supreme Titan whose Domain encompassed billions of souls. This creature was an old, broken, fallen god. What right did it have to curse her?  
  
A bitter smile twisted her lips.  
  
"Yes, I have come to burn you. I've come to destroy you. Unlike mine, your pain will be rapid. Be thankful."