2438 Concept of Humanity  
  
The blinding ray of pure white light struck the towering Nightmare Creature and was extinguished, denied the power to harm it, rather, vanishing without leaving a trace on the grey flesh of the Cursed Demon.  
  
Time and space themselves bent, allowing its enormous mass to draw near Nephis far more rapidly than it should have been able to. Her wings raised a hurricane, sending her flying back, out of the way of innumerable skeletal limbs that stretched forward, aiming to grab her into a deadly grip.  
  
The world that had let the Cursed Demon pass so rapidly resisted her movement, sapping her momentum and slowing her down. If not for the armor of the Will Nephis had forged for herself, she might not have been able to move at all.  
  
As it was, she barely avoided the harrowing forest of charred hands, slipping away between the Cursed Demon's fingers.  
  
Flying backward, she gritted her teeth.  
  
The Nightmare Creature had a hundred hands, but Nephis only had one sword.  
  
And even that sword had proven ineffective against the authority of the fallen god.  
  
The authority it possessed was too absolute in its ability to deny her. The ancient horror wielded it both as a shield and as a weapon, both as the lure and as the trap, as well, preventing the adversary from harming it while simultaneously refusing their ability to escape.  
  
Nephis frowned.  
  
No. her adversary was not simply wielding the authority of abjuration. It personified abjuration - the very concept of foreswearing something, thus negating its power and its very existence.  
  
That was what Will could accomplish when elevated to the very edge of being absolute.  
  
How would one fight against an absolute Will?  
  
Although Nephis did not know it yet, the technique Sunny would use in Ariel's Game was to channel and personify a concept that directly opposed the power of his adversary.  
  
However, the two of them were entirely different people, and what Sunny could achieve was not what Nephis could or should be striving to emulate. She had her own path to forge.  
  
Just then, the Cursed Demon's innumerable eyes locked on Neph's fleeting figure, their unfathomablе depths gleaming with a distressing notion.  
  
And a moment later, she felt her very existence beginning to grow faint.  
  
Because Abjuration was done playing with its food. Instead of resisting her attacks, the fiend simply chose to deny Nephis herself - to reject her existence, forcing the world into erasing her completely.  
  
'How do I resist a deity's Will?'  
  
It was a complicated question - a question that only a handful of people had been forced to ask themselves ever since the Nightmare Spell descended upon the world.  
  
To Nephis, though, the answer was easy. She simply had to break it with her own. She simply had to crush it.  
  
If the Nightmare Creature refused to burn, she had to burn it with more powerful flames.  
  
If it refused to be cut, she had to slash it with a sharper blade.  
  
If it refused to die. She simply had to convince death to take it.  
  
"Hey, Nightmare Creature."  
  
Nephis landed on the rubble and slid back, pushed almost to the edge of the water.  
  
Her eyes flared with distressing white radiance.  
  
"Do you think you can snuff me out that easily?"  
  
Her presence, which had grown faint, suddenly seemed clear, vast, and unfathomable.  
  
Abjuration might have been able to negate the existence of a Saint, of a weaker Sovereign, possibly. But Nephis ruled over and inspired all of humanity. To deny her existence, the creature would have had to erase all of mankind from existence first. To extinguish all of the innumerable stars that illuminated the vast heaven of her soul in an instant.  
  
She was Changing Star. the Star of Ruin. The goddess of humanity.  
  
Nephis did not like these words and had even taken measures to dissuade people from calling her by that title, as well as from worshipping her as a deity. But while she had not undergone Apotheosis yet, to some degree, there was truth to what some were saying.  
  
For all intents of purposes, she had become the personification of humanity. Her sword was the sword of all humans, and carried the weight of all their hopes and dreams.  
  
Of all their longing.  
  
Her flames were fueled by their desire.  
  
"How dare you deny me?"  
  
Snarling, Nephis dashed forward.  
  
The Blessing was strengthened by all of her Soul Flame, strengthened more than even her body and soul were due to its [Flame Conduit] trait. At the same time, its capacity to overwhelm the Will of Nightmare Creatures was further enhanced by the [Purifying Light] trait - the special quality of the shadowbound sword that made it especially lethal to those tainted by the Corruption.  
  
But, more importantly, it had become the vessel of her Will.  
  
And her Will was fueled by her desire to slay the Cursed Demon.  
  
Desire was the root of all virtues, no less, as well as of all sin. There was hardly a more potent source of willpower than passionate yearning.  
  
'Burn!'  
  
Gathering all of her Will into the tip of the blade, Nephis moved it in a downward slash - the same downward slash she had practiced myriads of times, until every minuscule detail of performing it flawlessly was absorbed into her very bones.  
  
And answering to her Will.  
  
The world burned.  
  
It burned brightly, the stone rubble melting and the dark lake boiling.  
  
But that was only the beginning. Because in the next moment, Nephis channeled her Will into speaking the Words, as well.  
  
A frightening Verse of linked True Names escaped from her lips, summoning fire and destruction upon the world. The intense white flames surged and roared, consuming the very fabric of existence.  
  
But Nephis was still not done.  
  
Releasing the confines of her mortal shell, she unleashed her true Transcendent form.  
  
A mass of white flame rose from the ground, easily as tall as the grotesque mountain of gray flash. The flame moved as if it possessed a life of its own, surging forward to meet the Cursed Demon.  
  
As it did, the mass of flames assumed the form of a radiant winged figure wielding a radiant blade.  
  
The giant blade woven out of pure white light fell, aiming to sever a dozen of the Abomination's severed limbs.  
  
The radiance of it all was so blinding that it seemed as if dawn had shone upon the shattered darkness of True Bastion.  
  
And, illuminated by that light, the Cursed Demon cowered, terrified by the memories of the ruthless destructive sky.  
  
Of course, naturally, it only faltered for a brief moment.