2191 Risk Management  
  
Cassie frowned, unable to follow the train of the Queen's thoughts.  
  
Had she not sаid that the Smile of Heaven's death was the root of the war? But now, it was Broken Sword's death?  
  
Cassie was still dazed due to having ingested Ki Song's blood. In her current state, even thinking was a difficult task.  
  
Eventually, she forced out a pale smile.  
  
"All your problems seemed to be solved, and you were free to shape the future as you saw fit. However, it does not look like any of you lived happily ever after."  
  
After all, Ki Song had to have ended up as a corpse somehow.  
  
The two puppets laughed.  
  
The Queen nodded with a smile.  
  
"Indeed. Well, it was to be expected... after all, how could we trust each other after betraying one of our own? What would stop us frоm perpetrating betrayal again? There was nothing holding us together anymore. Smile of Heaven was gone, and her ghost was gone as well, since Broken Sword had died. Anvil was wary of me —not because I was a threat, but simply because I had the potential to become a threat. And both of us were afraid of the Dreamspawn, that monster. Most importantly, we weren't really people anymore... we were entities, each responsible for a Domain."  
  
She paused.  
  
"Let's just say that large-scale systems are far less tolerant to risk. You can be reckless when you are only responsible for yourself... but what if you have a family to take care of? Would you allow yourself to be careless when the lives and well-being of your children are at stake? What if you are responsible for a million families? Ten million, a hundred million? Once one becomes a monarch, there's little difference between a threat and a potential threat. The mere promise of disaster is enough to take measures against the source."  
  
Thе Queen looked at Cassie and Seishan with pity.  
  
"Both of you have already tasted the burden of responsibility. But you know nothing, yet... ah, but I digress. The thing is, despite it all, we could have still worked out our differences. We even tried to remain civil, for a whilе. However, our attempts were destined to fail. Can you guess why?"  
  
Seishan frowned. Cassie remained silent for a bit, then said evenly:  
  
"Because of the Spell."  
  
Ki Song gave her an approving smile.  
  
"Indeed. I don't know whether it is by accident or by design, but the conflict between Supremes is woven into the very fabric of the Spell. After all, it grants us a way to grow the power of our Domains at a terrifying speed — the Citadels. However, the number of Citadels it creates is limited. So, the Domains of the carriers of the Spell must inevitably clash... it is as if it was meant to pit those who attained Supremacy against each other — so that a single, most vicious ruler was left in the end."  
  
She lingered for a few moments.  
  
"At first, we tried to build in peaceful coexistence. Each of us served to suppress the other... it was a circle of mutual responsibility, so to speak. The Dreamspawn held the heir of Valor hostage, Anvil had his sword hovering above my head, while I made sure that the Dreamspawn's name did not spread to too many minds. But that circle was swiftly broken. Because one who has the Will can never submit to being suppressed."  
  
The two puppets chuckled.  
  
"Anvil swiftly gave up on his son, almost as if he had never cared about him at all. I learned to escape the cage of my body, making the deterrent of his swords meaningless. And the Dreamspawn... the Dreamspawn secretly created a cabal of followers, making sure that his name could never be fully erased."  
  
Ki Song leaned back and sighed.  
  
"There was the issue of the remnants of the Immortal Flame clan, as well... you asked why we tried to eradicate them, Song of the Fallen. I will have to disappoint you, but there was no mysterious reason for it at all. It was simply cold logic — once you draw a sword against an enemy, you don't show your back to them until they are dead."  
  
There was no compassion on her face, but no particular cruelty either. Just the cold, ruthless pragmatism that had horrified Master Orum once.  
  
"Immortal Flame himself was dead, and both Broken Sword and Smile of Heaven had perished. Little Nephis was young and powerless... but children grow up. Sometimes, they grow up to be Saints of immense power who wield staggering influence over people's hearts and harbor a scathing desire for revenge. That was what Anvil and I both wanted to prevent from happening, so we tried to kill her before she could fully inherit the Fire. A vile decision... but a prudent one, don't you think? Considering how things ended up."  
  
Cassie shivered.  
  
So she knew... both of them knew. Both of them had never been fooled by Neph's act of submitting to their power.  
  
Or maybe that was not even important. Maybe it was simply the case of large-scale systems being averse to risk, as Ki Song had put it. It did not matter whether Nephis truly harbored thoughts of revenge... all that mattered was that she had potential to.  
  
That was all it took for these ghouls to sentence a little, orphaned girl to death.  
  
And how many more of such deaths had there been?  
  
'Ah... I want to kill them both with my own two hands...'  
  
But that was not meant to be. Cassie forced a smile onto her face.  
  
"It seemed strange that both of you mighty Sovereigns failed to kill one powerless child."  
  
Ki Song shrugged.  
  
"Our hands were tied. The Dreamspawn laid a claim to her, just like he had claimed young Mordret. He has a deep interest in Divine Lineages, you know. Immortal Flame, Warden of Valor, Nightwalker, and the Dreamspawn's own mother — those were the four members of the First Generation who had found Lineage Memories. A generation later, I was the fifth. And the sixth one, well, it is obvious by now what blood flows in the veins of the Lord of Shadows... even if he doesn't bleed much."