2196 Truth and Fortune  
  
Back in the throne room, Seishan took a step forward and stood in the spot where Cassie had previously kneeled. She did not lower herself, though, remaining upright as shе looked up at her mother.  
  
The Quеen regarded her with a distant expression. After a while, she sighed.  
  
"I think you have an idea of what has to be done now."  
  
Seishan nodded curtly.  
  
"I do, mother."  
  
Ki Song looked at her and smiled wryly.  
  
"Don't try to fool me with that refined expression, girl. You have not changed at all since you were little like a mouse... come, out with it. I can see that you have questions. Was what I said so surprising?"  
  
Seishan hesitated for a few moments, then bowed slightly and said in a reserved tone:  
  
"Then, I will ask. I do have questions... two of them, to be precise."  
  
The Queen just waited silently. Seishan raised her head and looked at her mother with a hint of a somber emotion in her eyes.  
  
"You said that Changing Star had to be dealt with... for no other reason but cold logic. That you would not leave the child of your enemy alive, knowing that they could return to seek revenge one day. Was that true?"  
  
Ki Song raised an eyebrow.  
  
"You should have been aware of our past efforts to erase the Immortal Flame clan from existence for a while now. Ah, I see... it's not the deed itself that sparked your curiosity, but the motivation. Well, I suppose it is true. Granted, I don't have a habit of going around disposing of children. It is not every enemy that has to be erased without a trace."  
  
She sighed.  
  
"...But little Nephis was. Because she was the daughter of Broken Sword and Smile of Heaven, the heir of Immortal Flame — a child like that would never have grown up to be a nobody. It was too dangerous to leave her be."  
  
Seishan remained silent for a while. Then, she asked in an even tone:  
  
"So, will I and my sisters be disposed of for the same reason, should you fall in the battle against the King of Swords?"  
  
The dead youths laughed, and Ki Song herself smiled in amusement.  
  
"Why? Don't you have faith in your mother?"  
  
Seishan lingered with the answer.  
  
In the end, she looked at the Queen with a steadfast expression.  
  
"I do... I believe that you will win."  
  
Ki Song chuckled.  
  
"Why?"  
  
Seishаn frowned and stayed quiet for a few moments. Then, she said evenly:  
  
"Because we are of the Song clan. The King of Swords received his kingdom and his Lineage from others... but you earned them yourself. He had everything, while you rose from nothing. You clawed and fought, struggling to gain every little piece of what he had been given freely. He is arrogant, while you are cautious. But most of all..."  
  
She paused for a moment.  
  
"You have too many things to lose, while he has nothing. He has nothing to protect, because he has already lost everything... and so, he only has resolve — not desire. He doesn't want to win. But you want it desperately."  
  
The dead youths laughed quietly.  
  
"So... you are calling your mother desperate?"  
  
Seishan's expression changed slightly.  
  
"That was... was not what I meant."  
  
The puppets laughed again, while Ki Song shook her head.  
  
"No. You are correct, my wise daughter. That man has the Will... but he does not have anything except the Will. Deep down, he doesn't really care to win — he doesn't care about anything. A man who has nothing to lose is dangerous, but he is also pitiful."  
  
She shook her head lightly.  
  
"But you are also wrong, thinking that I achieved everything myself. That I have had no help, and wasn't given anything by anyone. In fact, I have received many gifts... my mother's love, the kindness of strangers, the faith and loyalty of those who followed me, the care of my daughters. It was just that I was young and naive back then, full of resentment and anger. That was how I became ruthless enough to survive this world, and therefore lived long enough to wisen up and recognize my fortune. While Anvil... that poor man was far less fortunate than me."  
  
She sighed and looked away.  
  
"Isn't it funny? I am a descendant of Beast God, the goddess of the cycle of death and rebirth —and yet, I am unable to give birth, and neither can I die. Meanwhile, Anvil is a descendant of War God, the goddess of life. And yet, he has turned himself into a living corpse. What bitter irony is this?"  
  
Ki Song lingered for a while, then turned to Seishan.  
  
"You had another question, didn't you?"  
  
Seishan nodded.  
  
"Yes."  
  
She waited a little, then asked hesitantly:  
  
"Back then... why did you agree to answer Cassia's questions? You did not need to."  
  
The Queen smiled softly and looked away, her puppets did not speak for a while, but eventually, one of them answered in a slightly wistful tone:  
  
"Her True Name is Song of the Fallen. The Names are an expression of one's personal truth, as well as of their fate. Her fate is to be a witness... to remember. So..."  
  
Ki Song lingered for a moment.  
  
"History is written by the victors, Seishan. No matter who wins this war, the truth of what happened will be weaponized and twisted. But I wanted someone to remember the truth — my truth, at least — in its purest form, no matter what comes next. Even if it is just one person. Forgive your mother this little bit of indulgence... but I wanted to be witnessed."  
  
Seishan remained silent.  
  
Eventually, she nodded.  
  
"I understand."  
  
Ki Song let out a long sigh.  
  
"In that case..."  
  
Her expression changed, becoming cold and regal. She straightened on her throne, and her beautiful figure suddenly seemed towering and overbearing.  
  
The dead youths spoke solemnly:  
  
"Seishan of Clan Song. Listen to your Queen's command..."