2210 Song, Vale  
  
Two armies faced each other on a bone plain.  
  
On one side, steel glistened and vermilion banners fluttered in the wind. On the other side, a legion of the dead stood silently in front of the somber soldiers, a myriad of eyes brimming with emptiness, fear, and grim anticipation.  
  
The eyes of the warriors of the Sword Domain were not much different, full of dread and hopeless resignation.  
  
The veil of grey clouds shone brilliantly in the distant sky, and the blinding light was making the bone plain shine as well, like the surface of a white-hot pan. The sweltering heat was suffocating, making the warriors of Song yearn for the cold snowstorms of Ravenheart, while the warriors of Valor yearned for the cool waters of the Mirror Lake.  
  
Were they going to see their homes again?  
  
No one knew, and most were too afraid to wonder.  
  
The Seventh Royal Legion stood at the center of the Song Army. Seishan was in front of her soldiers, looking across the battlefield solemnly.  
  
Cassie was by her side, silent and motionless, her movements restricted by the invisible strings of the Queen's power.  
  
The Blood Sisters — those who were still alive —were interspersed among the soldiers, their red garments standing out among the sea of steel, leather, and scale. Felise was among them, a complicated mix of emotions hiding in the depths of her beautiful eyes.  
  
Rain, Tamar, Ray, and Fleur were not too far from where the former Handmaiden stood, keeping quiet — just like the rest of the army was. An eerie silence settled on the bone plain, as if everyone was either unwilling or unable to make a sound.  
  
Somewhere else in the formation of the Song Army was the Saint of Sorrow. There were also Dar of the Maharana Clan, Saint Ceres, and Saint Siord — among many others Transcendent champions. Their faces were just as tired and grim as those of the Awakened soldiers.  
  
On the flanks of the vast battle formation, hordes of enthralled Nightmare Creatures were waiting for their mistress to give them a command. Beastmaster herself was among them, her hand resting on the scales of a hideous abomination. Her tantalizing face was even paler than usual, dark embers burning in her bewitching eyes.  
  
She was looking at the sea of enemy warriors in the distance.  
  
The formation of the Sword Army was more organized and resplendent than that of the soldiers of Song. Knights of Valor stood in its center, and the Ivory Island hovered above.  
  
Master Sunless and Aiko stood on the emerald grass, looking down silently.  
  
Far below, the Lord of Shadows was leaning indifferently on his fearsome odachi, his white hair moving slightly in the wind. His demonic mask did not reveal any emotion, and there was nothing but darkness in the fierce slits of its eyes.  
  
Some distance away, Nephis was standing in front of a row of an orderly phalanx of heavily armored soldiers. Her slender figure was obscured only by the thin fabric of a light tunic, and her longsword rested easily on her shoulder. Her hair reflected the sunlight, flowing in the wind like a beautiful stream of incandescent silver.  
  
The Fire Keepers were just behind her. Among them, Sid was suffering silently from the unbearable heat. Letting out a sigh, she opened her canteen, drank from it greedily, then shook the flask a couple of times and dropped it on the ground.  
  
Not too far, the White Feather clan stood, ready for battle. Saint Tyris and Saint Roan were in front of the Awakened warriors of their clan, while their daughter, Telle, was among them. All three seemed calm, but the wind was turbulent in that part of the battlefield, betraying hidden emotions.  
  
The other Saints of the Sword Army were similarly tense. Saint Rivalen seemed to have lost some of his gallant poise, staring across the battlefield with a frown. Somewhere else, Jest was leaning on his cane, looking at the ground with a dark expression.  
  
For the first time in a long while, he felt too old to face the dire demands of the world ruled by the Nightmare Spell.  
  
His grandson, Master Mercy of the Dagonet clan, was among the soldiers of the Sword Army. Rivalen's son, Tristan, was there as well.  
  
And countless others.  
  
Countless souls were waiting for the battle to start on both sides of the white bone plain, shivering with dread and trepidation.  
  
They were waiting for the war horns to sing. For the battle to start.  
  
And for the war to end.  
  
However, the command to attack never came.  
  
Instead, two figures appeared from the rows of soldiers, walking calmly across the surface of the ancient bone as the titanic skull loomed in the distance, watching them with a silent gaze.  
  
One was a tall man with dark hair and cold, steely eyes. He was clad in heavy dark armor, emanating a suffocating aura of dominance and oppression. A vermilion cloak fluttered behind him like a wave, its vibrant color in sharp contrast with his bleak, ruthless gaze.  
  
He was Anvil of Valor, the King of Swords.  
  
The other was a breathtakingly beautiful woman in a regal red dress, walking across the vast expanse of bone with calm, mesmerizing grace. Her skin was pale like that of a corpse, and a light smile played on her crimson lips. Her raven-black hair was like a lustrous waterfall of darkness, and there was something eerie and vaguely appalling about her beautiful, enchanting eyes.  
  
She was Ki Song, the Raven Queen... the Queen of Worms.  
  
The two Sovereigns walked unhurriedly across the battlefield, their human figures looking small and insignificant in comparison to the vast armies behind them... and at the same time, larger than the world itself.  
  
Eventually, they met in the middle.  
  
To one side, the towering black wall of the Hollow Mountains reached toward the sky, the jagged peaks shrouded in white mist. The colossal skull rested on the misty slopes, staring down at them like an evil omеn.  
  
To the other side, Godgrave stretched into the distance. Its surface, which had once been overtaken by the scarlet jungle, was now immaculate and white, cleansed of the abominable infestations by the efforts of the two great armies.  
  
Anvil and Ki Song studied each other silently for a few moments. The King maintained a cold and harsh expression, while the Queen was smiling faintly.  
  
Eventually, she was the first one to break the silence. This time, Ki Song did not use the dead youths, using her own voice to speak.  
  
"Vale."  
  
Anvil responded evenly:  
  
"Song."  
  
She remained silent for a bit, then chuckled suddenly.  
  
"Ah... I've imagined this moment so many times, you know? Wondering what I would feel, what words I would say. But now that the moment has actually come... I find that I have nothing to say to yоu at all."  
  
Anvil just stared at her coldly.  
  
"I can't say that I've spared you a lot of thought, myself."  
  
Ki Song smiled.  
  
Then, looking away, she let out a quiet sigh — or at least pretended to, controlling her puppet with flawless skill.  
  
After a short pause, she suddenly asked:  
  
"By any chance... do you remember the first time we met?"  
  
He pondered for a second or two, then shook his head slightly.  
  
"I don't particularly recall, no. Was it at the Academy?"  
  
Ki Song glanced at him briefly.  
  
"No. It was at the party in honor of the Immortal Flame, I think? We were children then. So many years have passed, and so many things have happened. The world has changed so much since then... who would have predicted how those kids would end up? How the Immortal Flame clan would end up, as well."  
  
She paused for a moment.  
  
"Did you know that the walls of the Academy were breached, by the way? For the first time since its establishment... and it wasn't by a Nightmare Creature. They had withstood the perils of the Nightmare Spell for thirty-six years. But they didn't withstand us."  
  
Anvil smiled coldly.  
  
"Why? Are you feeling sentimental?"  
  
Ki Song studied him for a bit, then grinned.  
  
"Can't I? You are the last friend I have in this world, after all. And after today, I will have none."  
  
He just looked at her evenly.  
  
"Were we ever friends? I don't think so. Then again, you'll be truly dead after today, and the dead don't need friends. So don't feel too sad."  
  
Ki Song laughed.  
  
"That's it? After all these years, after everything we've done, you really have nothing to say?"  
  
Аnvil shrugged.  
  
"Words are meaningless. They are meaningless by now, at least... both of us have already said everything. What else is there left to say?"  
  
Ki Song sighed.  
  
"Well, you aren't wrong. Prepare to die, then. You are already no different from a corpse, so killing you will simply be mercy."  
  
Hearing these words, he smiled darkly.  
  
"Funny to hear something like that from you, of all people."  
  
She lingered for a while, then smiled, as well.  
  
"...Yes. You are right, it is a bit funny."  
  
As she finished saying those words, the world shuddered.