

Isawa Hinata stood patiently alongside many of her kinsmen, as well as a large contingent from several other clans. There were among them a number of Lion, and she could sense their angry glances, but she afforded them not a second thought. Why should she? They were unworthy of her attention, particularly when such an important personage was arriving within the Second City.

The city's northern gate was used almost exclusively for arrivals and departures between the Colonies and the Emerald Empire. Departures were often cause for sorrow, but occasionally quiet celebration. Likewise arrivals were most often cause for celebration, but occasionally quiet concern. Today there was more of the latter than usual, owing primarily to the importance of those who were said to be arriving. Positions would be threatened. The balance of power would shift, politically speaking, and perhaps in arenas other than politics as well. Hinata cared nothing for such trivialities. For her, this was a grand day, and one that would see her ambitions realized by day's end, or so she hoped. She would see soon enough.

The ceremonial palanquins arrived shortly, and there were far more of them than usual. The number of arrivals following on foot was appropriately larger as well, and Hinata noted inwardly that perhaps she had underestimated the enormity of the day. Ultimately, however, it was Phoenix business and only Phoenix business with which she should concern herself, and in that regard she was well prepared indeed. She approached the palanquin that bore familiar colors and bowed deeply as the lone occupant emerged. "Good day and welcome to the Second City, noble Kurou-sama."

Agasha Kurou, master alchemist and lord of the Agasha family, smiled thinly and offered a short bow in return. "Isawa Hinata, I presume?"

"Indeed, my lord. I trust your journey was not too unpleasant?"

"Calling it pleasant would be foolish, but I have endured worse hardships," he said. "Our Unicorn escorts kindly offered us accommodation in Journey's End Keep to refresh before our arrival, for which I am grateful."

Hinata smiled. "The Unicorn seem to thrive in this unusual environment," she observed. "They have proven staunch allies here in the Second City."

"Having read your reports, which I found in excellent detail, I would have to agree," Kurou said. He glanced around at the crowd. "I expected a larger reception, given the company in which I was traveling."

Hinata regarded the crowd again. "This is the largest I have seen in my time here," she acknowledged, then looked back to him. "I have heard rumors of those traveling with you. I suppose they must be correct, then."

"I could not say what you have heard one way or another," Kurou said. "but I do know that the Kuni daimyo was among those traveling with me."

Hinata paused. "Kuni Renyu?" she asked. "Kisada's younger brother?"

"The same," Kurou confirmed. "A thoroughly unpleasant man, in my opinion. When one spends too much time in the company of darkness, it begins to permeate the soul."

Hinata felt a sense of alarm. "Do you believe he was sent here because he is Tainted?"

"What?" Kurou looked surprised. "No, I do not think that. I simply think he is quite sinister and threatening. I would prefer to avoid his company, I think."

"I am certain that can be arranged, my lord," Hinata said, her tone revealing her relief. She frowned at the military entourage surrounding an older Crane man disembarking from one of the other palanquins. "I am afraid I do not know that man, however."

"Hmm?" Kurou looked around. "Ah, yes. Daidoji Tametaka. A senior commander of the Crane military, as I understood it. Not much of a talker, that one."

"I see," Hinata said. She looked beyond the gate and saw the assembled Crane forces there. "I believe the Mantis will find this arrival of particular interest, although I doubt it will be much to their liking."

"The conflict between the Mantis and the Crane is of no consequence to us beyond whatever obligations may be in place for us to assist the Crane," Kurou said. "I do not believe our long-standing treaty calls for any particular obligations in this instance, but we should set a scholar to the matter to ensure that our honor is above reproach."

"Of course, my lord."

Kurou nodded. "Very well, then. I am quite eager to see what has been done since the last report that I read. However, I suspect there are obligations for new arrivals. Would that be correct?"

"In this instance, my lord, yes," Hinata said, offering a pair of scrolls. "One is your formal invitation to the governor's estate for dinner this evening. The other is a report of the topics I expect will be discussed there, so as to ensure you have the most recent information available."

"Outstanding," Kurou said. "I think I will find your service exceptional, Hinata-san."

— New Rules and Notes on Specific Cards —

If (he/she/it) would be opposed is a condition that depends on the enemy units at the battlefield at the time it is checked. It does not take into account triggered or future effects that would change whether enemy units are present there.

On: The Honor loss will not be redirected by such effects as Rhetoric that use the word "instead," because they are substituting one player's Honor loss for another's.

Kakita Ichigiku: The additional destruction is applied even if the consequences of losing are already destruction.

Goju Bunoro: The overlaying does not have to follow the Experienced rules.

Blood of the Preserver: "Cards and tokens stay attached to them" overrides the rules that created cards and tokens do not exist outside of play. An "entering-play effect" is an effect from a trait or Reaction, or a

conditional effect, that is triggered by the unit or its cards entering play.

Paralyzing Touch: By the rules on performing, "its winner" refers to the Personality that won the duel, not the player.

Two-Fold Virtue: This will not copy a Unique Personality.

The New Foundries: If the Spell has multiple element keywords, only one effect may be chosen.

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