

KEEPER 117

Chapter 117: CRIPPLING SAFFOCATION

The group had gathered again outside the gate just after sunrise. Of course, after eating again. The leader of the patrol turned out to be Zonuvaki's younger brother, which explained why they were allowed to stay as his visitors.

The group, however, did not get to leave until four hours later because Kaka had been given some sleeping liquid to accelerate his treatment and healing, just like the one sagiri was given in the suffocation chamber exercise. He had slept the whole night. Apparently they had given him all types of medicine, and even after he woke up, he could not act like himself.

He refused to leave until they let him shower and smell nice, which was not a very kaka thing to say. He bathed in the springs for an hour as if he were a king of some sort, and he did not have to hurry anywhere. The healers had to bandage his cut afresh because he was too strong to stop from getting in the water. Squad 25 were having the time of their life who kept asking him stupid questions which Kaka answered honestly.

"He is definitely going to kill us all when whatever they gave him wears off," Ulekai said.

"Say Kaka, what do you wanna be when you grow up?" Kiuga asked after a long time of convincing Kaka that they had to leave, and the healing house of the Zonuvaki was not his house.

"Chief," Kaka answered. "Chief of Tagayia," he counted on his finger.

"Your desires are the same even when you are normal. how boring," kiuga said. He was carrying two quivers now and N'varu two bows. The extra belonged to kaka who apparently did not want to carry things that made his shoulders itchy. Sagiri and Ulekai were carrying his extra blades, and he just walked quickly ahead of the team, free.

On the bright side. He did not look as pale as before. The group walked at a slow pace till they were out of Zonuvaki, and they made it back on the government road right after midday.

By then, the substance kaka had worn off, and he was very angry to learn that he had been walking without a weapon and that others were carrying it for them.

"What happened to me?" he asked, patting his body.

"Well, the zonuvaki did not want someone reeking of blood to ruin the festivities, so they whisked you away," kiuga said, and Kaka had acted shocked.

"You let me sleep in the zonuvaki tribe. those savages?" he snickered in hot rage. "Who changed me? You let them see their future grand Zorath naked?" Kaka asked. It was not a hidden fact that Kaka wanted to be the next grand Zorath of the northern tribes, which was highly likely because he was the strongest of their age, yet sagiri had never heard him say it outright. It is taboo to see a leader naked in almost all tribes, and seeing his manhood was a crime that called for a battle to the death. Even if a chief died, his body would not be allowed to be naked.

"Who would want to see your nudity?" kiuga scoffed. "You don't even remember how childish you have behaved. You woke up two hours after sunrise and made us wait two hours for you to soak in the springs and threatened to throw away your dirty combat suit," Kiuga said, and Kaka froze as if he had committed the biggest sin of the century. If the man was emotional sagiri was sure he could have cried at the horrified expression he made.

"You don't even remember giving out your weapons because they are itchy?" N'varu asked intentionally to torment the guy. Silence prevailed as the group almost came to a stop.

"What else did I say?" Kaka asked, his eyes wide, and for the first time sagiri could perceive another emotion apart from pride. fear. It seemed Kaka Asakana had a fear too, and it was to be forgiving and not recall his childish behavior.

"Well, for a start, you called me brother and called Sagiri an equal," Kiuga said, and the words were barely out of his mouth before Kaka pounced on him and the two started chasing each other down the road. Kaka attacked, and kiuga defended as he laughed aimlessly.

"Is it really necessary to tease him that far?" Banga spoke.

The two chased each other for a while, which forced the team to pick up speed. They only stopped when kiuga gave in and said he had lied.

"Childish," Kaka snickered before he asked for his weapons back and glared at anyone who carried them as if it was their fault.

"How come I did not know Kaka carried a wound? Am I that bad of an instructor?" Lotaga asked when the team was back in order and running south as if he had been thinking about it for a while.

"Yes," everyone answered in chorus, and Lotaga gasped in fake practiced shock.

"How are you even a tracker if you can't smell blood?" Kiuga said.

"Well how was I supposed to know whether one of you was having their womanly moon call?" he said, and everyone flinched in uniform.

"You are shameless. calling us women and bringing up something sacred." Kaka snapped in disgust.

"I mean, I heard some men..."

"Shut up!" Kaka said. Lotaga stopped talking much to everyone's relief. But it was short-lived because he spoke a moment later.

"I mean, you are going to pick a maiden soon, I'm just...."

"Another word, and I will kill you and everyone else," Kaka said, and there were uniform groans. He was back to being himself. He was even threatening to kill them for Lotaga's words.

There was silence as the group moved south at full speed. They had eaten well, and they were fully charged. They did not stop even after darkness came, and they continued till it was almost morning. They rested for an hour in shifts of six and five.

They had a day and a half before they reached Ko'alsi city at top speed. They had wasted a lot of time on day five, and so on day six, they only stopped once for a few minutes to eat before they were on the

move again. They spent the whole night running, and when morning came, they finally broke into civilization. The population was starting to get denser and denser as they got closer and closer to the second-largest city of Tagayia.

The city had not changed since the last time Sagiri was there. They had to go through the northern side's huge gates just before midday on day seven. They did not get stopped for check up after Lotaga flashed a silver token he was holding. They were allowed in without a hitch.

"Finally the sight of women and a beautiful city." Lotaga sighed with joy as they walked through the streets. They had raised quite a few curious eyes and stares. It was only natural since they were wearing their combat coats, which had the logo of Galka War Academy. Lotaga had asked them to pull the hoods of their combat suits and coats to hide their faces. If his benefactor was in the city, sagiri was sure he would be aware soon. The measure to hide their faces was like plastering a small cloth on a big wound.

"Pervert," Maita said. Lotaga wheeled around to chastise him, but stopped at the state Sagiri was in. He had paused completely at some point at the back of the group with both hands to his ears. He had shied from wearing his oru-seals to measure just how much he could take, but it had been a mistake.

The noise and feelings of the thousands of people within a radius of his heightened senses, which had grown more shrill over the last six months, had hit him hard and crippled him.

"Hey kid, what's wrong?" Lotaga asked. They were standing on a less crowded street. Sagiri had stopped trying to correct how Salka's team addressed him sometimes. He had accepted the fact that they would always see him as the kid they brought north. "You look just like Seyika when he enters a city," Lotaga said, and just then it dawned on everyone.

"Too much noise," Sagiri gritted, staggering.

"Where are the seals?" N'varu asked, moving to his side, but Sagiri could hear everything and anything within a ten vaara and even further out like whispers. he had tried to retrieve them, but pulling his hands from his ears for mere seconds was torture.

N'varu parted him down and pulled them out of his pocket.

"Let me help you," he said as lowly as possible, and the whole group watched in bewilderment. nvaru clasped the m to his ears quickly, but even the mere whisper of a moment where he had to pull his hand back to get them clasped felt like an hour of torture.

"Your ears are bleeding," N'varu said when he stepped back, and everyone watched in bewilderment. Even so, just one problem had been solved. The amount of foreign emotion pressing onto him was crippling, and it had become more intense.

"We need to get away from the crowded city," N'varu said, hooking a hand in sagiri's to help him walk.

"The war headquarters are at the edge of the city," Lotaga said. "There are not many ways through," he continued.

"Can you hang in there?" N'varu asked, and sagiri wanted to say he could, but it was like he was back in the suffocation chamber, one with suffocating emotions, and he did not know if he would make it. Before he turned sixteen, he could have, but after he turned sixteen, everything was more intense and raw. It was too much.

"Damn it!" Kaka cursed, and anyone barely saw him move before a blade hand struck Sagiri at the back of his head, and darkness filled his vision, and he was out.