

KEEPER 127

Chapter 127: STILL

"No. just youths your age. No one has been able to find them." Eight said, yawning, before he lay back. "You can relax, we are at the central position of the formation. If the others don't shoot a flare, then we don't have to be alert," eight said, but did not peel his eyes off the darkness.

"People can't just disappear," Sagiri said.

"That is what the general always says since we started to watch this place in shifts. Day and night. No other cases have been reported. Perhaps the youths ran away, and we are just wasting our time here. What a bore," eight said, and sagiri was beginning to understand why the squad was reeking of boredom. They had been watching the air for a month.

They did not talk much after, and sagiri appreciated the silence. He was even more thankful that he was on a night patrol when most of the city was asleep and not too much noise. It was indeed boring watching nothing, and he soon dozed off. Traveling south for a week and running till dawn, and only being allowed two hours of sleep, must have gotten to him. Not even meditative slumber could take away the tiredness.

When he jolted awake again, it was still dark, but from the sudden cold seeping even through the cloak and combat, it could only be close to dawn.

Had he slept the whole night? How reckless.

He sat up quickly, his eyes taking in the surroundings. He was still sleeping on the roof, but he had curled up and was completely out of it. Another cloak was covering him. Eight's cloak had been covering him while he slept. He had been skeptical about everyone and everything since squad 25 arrived at the headquarters, and he had not expected to receive such kindness. He was rested, and he was feeling less cold inside.

Eight were still staring into the darkness. Only now he was standing with both hands folded on his chest. Sagiri shuffled to stand on his feet, and as if the small movement was loud, eight turned around quickly.

"You are awake," he said. Sagiri could not tell if he was angry or not.

"Don't do that again. I only let you sleep because I heard the general had you guys do laps around till daylight. Sleeping during a watch is equal to suicide. If it happens again, I will punish you." Eight said, and sagiri could just nod in agreement. He was already being careless even after everyone's warning. If eight was one of the benefactor's men, he could have murdered him in his sleep.

"It won't happen again," Sagiri said, and he meant it. He handed over eight's cloak and saluted him in respect before stepping beside him. Eight shrugged the cloak on, and the two stared in silence again as they watched the morning darkness.

"The watch will come to an end soon. Let's get to the meeting point.' Eight said after a while. Sagiri could not help but notice that, though the men were probably bored from watching the silent city outskirts for a month without progress, Eight still took the watch seriously, and his eyes had not left the dark even once.

They moved through the roofs again and only stopped when they were standing at the edge of the city. The rest of the team joined them soon after, and Chera was the last to arrive. He looked even more bored than the last time sagiri had seen him, and he was beginning to wonder why such a bored man joined a war school and proceeded to become a warrior and a captain. Did he bore his way to captain hood?

"Let's move out," is all he said after taking a silent head count. The team moved out at the same speed they had come in with. They were about to leave the dead city completely when sagiri heard something, or he felt it. He stopped immediately and turned around swiftly, but there was nothing other than a sleeping city and darkness.

"What is it?" eight asked.

"Nothing," Sagiri answered, catching up. The team was back to where the war carriages dropped them, and they were still there with the horsemen. They jumped back on and by the time they got back to the fortress, the day had broken. They were just in time for breakfast, and after sleeping for the whole night sagiri was rested and hungry. He sat away from the squad, Chera, and ate alone. Again, he did not run into any member of squad 25, as if someone had arranged it so that they could not meet again.

sagiri was to sleep in the Captain Chera squad section, and a room had been prepared for him. He was somehow tired even after sleeping the whole night, and he went to sleep immediately. Eight came to

wake him at midday. The schedule had changed completely from that of the Galka War Academy. Even so, he couldn't help but think he had been put in the slowest squad, and somehow he knew he was having it easier than anyone else. After cleaning and washing his dirty pair of combat sagiri went to lunch. Again, he did not see any member of squad 25. After lunch, the Chera squad trained him in archery and sparred with the spear. They were fast, and he had to work twice as hard to evade even a single attack from Two, who was a lover of the spear just like Miss Lakiya. He was also from the Teshini clan, which explained his prowess with the weapon. He was tall too and looked to be a foot taller than Miss Lakiya.

When night came, the team ate their supper and headed to their patrol. Just like the previous day, the squad separated into two and watched the night. Just like the previous day, the night was still silent, and nothing happened. This time, he did not fall asleep on watch and managed to stay awake and even push his senses out, letting the archive charge them so he could perceive anything in motion in the dead district.

But just like the day before, nothing moved.

The third day went the same, and even the fourth. The only change was their position in the formation. They had stopped being in the centre after the second day and taken the outer positions of the formation. Sagiri was afforded a red flare, too, in case of an emergency. It seemed that only the outer position holders were given those.