

KEEPER 128

Chapter 128: STILL TO CHAOS

They were perched close to the wall on the fifth day of the patrol, and Sagiri had gotten quite used to the drill. Nothing out of the ordinary had happened to him, but he had not relaxed one bit or let his guard down. He had not seen any member of team 25, as if they had been swallowed by the fortress, and he could not take it anymore and decided to ask eight as they walked around the perimeter before they could find a place to sit and watch.

"Are my teammates still in the fortress?" He asked eight who looked to be deeply thinking about something, unlike always, where he could talk about his missions and his life in war college. He made for a good companion overall, and sagiri was lucky he had been teamed with him. He was still skeptical whenever they left the headquarters because he did not yet know what his benefactor was planning. He was always listening to even the slightest movement.

"I was wondering when you'd ask?" Eight did not seem shocked at all by the question. "They are fine. It was arranged so you don't meet to break the familiarity, so you can improve individually. Sometimes, a team is double-fanged vermin. It can make you win wars, but depend too much on your team, and you might just die." Eight said as they came to a rising abandoned building at the edge of the dead district.

So that was the reason.

"How long for?" sagiri asked. He did not like the idea of not knowing where his friends were. He had also tried to push out his senses, but somehow he wouldn't. It seemed that the walls used to make the fortress were the same stones or materials that were used to make the broken pillar and the shadow arena. He did not like the coincidence, and it had made him restless.

Who had made the fortress? And had he made it to jam someone like him. It seemed like the fortress was hiding a lot of secrets, and it was as airtight as a prison. Perhaps it might have at one point been a prison.

"Don't worry, you will see them the day after tomorrow. They should have finished their seven-day normal squad routines, just like you are on watch duty with us. That is the job of a warrior when there is no war," Eight said as they started climbing to the roof of the abandoned building. It looked as if once upon a time it had been a beautiful tower, but now it had been reduced to a shell of what it once was.

Just like always, they climbed the roof, sat on the edge, or stood on the edge. They would sit as the night went by, or go down and walk up and down their perimeter, then come up. Nothing had happened the past few days they had been watching, so even sagiri was starting to loosen up and just let himself relax into the routine.

Their section of the patrol was even more deserted than the west they had been to, and sagiri could not perceive any movement. Even from the houses nearby. It was quiet. It had always been quiet every night, but tonight it was quieter. Sagiri could have imagined it, but even though the archive inside of him loved silence, the silence was so heavy tonight that it had stirred once or twice.

It was just after midnight, and sagiri and eight had just finished their second round and were back on the roof. He was talking to sagiri about his family and how his three sons were almost of age to join a war school. He had also not stopped talking about his daughter, who had started crawling and talking gibberish. Sagiri found himself deeply intrigued by his story and the thought of having a younger sibling. The man, though a warrior and always pulling a long face, was now smiling ear to ear, and he radiated only love and happiness.

The two made their way up to the roof of the building and sat down. Sagiri had to admit that it was somehow enjoyable being on just another boring watch duty.

"Can you imagine, she tried to bite me, that little squirrel. She has no teeth," Eight said, referring to his daughter, and then laughed to himself. He went on and on, and Sagiri just nodded and smiled genuinely. Kids were definitely adorable, and that was indisputable.

"She might be a warrior herself when she grows up," sagiri said, and eight almost toppled over with joy.

"I usually tell my wife that she will become a warrior like her father, and she always argues that she will be gentle and love pottery like her," Eight said, laughing silently.

He turned to say something to sagiri again, but the smile on his face was wiped away from his face suddenly. Sagiri did not have to react before eight launched himself at him and sent them hitting the floor hard. Sagiri heard it and barely saw it. The sound of metal cutting through the air with too much force before it stopped. Then another and then another. Sagiri could not tell where the attacks were coming from, partly because eight's body weight was pinning him down completely, and secondly because the sound of metal cutting through the air was coming from everywhere.

Then, suddenly, just as it had begun, it stopped, but something else had entered the air. The smell of metal. The smell of blood. A lot of blood.

"What is happening?!" sagiri asked. He very much wanted to believe the blood was not Eights', but it was not his, and that was for sure because he was not hurting anywhere. Eight did not answer, and sagiri pushed him off of him with all his might.

Oh no!

Three arrows had pierced eight on the chest through and through. One to the heart, one to the back of the bench, and another to his lungs. Sagiri froze for a moment, not able to fathom the situation. The man had been telling him about his fierce daughter just a moment ago, and now he was lying dead with three arrows launched in his body and in a pool of his own blood.

He would never be able to see his daughter become a warrior just like him!

Who dared do such a thing? To such a man who had used his own body as a shield to protect himself. A man who was also a good father.

Who did such a thing?!

The cold inside sagiri turned to ice, and he could feel the archive stir and merge with the cold.

He barely recognized as he lay Eight's body down gently on his side and closed his eyes. He pulled off his cape and laid it on his body just like he had covered him the first night of patrol. He pulled out the red flare and aimed it at the sky, his movements foreign to him. Before the flare could burst in the sky, his senses had already moved out further than he had ever reached before.

The archive was like a raging fire eating through the desert as they merged and reached distances he did not know he was capable of.

Then he found them. As the flare burst in the sky, so did his senses find them, and he moved.