

KEEPER 143

Chapter 143: MYAMA

Sagiri moved back against his own accord as if he did not have control over half his mind. Even so, he couldn't fight it. His right eye came to life instantly, and the archive responded to the intrusion aggressively. It was not fighting against the intrusion, but it was giving in to the control. Has the archive been hypnotized, too? sagiri could not see the man-boy and his Nfari tribe counterpart. They had failed to put him under control the first time, and he was sure she was too weak to bring his mind under her control.

Right after the fourth door, where the call had hit him the last time he was in the containment chamber. Now, with his right eye, he could see something he had seen before. A few feet from the fourth door, there were prints of palms on the concrete as if a hand had been pressing on a platform just below his feet.

sagiri crouched in front of the platform and placed his hand on top of the platform as if he had done it a thousand times. The platform in front of him gave way, and a small staircase came into sight. Sagiri stepped through the stairs, and when he stepped on the last staircase, the platform slammed shut soundlessly behind him. He was submerged in darkness for a moment before suddenly all the light came on as if suddenly lit by some command.

Sagiri somehow knew what way to go. The place level black under the fourth wing was a whole city in itself. He reached a suspended lever that started lowering the moment he stepped on it. The lever dropped lower and lower, and sagiri knew he was now a few hundred feet under the wing. The lower he got, the heavier the presence of his caller became clear, and the connection he felt to him became staggering.

The lever came to a stop, and he stepped out. The walk did not end there, and he had to take a wide spiraling staircase that went lower and lower and lower. The lower he went he started to feel the presence of other creatures held below the wing. Their presence was domineering, and others just carried an aura of pure evil, and some just pure enormous power. How had such beasts been caught, and how did they exist? well he existed too, and he was an anomaly. He knew that now more than ever.

After going low for a few moments, Sagiri finally stepped into a dark place where he could only see with his right eye. The place was damp, and even some water was leaking on the surface. It was also as cold as ever. The trance he had been in seconds ago snapped away instantly, and he fell to one knee, gasping for air. He held onto the rails of the big cell in front of him and stood to his feet.

He stared into the darkness beyond the bars of the cell, and he knew he had arrived. Whatever had been calling to him lay right beyond the rails. He could feel all of it now. its power. It was the most powerful of the beasts beneath the fourth wing. sagiri could not see any movement behind the darkness that he could now see through. There was silence, but he knew it was there.

"Did you call me here just to hide?" sagiri said to the darkness after a few more moments tickled by.

Another moment of silence went by, all the devastation and the desperation he had been feeling disappearing altogether. Moments tickled by again before he finally heard the sound of heavy chains being dragged and felt movement that caused the ground beneath him to tremble. The movement got closer and closer until sagiri finally saw the enormous head of the beast, and somehow, he knew its name.

The desert serpent.

It was enormous, its body coiled in layered spirals thick as ancient pillars, scales the color of sun-burned bronze and cracked amber. Each plate shimmered faintly, as though grains of sand were trapped beneath its skin, shifting when it breathed. Its length disappeared into shadow, impossible to measure, as if it had no end.

That was not the only thing sagiri noticed. Heavy chains. Heavy chains bound it. Not ordinary iron, but dark alloy etched with sigils that pulsed faintly blue. They wrapped around its coils, dug between its scales, and anchored into the stone floor and ceiling. Even so restrained, the serpent did not seem restrained.

It stood its head almost touching the roof of its cell before it lowered it and its eyes finally snapped open. Its eyes were the most striking of all. molten yellow, slit pupils narrowing and widening like twin eclipses. They blinked once as they watched him. When it blinked, the sound was like sand sliding across glass.

A crown of horned ridges framed its head, curved backward like desert thorns hardened into bone. Faint glyphs glowed along its jawline, lighting whenever it inhaled. The air around it warped slightly, as if heat radiated from its existence alone. When it shifted, the chains groaned.

sagiri's eyes connected with the beast, and the devastation came back a hundredfold. It was now accompanied by its sadness and pain and longing for having been locked up for so long, and for some reason, it filled sagiri with pain and rage. He needed to punish whoever had imprisoned her.

It touched its big head to the bars as if urging him to touch its head. Was it asking him to read his memories? It pressed against the mind. Its voice was ringing loud in his mind. It was like a whisper, like wind crossing endless dunes and deserts. and most of all Patient.

Keeper

The name echoed in his mind, and it echoed in his very bones. Only N'varu had called him that name, and now that the beast was calling him such, it felt familiar this time and more powerful, as if the name belonged to him. This beast was no mere beast from an outbreak. This was something older than the outbreaks. Older than the Academy. Older than the desert itself.

And somehow sagiri knew that.

"Myama," Sagiri said her name as if the desert serpent was an old acquaintance. He could have imagined it, but liquid filled its yellow orbs before it shut its eyes and rested its head on the bars and waited.