

KEEPER 148

Chapter 148: ESCALATION

Sagiri paced up and down his cell for the third time. He had been locked up for a day and a half now, counting the night he had stepped in the circle. Things had gone to hell pretty quickly the moment he showered up. There was silence before fingers were pointed at him.

"Where have you been?" General Felunka asked. Immediately, he saw him.

"I was inside the fortress," sagiri answered, stepping deeper into the circle.

"How can you explain this? A warrior supposed to be on watch duty with you is dead." This time, it was Captain Riogi who asked the question. He and the remainder of his squad were standing in one place, and they looked angry. Sagiri had figured they hated him from the start, but their hate had managed to grow now, and they wanted to draw blood. He had thought that getting rid of the twin could end hateful vermin, but he was starting to realise he was wrong.

"He was alive the last time I was with him," Sagiri said. He had never been a person of many words, and he could not waste his time saying many meaningless words when the truth was right in front of him. The man had been cut up badly. Something was fishy about the whole situation. Perhaps the twins killing eight had not been a coincidence. Or perhaps the man in red in Make and Nakea's memory was pulling strings to make it look like the death of the two warriors had something to do with him. He might not have been the best at deducting situations, but he was not stupid either. Something was in play, and all he knew was that he was the centre of it.

"Cadet Sagiri," the General said, his voice thick and sharp. "Your patrol partner is dead. Slashed repeatedly by a blade. And you were the last person seen with him." His voice was that of accusation this time, and he was not trying to hide it. Rage was rolling off the man in ion waves enough to suffocate anyone.

Sagiri didn't move his eyes from Yugo's butchered body when he answered the next question. Now that he was looking at the cuts more deeply. They had been made to look like the cuts Nokai made. Deep and clean, even to the point of almost severing Yugo's head with one slash.

"I did not kill him." The statement came calmly.

A murmur spread through the gathering of warriors. Many were now coming up with theories and talking about the situation among themselves. One of the warriors in Riogi's team scoffed loudly.

"That's what you said the last time," The General said, pointing a trembling finger at him as if he was fighting hard not to control himself. "Your first partner died under mysterious circumstances as well! And now another is butchered while you're conveniently missing for four hours?"

Sagiri lifted his head slightly.

"I told you what happened. When I left him, he was alive. "

"And we're telling you we don't believe it," Captain Riogi snapped. "I saw you yesterday neck to neck with him. Did you kill him out of revenge?" Riogi continued.

"He was the one who wanted to beat me up for the death of Eight; even so, I did not kill him," Sagiri said again. Why was it difficult for anyone to understand that he had not done it? He had had many chances to do it, but refrained. Turns out someone wanted him to be labelled a murderer for some weird reason.

The General stepped forward then, boots echoing across the pavement floor among the many outside the fortress.

"Your patrol partner was killed by a combat blade, cadet. Clean steel. Military grade." His eyes narrowed. "Where are your weapons?" The general asked, ushering two men to come over, and before sagiri could say anything, he was being prodded, and all his two small, doxed blades were dismembered and thrown to the ground. Sagiri was lucky that the archive was still kept by Nokai. Everyone on his team watched with held breath, and when Nokai was not found, they all relaxed.

"Cadets are only allowed to carry small blades inside the wall; that is not a small blade's work," Lotaga said, moving closer to sagiri and purposefully standing in front of him.

"Two of my men died, warriors. In under a week, and with this boy as their partner. I have a right to question the boy. Don't forget your place, warrior. I am the general, and I am a superior

"That boy is cursed with bad luck," Riogi said loudly, his team holding him back. Speak of not putting personal feelings in front of anything as a warrior. What a hypocrite.

"No one interrogates my cadet like scavengers fighting over a corpse. I am the one in charge of the cadets. They are still under the grandmarshal and under the ten schools. They should not be interrogated without his presence."

The General frowned.

"You forget your place, Lotaga. This fortress is mine and the dead warriors are under me," the general said, all his control snapping, and he stepped closer to Lotaga.

"No," Lotaga replied calmly. "I remember it very well. I am under the special units captain, and I answer to him. I am also under Captain Salka and under the grand marshal of Galka War Academy, which puts me under the ten schools. His gaze swept the place, not backing down.

"And I remember academy law." He pointed toward Sagiri. "This cadet will not answer another question until the Grand Marshal arrives," he finished, now standing completely in front of sagiri as if to protect him. Leave it to Lotaga to challenge someone stronger than him without care just to protect him yet again.

The group of warriors surrounding them erupted in protest. They also wanted justice for their fellow warrior, and indeed, two had died in just under a week with no cause.

"You don't give orders here!" Riogi said almost charging now

"Neither do you captain Riogi; the only captain I answer to is Salka. You are forgetting the number three rule of being a warrior." Lotaga did not move.

His stance alone blocked Sagiri out of sight like a gate.

"You want answers," he said quietly. "Then you follow protocol captain. Sagiri is my student. I know he did not do it. So while you stand around arguing, the killer is halfway into his hideout, general."

Silence stretched.

"Put them all in separate cells. Including their instructor." The general said, but then his eyes stopped at Kaka, and his lips trembled. "The boy Sagiri goes into the cell. The rest are to be confined in their dorm rooms." General Felunka said in a strained voice before he turned around to leave.