

KEEPER 161

Chapter 161: BOOK THREE: THE FINAL EXAM BEGINS

THE RED SASH

The final exams were about to begin, but the cadets of the Galka War Academy had not relented. Sagiri had moved up a sash to midnight blue after the exercise, and Salka had asked him if he would approve his crimson red sash if he landed a hit. It could also be the last time they sparred. Salka had agreed to train him after the field exercise in bow and arrow, sword, and combat. He and Senraki had not spoken with him about their conversation with Seyika at the Galka War Headquarters.

Sagiri, however, had a talk with N'varu.

"Are we from the south?" he had asked when they returned to the academy. They were standing in the arena above the fourth-year pentagon. N'varu had neither denied nor agreed but just said.

"When you remember, you will know everything. Whatever I can tell you, you already know." his annoying answer had not changed, but sagiri had been sure on that day that he was from the south. He asked Senraki to allow him access to the central Pentagon library to study more, but no matter how many books he went through, none were about the South. There were even books about the neighboring states and even Lanka. Even a book on the mad king of Lanka, yet there was not even a whisper about the south. Not even a piece of paper. It was as if the place did not exist in the books of Tagayia. The absence of anything to do with the south was so lacking that it was suspicious to him.

Maps of all states were in the central Pentagon library, yet it seemed that the South's map did not exist. Senraki had also not said anything about what had happened in the war headquarters of Tagayia, but Salka's agreement to train him was also something he had not expected. He had trained him for one and a half months, and sagiri had almost come close to death more than a dozen times and visited the healing queen in the central pentagon quite a few times. He could tell Salka was not going at his full power and strength, yet he was not completely holding back either.

It was almost time for supper, and they were training in the combat pit in the central pentagon. Most of the squad salka and and squad ten were here to witness the fight. It was a fight that could decide if he was to land one hit on Salka. Just one. Since sagiri started to train with Salka, he had come to believe that Salka was right when he had refused to train him before. If he had trained him, he could not have made it past the first training. The man had too much strength that even when he controlled his attacks, they were enough to break a man in half. He had also come to foresee some of the squad team attacks and even the ten going up against him, the man still managed to hold them down and still did not go at

his full strength. He truly was the number one beast of battle of his time. It was also true that no one had broken the record he set since he graduated from war school. There were, of course, those who came close, but none had yet reached their potential. Most already whispered that he was the most worthy to be chief after Chief Zaka. Salka did not like involving himself in politics, but the north only recognized the strong to be their great chief, so it was only natural that they could not appoint a man weaker than him.

Sagiri now stood facing Salka. Salka had not forbidden him from using his archive inside him that made him stronger, but sagiri wanted to use his own strength to defeat him. That was clearly impossible, but he still wanted to try. Most times during their training, Sagiri had been so overstimulated and so cornered that the archive reacted, and in those times, Salka had to go at his full strength, and yet Salka was able to hold him down. Sagiri knew that he had not been able to fully access the archive's power, and with the small power of it, he had to touch it, it was still not enough to beat Salka. In those times, however, the training was more fun, or rather, it did not look pitiful like Salka just whooping him and actually looked like a sparring between an opponent who was weak but still holding his own. Without using the archive, he was now able to stand toe to toe with other cadets, but against Salka, it was futile. Yes, he had grown stronger and taller, but he could never be as tall as Salka. That would be considered a genetic miracle.

"You can beat him, Sagiri. He always loses to me," Lotaga yelled, and Salka snickered. Of course, Sagiri had seen Salka spar with Lotaga, and Lotaga still had a few years before he was able to even dream about beating Salka. Yes, there was a difference, and it looked like a sparring match, but on top of being from the Asakana clan, Salka was even more genetically gifted, and it was cruel for one person to have that much strength. How was sagiri supposed to land even one blow?

"He lost to me one too, back when we were in this academy as students," Senraki said, and Salka did not snicker this time. Sagiri had known the two went back in time, but he did not imagine the two went so far back as to be classmates in the academy.

"It was once, and it's because I thought you were too small to actually try to kill a bigger opponent during sparring." Salka groaned.

"Well, I had to teach you a lesson not to treat me like a kid," Senraki said.

"Yet you have not grown much," Salka said, and Senraki gasped as if Salka had not used the same insult on him a thousand times.

"Cadets, did you know that not many can beat Senraki with his sword. He is the best of the best in that blade," Matasi said, and all the cadets turned to look at Senraki. Most of them had seen him carrying a sword on several occasions, but knowing he was among the best with a blade was a surprise.

"Well, he did not go to war college and instead chose to be a philosopher and run an academy. " Doesn't count," Salka said, and Senraki gasped again.

"Why don't you fight me, and they can all see you lose to me a second time?" Senraki said. "Besides, I am a marshal now, I am more dignified than you, who spends his life getting your combat suit dirty," Senraki threw back.

"I don't fight philosophers," Salka said, and Senraki gasped again dramatically.

"Let the match begin!" Kolu said. He was pinching his eyebrows after hearing the exchange