

KEEPER 172

Chapter 172: PAINFUL MEMORIES

He looked down. Small fingers. His. A child's hand was held tightly by someone else. A woman with red hair. She was looking down at the baby lovingly and happily for a moment. Even with the happiness in his eyes, there was sadness. She was looking at the child in her arms as if she wanted to imprint her image into his mind, so much so that she looked to have stilled. The child had a full head of red hair.

His breath caught. Did he once have a head full of red hair like his mother? Why did it go black then? A tear escaped his mother's eyes. She looked delicate yet strong at the same time.

"No..." he whispered. He turned swiftly. Suddenly, the picture was clearer. Her mother was sitting in her own blood. Her face was streaked with soot and blood, her breathing uneven, eyes wide but focused.

"You will be the last keeper," she sniffled. She was at the jaws of death, yet she still had time to kiss her child on his forehead. Sagiri watched as the woman and another joined arms, and then they sealed the archive inside him. "As your last keeper, I say you keep the boy safe until he turns sixteen. You let him choose what road he wants to walk. The north has made a mistake, but my forefathers and I have protected you. So echo I ask only that you let him choose what road he will walk on," the woman said, now looking more forceful than ever. Sagiri could not understand what the woman was talking about, but then, as the echo disappeared inside him, his hair turned black.

Sagiri could not look away even as his mother summoned his sand shade. His eyes were white, just like N'varu's on rare occasions. Perhaps the secret art of their clan. They were quickest in the desert, and Sagiri, even looking at his mother, could see as the man moved like a blur, blending with the desert, and entered using a secret passage. The man he had seen in myama's telepathy. There could only be one sand shade. So, who were the ones who had been sent to all schools?

Sagiri stretched his hand to touch his mother, but his hand went through. Perhaps it was a curse of the keepers to protect the echo. The very memory of the world. He now somehow knew that the echo and its archive were never meant to be carried in a human body. No human was supposed to hold such an enormous amount of memories of things and places he had never been and time periods. The memory of wars.

There was nothing done out of order that lacked consequences. Whatever his mother had said to the echo about letting him choose must have had something to do with the consequences. Suddenly, flaming arrows began overwhelming the place, and with the echo having been moved out of the echo

archive holder. It was inside him, and the sand shade had just walked through the door with the child as fast as he had arrived. Without the echo archive, the holder was meant to collapse.

"Run..." sagiri found himself yelling, but his voice could not come out, nor could his mouth move. She turned to him, and their eyes met, and she smiled as if she knew he would remember one day.

"I know it will be bad skiing your mother like this, and you might hate me for putting the echo inside you, but my son, the echo, is not something to be trifled with, and uprooted fruits holder, it is dangerous. I am too selfish to just watch it destroy together with everyone. I love you. " I'm just sad that I won't be able to see you grow," she said with a sad smile, but then wiped her tears away and smiled one big smile enough to light up a room.

"Wait..." Sagiri tried to say again, but he could not.

"I'm so selfish because I love you too much," she said and turned around to face the other side. She was dying, and she did not want him to see her die, perhaps, but of course, he could. Her lips trembled, and tears streaked down her face. More arrows rained into the place, one landing on her so hard, tearing her through and through. She stumbled forward, but she held on. She was merely alive by her strong will.

Sagiri screamed with so much rage that he had not known he was capable until that moment.

More arrows and more fire, and another arrow hit her mother again. The arrows were huge, and he wondered how she still stood. His mother still held on with her last breath until the northern warriors broke through the doors and filled the place. The place had not crumpled because she still breathed, and she, being a keeper, still held on. When the last of the warriors sent in broke through, making up almost ninety percent of the warriors.

Just then, Sagiri understood. His mother was waiting for all of them to enter before she allowed herself to die and bury them together. She finally gave a small smile of triumph before she froze. The arrow launched in her could not allow her to fall forward or backward, and so her head fell low, her red hair falling forward. She was gone.

Sagiri's scream that could not be heard died in his throat as he watched the place sink with the rest of everyone who had entered. Her mother was truly strong. She had held on with all she had, only to bury her adversaries. She was a true keeper indeed.

The place shattered into a million small debris, swallowing and sinking with everyone with it, and when it was done, the ground was flat as if the massive structure had never been there in the first place. If it were not for the littered bodies of his clan beyond where the eyes clouded over and their blood soaking into the desert, it could have been as if nothing had happened there.

Another scream tore through sagiri. He now understood why N'varu could not tell him what had happened. He wished he had not remembered. Seeing his whole clan massacred was too much for him, and the worst part was that the eco archive inside of him could never allow him to forget but remember it again and again.

A scream tore through him, and this time, he was back in the pool, and he swallowed another mouthful of water. But the darkness did not even let him go.