

KEEPER 195

Chapter 195: PROPOSALS AND BEGINNINGS

The sound of the drums had been going on since before the crack of dawn. It was safe to say that Galka City was filled with all civilians and dignitaries from all over Tagayia that it was to the point of bursting. They had started arriving at the arena outside the walls. The biggest arena of all in the outer pentagon that almost always remained unused. The place had been prepared and renovated since the month before. This year's crowd seemed even bigger, according to what Lotaga said.

Sagiri did not know whether to feel excited or nervous. He was eager to see his parents, but he was anxious about whether they would make it or how things would turn out. He knew for sure his benefactor would be among the crowd with the high-ranking officials, generals, commanders, or captains. Whoever it was must have been planning something, and this would be where he could make his move. If he didn't, then he was either stupid or had a far worse plan. That is why he was back at the pool long before everyone woke up and went to the pool. The full moon had appeared the night before dawn, and he could only guess that was when Sikuwa acquired the shy flower. It could take a while to make the antidote, and sagiri did not know whether he would

It was especially quiet when he went, and he took his time to soak in long intervals before coming out for air. No wonder water had been soothing him before. Turns out the black rot could only be cured by water or cutting off the affected limb. He could not, however, cut out his heart, can he? He only came out during breakfast. The dining room was full of chatter. N'varu had already served him as a habit, and he went over to eat.

"How are you feeling?" N'varu asked. He was especially tense, too. Guess they could both feel the tension in the air, not from the exams, but from what awaited them. The girl who stabbed sagiri was acting just as always. Giving him empty looks, and every time he had to fight the urge to call Nokai out to end her, but it was not yet the right time. The gong went off soon after, and all the schools gathered in the assembly grounds. Sagiri was just about to join his team when a hand settled on his upper arm. He wheeled around, and the trio from Kafika were standing behind him. He did not have time to deal with them, but he just waited. The red sash still covered his eyes, but he could see their prideful expressions.

"Don't you think you are overdoing the night sensory training?" The Teshini clan was the first to speak.

"Just tell him what we came to say," the anku girl had her bird resting on her shoulders. She pushed the tsanka clan girl to the front.

"I, as the niece of the Kun of the Tsanka Tribe, accept your challenge," she said, stretching out her arm for sagiri. A handshake? A challenge? The girl still had pride rolling off of her, but something else was rolling off her. Before sagiri could say anything, there was suddenly cheering from the back, Kiuga being the loudest. Kiuga had always been dramatic when it came to girls, so sagiri was not surprised.

"A challenge?" sagiri could not understand when they had agreed on a challenge. She was not being hostile, which was odd.

"Yes, I have chosen you to challenge me. You are worthy of it." Gavina said, and sagiri was more lost than ever.

"Well, I don't have time to..." before sagiri could finish, Kiuga jumped on him and laid his hand on top of his mouth and nose, suffocating sagiri behind his mask.

"You can't deny a girl a challenge. Especially from tsanka. They only ask this of men they consider worthy. If you deny, she will have to fight you to the death or something to keep her honour." Kiuga whispered loudly in Sagiri's ear. All of it seems like trouble. Especially fighting to the death. It was easier to accept her challenge, which he was never going to partake in, than fight a girl to the death for her honour. The girl's hand remained stretched out, and a crowd had even turned to witness.

"Okay," sagiri said after Kiuga took his hand back. He lifted his hand and shook it, and the crowd around them cheered.

"The tsanka clan princess wants to marry the six dance and suffocation chamber protegee?" one whispered loudly as the girl shook Sagiri's hand for a long moment before letting it go.

"Even after he killed her beast?"

"The Tsank women are savages, perhaps they are attracted to violence," another said, and Sagiri's brows furrowed even deeper with each statement. He felt his mischief long before he turned around to find kiuga hunched over, laughing enough till he shed his tears.

"Sagiri the blind, you just accepted a proposal. How naive can you be? First, the girl from Konate and now a Tsanka?" Kiuga laughed harder. What? A proposal.

"What do you mean? She just wants to challenge him?" Kaka, who was beside Kiuga said, and Kiuga laughed even harder.

"You two are so naive. Didn't you read about the many ways different girls from different clans show interest and propose?"

"What?"

"Don't you know the Tsanka only challenges a spouse whom they wish to marry. The women of the Tsanka tribe are feral, and they only know how to fight a man to submission." Kiuga said, and Sagiri's blood ran cold.

"You said if I didn't accept..." Sagiri started, but at this time, Kiuga was crawling on the ground, out of breath

"Of course, you can't deny the kun's princess. I was saving you, you know. It could have ended worse anyway. At least this time you only have a wife to be." Kiuga laughed harder.

"Weren't you claiming you wanted him to marry in your clan?" Nvaru joined the conversation, looking amused. Kiuga stopped laughing and wiped a few tears before he composed himself.

"Sagiri, the blind, you won't marry her, will you? You will marry in my clan, right?" Kiuga said with a serious tone, but his cheeks were still swollen with humour.

Smack!

Kaka landed a slap on the back of Kiuga's head.

"You want a man to take a proposal, and now you want him to trample on a woman's honour. So shameless." Kiuga said.

"Why are you so salty? Don't think I didn't see you train with the teshini girl when you refused to spar with other girls," Kiuga said, and Kaka's brows narrowed. It was true he had been pulled into a spear

fight with the girl. She was truly exceptional, being able to hold her own against kaka. Not even many boys could manage that. They even went two rounds before they called a truce.

"She is a warrior. Must you think of marriage when two warriors spar together?" Kaka defended.

"A warrior and a girl," Kiuga teased, wiggling his brows. Kaka turned red, but before he could strangle kiuga to death, this time a voice tore through the place, catching everyone's attention. Every cadet fell in line and in an alert position with upright stances.

"Warriors, take your position!" an instructor from Kafika took to the stage. She was undoubtedly from the Tsanka clan by her choice of pets circling her wrists all the way to her elbows. And her lungs were something because she managed to bring the place to attention. Twelve captains walked through and stood behind her. Twelve from all the war-oriented academies and instructors from the other school. Ten purple sashes joined in before more and more instructors joined in, all dressed neatly in their school colour combat suits.

"We are about to start the first part of the final exam. You all have to be at the centre of the arena before the sun breaks. Further instructions will be issued there. Cadets, salute your instructors, marshals, and grand marshals, and move out!" she announced, and the chorus salutes began before the cadets moved out. Not knowing what they would be tested on was even more nerve-racking, and as they ran to the biggest arena of Galka War Academy, the tensions spiked.