

KEEPER 200

Chapter 200: STRATEGY II

"Are you sure you are not taking us on top of another grave scale nest? I am still recovering emotionally from almost getting eaten," Kiuga said in a light voice, but Sagiri could feel the boy's uneasiness. It is not every day one gets almost munched by a grave scale.

"I should have let it eat you. An emotional man is a disgrace." Kaka jabbed.

"I am not sure, but this species is quite hard to catch because they are too restless. We will not find one where the cadets are chasing them," Sagiri said. "We move south, then go west, then south again till we reach the heart of the south. We have to go further than we have ever gone before," Sagiri said.

"You have a way of making me trust your words without offering any precaution," Kiuga said. "We move just like Sagiri says. We have a thousand rabbits to catch," Kiuga announced, taking the lead with Kaka.

Further into the tall woods, the squad unraveled their hooking ropes and fell into arrow formation by Kiuga's hand signal. Since they were dealing with a restless target, being loud was the worst way possible. The formation had Kiuga at the front. Sagiri is behind him with N'varu and Kaka flanking him. Banga was behind Sagiri, followed by Bukata, then Zazarie, then Ulekai, then Banga, and Zolinka was at the back of the formation. Most squad 25 formations had Sagiri at the centre. He was stronger now than any of them if he merged completely with the archive, but this was not the time to change the formation. The lead and back of the formation had to be strongest, but Kaka was not the best choice to be in the front because he could not control himself and would just leave the team.

The team moved south for almost an hour in absolute silence before Kiuga signalled for the team to stop.

"Sagiri the blind, are we close?" Kiuga turned to ask as the team came to a stop.

"The rabbits are not where we are going," Sagiri said, and Ulekai almost tumbled over right behind him.

"What do you mean they are not there?" Kaka asked with irritation.

"This boy from nowhere is something. Did you not hear the instruction? They are about catching rabbits. This is not a tour." Maita fanned the flames.

"I'm sure Sagiri has a reason for that. Sagiri, why are we going where there are no rabbits?" Kiuga asked with a tight 'I better not have a reason to agree with the Bami' smile."

"The runner hare species, as I said, loves peace. We are going to the quietest place. They will come there eventually," Sagiri said, and Kiuga nodded, getting it.

"Even if they come. How will we catch them?" N'varu asked.

"Banga, can you make makeshift traps with wood?" Kiuga asked, and Banga nodded. Most tribes of the north and west knew how to trap game, but the central plains Fuzaka and Wataida tribes always went to new levels in making traps.

"Yes," Banga said without hesitation. He only ever showed interest when something was being made.

"Well then, we should move quickly to the quiet place Sagiri wants us to go and wait for the other teams to herd them there. That is your plan, isn't it, Sagiri?" Kiuga asked, and Sagiri nodded. The team got back into formation and moved west, deeper into the terrain, before Sagiri finally asked Kiuga to turn south. They had been moving west for over an hour, trying to be as silent as possible.

"Now moving south once again, the terrain was even more thick as if no one ever went that deep. At some point, it was harder to be airborne between the trees because of how thick they were, and the team moved back to the ground. They switched to walking, and their pace instantly slowed.

"I have a bad feeling about this," Ulekai shuddered.

"Coward," Maita snickered.

"We need some makeshift weapons at least. I feel naked." Zolinka said, echoing everyone's thoughts. The team kept moving till it was midday, and finally, they came to a place where running streams and the undergrowth looked damp.

"This is good," Sagiri said. The sun was up, but no amount of sunlight was able to break into that area. The canopy was so thick that it was dark. Sagiri sank to a crouch and listened.

"It is silent. There are snakes deep in that direction," Sagiri said, pointing east of their position where the small streams of water seemed to emerge from. The boys did not care, and they were already washing their faces. "No rabbit is coming in this direction yet," he added.

"I guess it's a good time for us to pick branches for Banga to make a trap. Bukata, Zolinka, Zazarie, and Maita, you watch in all four directions. Banga, you scout the place to see where you want your traps.

N'varu, Ulekai, you are with me. We find branches to make traps. Sagiri, stay here and watch our backs. If something odd happens, whistle and we all fall back," N'varu said, and everyone moved out to keep watch or pick branches. Sagiri went to the little streams passing by and poured the water on his face, drinking some in the process. He could not care for hygiene at the moment. He had to make sure he was not dehydrated.

Twenty minutes later, Kiuga's squad was back. And Banga sat legs crossed at the centre of the space and got to work. Kiuga even instructed him to make bows and arrows from branches. Making the bow was easy because all it needed was the sash and wet branches. Soon, there was a pile of wood at Banga's feet, and Kiuga's team finally stopped. Sagiri was sitting in a meditative position all the while, but his senses were fully active, and he could feel the chaos ensuing all over the outer district. No team had moved in their direction. The place was too big anyway for two teams to collide unless one was targeting the other.

Soon, Kiuga called all four back with a small whistle. It had been an hour since Bukata started making the traps. Rabbits didn't require big traps, and he had already made a few hundred.

"Sagiri, what do these rabbits like to eat. We can't attract bees without honey?" Bukata asked once they were all gathered.

"They eat grass," Sagiri said, and there was a beat of silence.

"We are doomed," Maita said, grabbing his head dramatically. "We should have caught a few hundred by now, perhaps. How is the grass here different from all else?!" Maita was close to lifting Sagiri by the collar when Sagiri placed a finger to his mouth.

"I said they love a peaceful place. Do you think they would love to eat while being chased down by cadets or find a peaceful, untouched place?" Sagiri said in a cold tone, and Maita retracted his hand. "I think there is movement 30v out, we need to place the already made traps and hide," Sagiri said. It was now past midday, yet the place was so cold and dark.