Sootputra The Unsung Hero

Chapter 36 Padmavati

"what are you doing here?" locking the gate I asked her. "and why only this"

"what's the problem?" she slid her finger on my arm.

The room was filled with her flowery scent. The sound of her payal, mixed with the humming of night composed a rhythmic beat.

"Vrushali, take me seriously. Why are you here? Does your family, your father know ?"

She was silent a moment "Let's not talk about that" the cool breeze felt on my skin with every touch of her. Then I saw that the breeze was coming from the extended balcony.

"Vrushaliii!....." she read my face and stopped. Her hands held both of her arms. The open revealing clothes left only a little to imagination.

Therefore as the spiky cool winds struck her fair smooth skin she started shivering. Her coal black hair flowed with the wind. She was rubbing her side arms to keep warm.

"thanks" she said covering herself with the warm blanket I put on her from the bed.

"Now sit and talk......"

She sat there for a bit, as if figuring out where to start.

"well this explains why both me and Shon were not able to meet you, in so many times we came here.

You were purposely avoiding us."

I folded my hands under my chin as we both sat down.

"the question is why?"

She finally spoke "its been almost a year since we last spoke. Tears started forming up."

And then she cried

"he is sick Karna, father is ill. We are barely getting by. I had to make a little more money. For him, for us."

"What are you saying, Satyase----" but as I spoke his name a realization dawned on me.

It was duryodhan driving his chariot when we came back.

"yes, him. I am ashamed to even call him my brother. It was long after I came from Anga. At first he and his wife were quite welcoming. I even played with their children. Father also seemed happy.

" oh god what have I done? " i whispered.

" Father was sick, so the harvest wasn't good this year. In fact almost none. The whole family was struggling to keep afloat with only Satyasen earning for us all. But it didn't lasted much long, he threw us out a few months ago and sold the farming land.

Ever since then I have been going here and there, seeking shelter, doing all sorts of work, finally settling on this. "

" if not for me father would've been dead. I am scared for him Karna. I am scared for us. "

" you should have come to me, you should have come to Shon. " I said

" To do what.... Beg. " there was a moment of pause, the whispers of air could be heard." Karna, it was clear where we left ourselves. I just couldn't face you after that. That's why I avoided you. "

I grabbed her soft cold palms and placed the small pouch I had on me in them. Also all the rings and the only bracelet.

"Sorry, this is what I only have on me right now. If we were at Anga I would have given more."

She chuckles "you were never one to wear much jewelleries, after all. Still....." she placed it back. "I can't take this."

"Why?"

"You already know why?"

A guilt was trippin me from inside. "Vrushali I am not doing this for you. I am doing this for your father. And also......" I stopped.

"please just take it. I promise I will not pursue and if you want, I will not show my face to you ever again. But please don't let Uncle suffer for this. Because if anything happens to him, you will never be able to forgive yourself. "

She slowly extended her hands and silently grabbed all the things back." I would like to see you again. " she said in a low soft voice.

" I would like that too. So shall I make you permanent. Exclusive only to me. "

Both of us chuckled. Except my laugh was a little fake.

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"so how was it" Duryodhan's room was dimly lit, thus time od the day. The lamps and torches had been on the verge of dying. It was the constant breeze that was beating them to submission.

"it was different........"

"Good different" he asked.

"yeah..... Good. Duryodhan if its not so much of a trouble, I would like to make her exclusive. Only to me.

Pay her what you do right now. But treat her like any normal servant....

But her other nightly services will be exclusive to me."

"A weird request" he puts his hand on his chin. His eyebrows are raised.

"why don't you just take her with you"

He caught me a little of guard. "ah... She.. She has her family here. She doesn't want to leave them."

"One could say you are infatuated with her"

"something like that" i said.

He laughs. "Fine I'll do it. Anything for Angraj. No one except you will lay a hand on her."

"thanks" I had to make a little lie to him to protect her. I had already seen the lust dripping from Dusashan's eyes when he saw vrushali in those clothes. He will not leave until he eats every portion of her skin.

At least this way even if he tries, she can try to escape or scream and duryodhan will handle the rest.

Still even after all that, the feeling of guilt didn't leave. I had hid the fact about leaving Satyasen behind from Vrushali. I don't know why I lost the courage to speak, but I just simply didn't.

What was happening with him in the kingdom of Kalinga. One part of me said that he deserved it for throwing Uncle and Vrushali out, but the other part knew that she will not see it that way. He is still her brother, a brother who she loved no matter what she said.

I just wished that he was on his way home, or the future is going to be grim for his wife and children.

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After that the whole capital went into celebrations. The roads were rebuild again, There was so much commotion in the market. Every shop whether it be a halwai, blacksmith, tailor, cobbler went busy all of a sudden. Even several farmers were given more than what they usually got of their harvest. I should know because Maa, was very happy about it. Even though I take care of any financial troubles at my house in the capital. Even gave them more than needed, but still she somehow she was more happy for that extra money. I didn’t dared ask, why? Cause first, I didn’t wanted to incur more wrath on me and second, I didn’t wanted to disturb that smile she had.

Almost everything was happy around here. I say almost because, Satyasen still hadn’t returned and also, there was one more person who was directly linked to this marriage, whom I still didn’t knew how she felt. In fact I still haven’t met her for myself. Whether she was happy that her father was also coming to the marriage or was she secretly crying in her bed, because of this forced tradition on her.

I was standing at the threshold of the door to the courtyard (Yes, the house now had a courtyard.) when I saw her. She came running.

“So!?” I asked her immiediatly.

She was hesitating to speak.

“Karna, she ….she was…..”

“What!?” I jolted her awake.

“I wasn’t able to get an audience. “ She said loosening my hands. “But, at night I went near her room, and I could hear her shedding tears. Like when I do…I mean I did…” She said stopping at every word thereafter.

But I wasn’t listening to her. The princess of Kalinga, The only daughter to Kaling. She must have been raised with so much care and love. The only daughter of her family, Her father must have adored her. She must have taken it for granted, without even realizing it. Granting almost every wish she expressed at her first behest. Never letting her get sad, let alone cry. And now because of me, she …she was crying in her bed. She can’t even express herself fully. Dying bit by bit from inside.

I grabbed my left trembling fist, it was so much frustrating to feel so helpless. It’s that how Pitama Bhisma felt when he abducted those princesses. Am I following in his footsteps. I always wanted to surpass that old dude but not like this.

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