Chapter 34 Reliable Baas

Baas stared up into the golden-red sky. It was close to sunset and the group was still in the grassy fields with no sign of the grey territory. That didn’t concern Baas though. Even with the backpack he had on, he felt pretty good and not really tired. What did concern him was the sky. What was it exactly? It was so high up there that there was really no way to tell. Was there really something there or could one pass through it? And why did it change colors? Did it have something to do with the sun, or perhaps the moon was the actual culprit? Perhaps even the clouds had something to do with…

“Hey… Baas.” Hearing Sheina’s voice snapped Baas out of his thoughts. “Do you… think we’ll be… stopping soon.”

Analysis. As a Leader, It’s what the Center had trained Baas to do best. Sheina was not in a good state. She was sweating hard, breathing heavily and the skin color on her face was not natural.

“Sheina, are you okay?” Baas asked concerned.

“Huh? Yeah.” Sheina said, pretending she didn’t know what he was talking about. “I… I was just… just wondering if… if it were time… for a break soon. Not… not that I need one.”

“Uh, Sheina, you don’t look so good. If you need a break… ”

“No I don’t need one Baas. I’m… not going to hold up the group. If… if they don’t need to rest… then… then I don’t need to. This is the hardest… hardest part of war right?”

Baas raised an eyebrow to show he didn’t believe her.

“Right.” He said sarcastically. “Come on. Let’s go ask Atsuma if we can stop for a while.” Baas hurried to catch up to the rest of the group.

“Baas, no, wait.” Sheina tried to follow him, but her body suddenly wouldn’t go any more. Her vision started to blur.

“Baas.” She cried out weakly. It was the last thing she said before losing consciousness.

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Atsuma wiped the sweat from his brow. He wanted to stop and rest. The group had been walking for some time now since their last break. Plus, the sun was going down. Traveling during the night might have been cooler, but it was also more dangerous. In reality, he had every reason to stop. However, he knew that if the group stopped they would not make it to the grey territory before tomorrow. Atsuma glanced at the sky again. It hadn’t rained for days and the sky was showing signs. It was definitely going to rain the next day and he wanted to get to grey territory before then. So until then, he would just have to suck it up.

“Atsuma,” Pandora said sweating hard, “don’t you think it’s time for a break?”

Atsuma understood. The group had been traveling for days with only small breaks during the day and a sleeping break during the night. Spirits were bound to be down. Still, rain was coming.

“I want to Panda,” he responded, “but I think we should keep going. At this rate, we’ll reach the first Grey territory by the midnight. Plus, it hasn’t rained in a while. There’s a good chance that it will tomorrow. Do you want to get caught in that?”

“Yeah Panda.” Koroko said as though he were not phased. “Stop making such a big fuss. You don’t see me complaining.”

“Koroko, stop playing like your invincible.” Pandora snapped back. “You’re just as tired as I am. Look at you. You’re sweating through your chainmail. I bet your muscles are so tired, you couldn’t swing your sword properly.”

Koroko smiled at Pandora in a mischievous way.

“Maybe, but at least I’m not complaining.”

“Don’t make me slap you.”

“So long as you don’t complain about it after words.”

Both Atsuma and Koroko laughed at that. Pandora was about to respond, but her statement was interrupted from a voice from behind.

“Atsuma!” Baas called out coming toward the group. “Atsuma, do you think we could take a break!”

The group stopped and turned around.

“Kid,” Atsuma called back with a smirk. “Don’t tell me that after that long training session with Koroko, you’re tired after a little walking.”

Baas got closer to Atsuma. Atsuma was shocked to see that despite the traveling they had done, Baas was sweating the least of the group.

“Me?” Baas asked. “No. I could keep this up all night long. I was actually concerned about…” He turned around as though he were referring to someone. However, no one was behind him.

“Sheina? Where’d she go?”

“Wasn’t she with you?” Atsuma asked.

“Yeah, she was right next to me. She was telling me that she wasn’t tired and could keep going, but based on the color of her skin, her heavy breathing and the amount of sweat coming from her body, I could tell she was in an unhealthy state.”

“You mean like… she was about to collapse?”

“Yeah like…” Baas thought about the situation for a second. “Oh.”

“Baas you moron.” Atsuma began to hurry in the direction that they had been walking from. Baas was right behind him. It wasn’t long before they found Sheina’s collapsed body. Baas had been right. Her skin was a bit redder than usual and she was sweating and breathing more heavily than the rest of the group. Atsuma put his hand on Sheina’s forhead.

Upon seeing Baas and Atsuma hurry away, Pandora and Koroko followed but at a slightly slower pace. They were shocked to see their teammate collapsed on the floor.

“What happened?” Pandora asked.

“Heat exhaustion.” Atsuma concluded. “Sheina’s body isn’t used to working in this heat likes ours are. She’s been inside all her life.”

“Atsuma,” Pandora said hurridly, “we need to…”

“I know, I know.” Atsuma said. He stood up and began to take command. “We’ll camp here on this hill for tonight. There isn’t any wood around for us to make a fire, so we’ll have to stay close. Baas I need you to…” Atsuma turned to where he last saw Baas, but Baas was no longer there. He was closer to Sheina now holding a container he had got from the backpack that was now on the ground. Atsuma watched as Baas poured all the water inside the container onto the ground.

“Baas, what are you doing to our water supply!?”

“Hang on Sheina.” Baas said not hearing Atsuma. His mind was focused on one thing. He then pulled up a wet clothe. Though it had looked like he had poured the water on the ground, he had actually poured it on a clothe he had also got from the bag. He then took the clothe and placed it on Sheina’s forehead. Baas then blew softly across the towel. Feeling the coolness of the clothe caused Sheina to open her eyes. They opened slowly but soon enough she was conscious.

“Baas?” She said, sounding as though she had just woken up. “Baas… I told you… I’m not… tired.”

After that, she fell back asleep.

“Sure you’re not.” Baas said with a comforting smile.

“Baas.” Atsuma said startling him. He had forgotten he was there. “What did you do?”

Baas shrugged as though it were no big deal.

“Her body was hot so I figured I needed to cool it down. But since she was already sweating, I figured she needed a bigger jolt of cold atmosphere. With the wind blowing across it, a wet clothe was the best solution.”

“And you thought of all just now? No one told you about it before?”

Baas shrugged again. “Yeah. Seemed like common sense to me.”

“It is common sense, to someone who’s seen heat exhaustion before. However, you’re straight out of the Center where there’s barely any sun. That’s not something you would have encountered.”

Once again Baas shrugged. He was too concerned with Sheina’s wellbeing to really think about why he knew what he knew.

Atsuma smirk returned to his face. “I think Baas has got this guys.” He said. “Let’s set up a perimeter for camp. We’re out in the open in enemy territory so we’ll have to be careful.”

After reaching inside the bag for some materials, Atsuma, Koroko and Pandora began to set up camp around Sheina. Before continuing, Atsuma took one last glance at the two.

“Kid’s pretty reliable.” He then continued his business.

Meanwhile, Baas continued to care for his friend.

“Baas.” Sheina said. Baas knew she was only mumbling in her sleep. “Once this is over…”

“Yeah yeah yeah.” Baas responded even though he knew she couldn’t really hear him. “‘Everything will be easy.’ That’s what Vatti always told me and it’s what I always told you. Guess we forgot to mention that you actually have to get past the hardest part of war in order for everything else to be easy.”

“Baas.” Sheina spoke again. Baas looked at her. Her eyes were open this time. She was conscious but still drowsy.

“Did it hurt Baas?” she asked him.

Baas was confused. Sheina was the one on the floor exhausted. “Did what hurt?”

“You… you went five minutes without telling a joke. Did… did it hurt?”

Baas thought about what was said. Then, he smiled. He of all people knew a joke was a great way to clear the atmosphere.

“See?” Sheina said still weak. “It wasn’t so hard.” Then, just before she fell back asleep she said one more thing.

“Why can’t you always be like this. You’d make a pretty reliable person.”

Baas wanted to respond with a joke, but it was too late. Sheina was back asleep. It didn’t matter to Baas though. A joke made Baas feel that Sheina would be okay and that was all that mattered. Of all the things he said were the hardest parts of war, there was one thing he had never gotten past and that he had never hoped to have to go through again.

Chapter 34 End