Chapter 52 : New Abilities

Sheina took a deep breath. Today would be the day. She grasped her twin swords tightly. They were no longer new looking. Though still sharp as ever, there were stains from dirt and sweat of hard work.

Several days had past since Atsuma had told the team his story of Sean. In that time, the team continued to travel North West toward the great river of Wig-Or-Log. As their journey continued, the team spent more time with each other and became close and closer. Particularly Sheina and Keely whom were glad to have someone around their general age and of the same gender to relate to. Almost like best friends, the two would often be seen whispering and giggling to each other about who knows what. And should someone get near, namely Baas whose curiosity often brought him over there, they would get quiet or immediately change the subject.

While they did that, Atsuma Pandora and Koroko often spent their time reminiscing about the past. All the adventures they went through; all the stories they could tell; many of them, if not all of them, seemed to pop up in that amount of time.

Baas often found himself alone. Not because he didn’t want to spend time with the others, which he often did want, but for some reason his mind seemed to wonder off. He found himself asking questions over and over again about things no one really cared about. At one point, what grass was made of seemed to be really interesting to him. At another, the process of how wind was created was intriguing. There was even an incident where he had questions about female anatomy, but he knew better than to ask anyone about that. Still, when he did ask his questions, he was always lead to a dead end. It was as though no one cared enough to even begin to wonder what the answer was. No one but Baas. Baas didn’t understand why no one else found these things fascinating. He would begin to wonder about that too, but then something else more important would come into his brain. Like what humans do to grow during their lifespan. That was extremely important to him.

Baas was not the only one who took time out for himself. On many stops, Sheina would take some time to go train with her swords. Baas, Keely or both would often go with her under Atsuma’s orders to make sure nothing happened. It wasn’t that Sheina needed a babysitter like Baas, but if something happened or if an enemy came, the more people there, the better. Sheina would often hope Keely would come alone since she was younger and about at the same skill level. With Baas there, Sheina would feel herself slipping up under pressure of him watching her. Either that, or she would get upset at the fact that she was less interesting to him then the random questions he seemed to be so interested in. Another perk with having Keely with her was that she actually had useful advice. With her dad being a former Commander, she had learned many tricks to make an interesting fighting style. In return, Sheina would teach her some of the basics she had missed in the Center.

So now, here she was yet again. This time, she wasn’t in an opening field like she had been when before. The team had recently reached a forest. With trees surrounding, Sheina had found a small opening she could practice in.

This time, she was hoping she would get down that difficult move. She might have more confidence in herself were it Keely there. But this time, Baas was there sitting on a boulder next to his hood. He was staring in the air blankly, probably thinking about some conundrum. That was just great. Not only was he making her nervous, but he wasn’t even interested in her skills.

“Baas.” She called out to him. Baas blinked to show that he was no longer thinking. “Tell me what you think of this move.”

Baas began to focus on Sheina now. A new move? That would be interesting. Would he be able to do it? Probably not since it was a twin sword technique and he hadn’t been practicing with those lately.

As Baas’ mind went off wondering, he kept his focus on Sheina which was good enough for her. She began to refocus herself on her moves. Closing her eyes, she began to refocus.

Now

She took the sword in her left hand and tossed it lightly in the air. She then extended her right arm and pointed the other sword out away with the curve pointing up. The left sword went up slightly and came back down. This was the hard part. She had to time it just right. As soon as the left sword came down on the right sword, she rotated her arm clockwise. Did she do it? Yes! The left sword was spinning around her right sword. Sheina kept her arm rotating. The smile on her face made it obvious at how happy she was. Finally, she had gotten this move down, and even better she did it in front of…

“Baas!” she called out to him. But Baas was no longer listening. In the midst of Sheina performing her new move, he noticed the shine on her swords. That led him to wondering what swords were made out of. Metal. That answer led him to wondering what metal was made out of. Technically it was a type of rock, right? He began to examine the rocks on the ground and while he did, he noticed similarities between the rocks and the dirt. Getting on his hands and knees, he began to examine them closely. Now, he was holding a fist sized rock in his left hand and some dirt in his right. Was it possible that dirt was just small pieces of broken down rock? And if so, what forced caused all those rocks to suddenly…

“Baas!” Sheina voice rang in Baas’ ear. He turned to see the frustrated female staring at him. Hey, Maybe Sheina knew.

“Sheina, do you know if dirt is the same as small rocks?”

Sheina opened her mouth shocked, but no words came out. Just a small squeak followed by silence and then more squeaks. Had Baas really stopped paying attention to her, AGAIN, just to examine dirt? She was indeed upset at this. She wanted to find someway to get back at him. And she knew how.

“I can’t believe you missed seeing my awesome move just to play in the dirt. I guess now you’ll never know what it is.” As Sheina turned around and crossed her arms, she smirked at herself. She knew Baas’ curiosity in fighting would make him hunger for the knowledge of what her knew move was. But she would not tell him. No matter how he begged, she would not let him know that…

“You mean the way you rotated one of your swords around the other one?” Baas asked.

Sheina almost tripped when she heard Baas.

“You saw it?” she asked not knowing what to do anymore.

“Not really.” Baas said never looking up from what was in his hands. “But I heard the sound of metal clinging together in a certain pattern. Since the sound was continuous, I figured that you simply weren’t clinging your swords together and since you said it was a new move, I thought the best option was twirling your swords.”

Then, Baas got an idea. One that made him put down the rocks and smaller rocks. He then put his left hand on his chin and his right hand on his left elbow. A common sign to show that one is thinking.

“That move is interesting. It gives you a defense that you’re opponent wouldn’t see coming. The other person wouldn’t be able to get near you from the front and would probably be so stunned that you could finish the fight before they had time to respond. However, once it’s over, or if you fail, you’ll more than likely lose the sword you aren’t holding onto. But, say you tie a single rope, about as long as your arm span to the ends of each sword. The twirling move then becomes almost impossible, but, you would get the same defensive strategy plus a barrage of moves that you could perform!”

Baas then got really excited and grabbed onto Sheina shoulders.

“Sheina, lets go get some rope. I wanna try that out.”

Sheina’s face turned to disappointment. Her plan had backfired. Baas’ curiosity not only made him go further in his mind, but it also made him think of a better move than she had. Not only one move, but he instantly thought of a whole strategy.

She slowely turned away from Baas and said in disappointment.

“Let’s just get back to the others Baas.”

“What?” Baas asked confused. “But we just got here.”

“I’m not really in the mood to practice anymore.”

Baas didn’t understand, but he didn’t have to. Baas could see his friend no longer wanted to be here and was an understanding person.

He quickly headed back to where he had been sitting and picked up his hood. Even though it wasn’t raining, Baas often kept the hood Sheina had got for him on. He thought it made him look like a cool, mysterious person.

Placing the hood on his head, Baas hurried after Sheina to go back to the group.

Chapter 52 End

Chapter 53 : A Moment of Peace

The sun shown down on the trees with intensity. However, thanks to the cool shade of the forest and the breeze blowing water from the river nearby, Atsuma did not think it was hot at all. As he lay there against the tree at the edge of the opening in the forest, he began to ponder the future events of him and his team. The trip was taking longer than he would have liked. By now, the people in Orange might know something was up with him and his team. They would have to speed up the pace if they wanted to keep Cham from getting too upset. Also, they were beginning to run out of food. Everyday, the bag Baas carried got smaller and smaller. Now it was mainly full of clothes and dishes. That wasn’t a huge problem though since picking fruit along the way was not a complicated task. What might cause a problem was bathing. The team could only bathe in groups whenever a river was spotted and that slowed them down extremely. If Atsuma could make the awkwardness of mixed bathing go away, he would, but that was something impossible.

Putting all the factors into play, Atsuma guess it would be another 3 days before they reached the next Grey territory. The woods they were sitting in now were already next to the Great River. All they had to do was head North and they would reach it. Well… maybe not all they had to do. The team, of course, couldn’t get too close to the river since blue ships constantly patrolled the Great River. Still, if the team stayed hidden in the forest, they should be able to make it there without any trouble.

Even though they were still in enemy territory, Atsuma felt relieved to be out of the Golds’ territory. The Blues may be enemies too, but that’s all they were. They weren’t bad guys, they were just other people fighting for their territory. Not that they’d ever win the war. Had the Greens not pulled their vanishing act, the Blues would actually be in last place to win the war. Atsuma knew why. They were too comfortable with the water. Their main base was in the middle of the lake in the South West of the land, so they always tried to fight while staying near the water. Atsuma did admit that they were pretty good foes when near the water, but there were too many variables that could throw them off.

Golds and Oranges were the only real standings to win the war since they came up with good strategies. Perhaps the Greens too, but Atsuma couldn’t really say anything about the Greens since he himself had never fought one. Plus, anyone who spends their time hiding would probably never win the war. In fact, the Golds couldn’t win either. According to the Discretes, the Officials agreed that whatever country won the war would have their ways established over the rest of Wig-Or-Log. No way would Orange allow their country to become stuck up like the Golds. Orange would win the war. They must win. They could show the rest of the world the proper way to live.

Atsuma’s private thoughts came to a halt as he heard noise. He looked up. Pandora and Koroko were still in their positions. Koroko lay in a similar position to Atsuma’s left about 15 meters from the center of the opening. Pandora was imbetween Koroko and Atsuma also laying down. The noise wasn’t coming from them. He then looked across the field at where Keely was. She was not laying, but she was looking toward Atsuma. Not at him, just toward him. The noise was not coming from her. So, it must have been coming from…

“We’re back.” Baas announced with an energetic smile. “Did you miss us?”

Both Baas and Sheina emerged from the forest from behind Atsuma. Sheina immediately headed towards Keely to tell her the news of her practice while Baas stayed standing near Atsuma.

Atsuma reached to his side and picked up Baas’ sword and shield. He tossed them at Baas who was ready to catch both of them.

“Why in the Wig would you ever leave your weapon behind in enemy territory? I know you’re only 16 but come on.”

“Yeah.” Baas said with a nervous smile. “I realized after we got there that I had left my stuff here.” He then shrugged and kept his smiling. “Sorry.”

“You need to stop going off in dazes and pay attention.”

“I’m sorry, but back when I left, I was wondering exactly how our bands know when to change color.”

“It figures.”

“But it’s strange isn’t it? Are our bands part of our bodies? And if they are, why are they so different from the rest of our bodies. They feel more like a combination of cloth and metal rather than flesh. Does something happen to them when we are born…”

“Whoa whoa whoa. Slow down Baas. I can tell you that people aren’t born with bands. In fact, Sean never had a band the whole three years that he was with me.”

“We’re not born with these things?!” Baas asked pointing to his band.

“Then how…”

Baas immediately stopped speaking. In that very instant, something flew past his face and hit the tree right above Atsuma. When he had heard it hit the tree, Atsuma immediately stood up to look at the object. It was an arrow. But it wasn’t like the Oranges arrows. The craftsman ship was better looking though not as effective than the typical Orange arrow. Atsuma immediately recognized it. It was an arrow from the blue territory. As the conclusion hit his brain, it hit everyone else’s too.

The team was under attack.

Immediately and instinctively, they all headed toward where Keely and Sheina were as that was where the arrow had came from. Sheina and Keely backed away from the trees to prepare themselves for the battle that was about to occur.

Suddenly, there were voices. Voices screaming. The Blues were attacking! But they hadn’t come from the direction the arrow had came. Baas and Atsuma immediately made a 180 degree turn to see several people wearing blue bands attacking from the forest. They barely had time to brace themselves. As Atsuma saw the fighters, a realization came to his mind. The arrow wasn’t for attacking Atsuma’s team. It was to distract them. Somehow, the Blues had made their way around the team, away from the river and had someone shoot from the opposite direction. That would make Atsuma’s team focus that way while the Blues charged. Atsuma was a little angry at his stupidity but he managed to get out a smirk. This was a clever strategy indeed. That meant this fight was gonna be fun.

Chapter 53 End