Chapter 61 : Too Much Fun

“You know something Panda?”

“What Koroko?”

“I just realized that I could’ve killed that guy in the storage room.”

“Now’s really not the time for that Koroko.”

“I’m just sayin. He was right there and I had a sword. Can’t believe I didn’t slit his throat or something.”

“Koroko!”

“What!? It would have been painless.”

As Pandora sighed at the stupidity of her teammate, she continued to try to maintain her focus. The area opposite of the captains chair was indeed higher than most of the deck, but she still needed to focus. After triple checking her aim, she let an arrow go. It hit one of the many crew mates in the shoulder causing him to fall over the side.

“Panda, if yore not going to kill these guys, then go hide somewhere so I can.”

“How about you worry about your job, so I can do mine.”

“What job? All you’re doing is shooting a bow. You act like it’s **so** difficult.”

Koroko laughed at himself as he smacked away another enemy’s blade with his own. Normally, he would go about ship, fighting and killing as many people as he could. But because Pandora was easily accessible, he was left with the task of guarding her from Near attacks while she fired off. His body was in a non stop movement as he defended the stairs that led to the higher part of the deck. Since it was eight on two, he could never stop moving his sword to keep people away. But that didn’t mean he had to do it silently.

As the two partners fought in the best way they knew how, a yell came out of nowhere.

“AAAAAHHHHH!!!”

All turned to see what it was. Emerging from the lower deck from the entrance next to the stairs Koroko was guarding was Baas. He saw the crowd of people in front of him and immediately took action.

“Out of my way!” He cried. “She’s gonna kill me!”

When he reached the entrance of the upper deck, he took a small leap in the air, moving forward as he moved up. While in the air, he twirled his body letting his shield slide down his arm as he did. By the end of the spin, the shield had reached the edge of his arm. The result was that his shield launched itself forward as a projectile.

Upon seeing a shield come flying at them, the crew of the ship all dodged out of the way, leaving exactly what Baas had wanted, a free path. The shield hit the captain’s chair and rather than landing flat, it rolled on its side back toward Baas. Getting what he wanted, Baas continued to run forward.

In the seconds that this happened, the viewing audience of Blues and Oranges were confused. It was then made clear as to why he was doing this. Immediately after Baas came out, following him was the captain of the ship. Running full speed, she followed Baas with the sign of fury in her eyes.

Letting the two through and understanding now what was happening, the Blues and Orange began to focus back on their own enemies. Still, both Orange and Blue fighters couldn’t help but let a little smile appear on their face. To the Oranges, they knew Baas had done something completely outrageous. To the Blues, they knew their captain’s fury. To all, it was fun to see their teammates’ attributes being used against the enemy.

As Baas ran, he picked up the shield that was coming back to him. He knew she was coming and he needed to prepare himself. But there was not much on this ship. Baas had already reached the captains chair. He would just have to use what he had. Quickly, he got behind the chair to put something between him and the female death machine he called his best friend.

“Come on Vatti!” He cried out before she reached him. “It was just a…”

Vatti’s sword came down across the chair. Baas moved to his right and let it hit the chair. It was a good thing Vatti used a flat sword. She couldn’t do much damage to the seat and she was limited to certain types of swings. Of course, should one of those swings hit, the impact would hurt as though someone were hitting you with both a sword and a hammer.

Baas clung to the back of the chair all the while trying to bring Vatti to her senses.

“I’m telling you Vatti, I didn’t mean to..”

Another vertical slice. Baas moved again, this time to his left. Pulling her sword back to her, Vatti began to circle the chair but as she did, Baas moved in the same rotation, taking the back of the chair with him. A couple of steps left. A few more right. Vatti caught on and figured the solution to this strategy. She went forward and stepped on the chair to go over it and reach her prey. Panicking, Baas scurried away from the area of the chair back to the center of the ship. The mast of the ship, which also held the crow’s nest, caught his eye.

“Baas!” Vatti cried out slowly coming toward him. “Get back here and fight.”

“I would Vatti, I’m having too much fun not dying.”

“I’m so gonna kill you.”

“You’ll have to catch me first.” Baas said smiling. He then headed over and began climbing the ladder like ropes to the mast. Vatti immediately followed. As the two of them climbed up, Sheina emerged from the exit they both had came from. Immediately she spotted them. Despite the fact that Koroko was right next to her fighting, her attention was caught on the two climbing. Vatti’s rage. Baas’ stupidity. She could only imagine how far they would take things.

Giggling all the way, Baas looked back down. Vatti was right on his tale. Wow, she had gotten faster. She was still Vatti, though. Just like he was still Baas. As she continued to climb, Vatti began to speak.

“Just wait until I get my hands on you. I’m gonna take my sword and cut your lips off.”

“Really now Vatti.” Baas replied sarcastically. “Ladies should not be speaking in such a manner. Oh wait that’s right...”

Baas did not finish his sentence, but Vatti knew what he was insinuating. The constant, “Vatti is a boy” joke. This made her angrier and made her climb faster.

When Baas reached the top of the mast, he prepared himself. Vatti came right behind him. It was the same thing as before. As Vatti circled around the pole in the center of the crow’s nest, Baas went in the same rotation. As he circled, Baas continued his conversation.

“I don’t see why you’re so upset Vatti.”

Vatti turned around and horizontally sliced. Baas stopped to have the sword hit the pole in front of him. He then backed up and continued to speak.

“It was just a kiss.” Again Vatti stopped her movement and turned around with a slice. Missing again, Baas continued to speak.

“Most people are joyous when they receive something like this.”

Vatti pushed her sword forward to stab Baas. Baas not only dodged the sword, but as it passed him, he pushed his fist down on it. The sword then headed into the wall of the mast. As Vatti caught her breath, Baas jumped on the edge of the wall and smirked.

“Or maybe, you actually did enjoy it and now you’re just trying to cover up your love for me with anger.”

Baas had only meant it as a joke, but his comment made Vatti’s heart began to beat faster. Out of frustration she quickly pulled her sword out to continue her chase. Baas knew what to do. Walking along the edge of the wall he came to a rope. The rope was tied to the wall Baas was standing on and lead to the side of the boat.

“Admit it Vatti…” Baas said. He then jumped off the side. A quick flash of worry came over Vatti expecting to see a wounded Baas at the bottom of the ship. To her surprise, Baas was fine. When he jumped, he put his sword over his head and, grabbing both ends, he slid down the rope. As he did, he called out to Vatti finishing his sentence.

“You missed meeeee.”

Before reaching the end, Baas let go of the blade of his sword allowing him to fall. After rolling and regaining his balance, he looked back at the mast. Just as he thought, Vatti was sliding down it as well using her sword. She landed in front of Baas, sticking the landing with a squat.

“It’s okay Vatti.” Baas said smiling “I know you missed me. After all, who wouldn’t miss a wonderful dude like me? I take it you’ve become nothing without me.”

“I’ve become nothing!?” Vatti asked. She jumped forward with a barrage of slices, all of which Baas dodged.

“Well, looked what I’ve done.” Baas pointed out while dodging. “I joined the greatest team in Orange and left earlier than anyone in the country.

All the while swinging, Vatti responded.

“You think that’s impressive? I’m a Great One and I’m still 16 years old.”

“I hear you’re known for your strategy, not your fighting skills.”

“Are you saying I can’t fight!”

“No. I’m just saying I’ve gotten better than you. I’m known for my skills.”

“How can you even say that?”

“Because it’s true.”

Vatti was getting angrier and angrier. Baas’ statements were making no sense. Plus, he was making a fool of himself. He was not using his weapons at all. He was just dodging blows. Eventually he would run out of steam. He needed some offense. A better fighter than her? As if. He was so busy trying to have fun that he didn’t realize his horrible fighting strategy. He didn’t remember all the times she beat him. All the times she proved herself better. She was the reason Baas was good in the first place. Were it not for her, Baas would be just another ordinary Leader. Vatti knew that, and it was time to remind Baas.

She jumped in the air and put immense power in her next attack, hoping for it to be a finisher. It was a downward slice toward Baas. As she did, she screamed at Baas in anger for underestimating her skills.

“DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY TIMES WE’VE FOUGHT!”

Baas smirked. That’s what he had been waiting for.

\*Shing\*

In the midst of her comment, Baas finally pulled out his sword to block her attack. As the realization of this came into Vatti’s brain, Baas looked at her in the eyes with his cocky smirk and said…

“One million.”

Those words brought a realization to Vatti. This person in front of her, this smug person, it was Baas. This was her friend. And she was engaged in a fight with him. A fight with Baas, her favorite activity to do and she was just blindly swinging. That wasn’t how it was suppose to work. Vatti closed her eyes and sighed.

“And how many times have I beaten you?” she asked calmly.

That line brought a huge smile across Baas’ face.

“One million and one.”

Finally, the real Vatti had returned. Baas hadn’t fought Vatti in far too long. If he was finally gonna get that chance, he was gonna do it right. Vatti had to be focused. Otherwise, this would be no fun at all.

Chapter 61 End

Chapter 62 : The Two Friends

Atsuma slowly entered the chamber of the ship. It wasn’t much different than the others he had visited. Low ceiling, barrels and ropes scattered about and moist from the air of being on water for so long. Like the other rooms, the dim lit lanterns signified that people hardly ever came in the room. It made sense to Atsuma. As he passed by the rooms on the ship, he often heard voices or noises. That meant that most of the people were in their rooms. The thought of how Blues could possibly run a ship with so few people on deck crossed Atsuma’s mind, but it left immediately as he focused on his goal. He moved through the pile of barrels that were as tall as his waist, trying to get to the wall of the ship. It had to be here somewhere. This was the last one, if he could just find it he could… ah there it was.

Atsuma came to a spot on the wall that was colored differently than the rest of the ship. It was a small patch right above the floor along the wall. He would do just as he did the other three. A couple of strikes and water would come flooding in. He had to hurry though, he had already felt the shaking from his previous attempts. That meant the ship was already going down and Atsuma did not want to be caught below deck when the ship sank fully. The great river of Wig-Or-Log was plenty deep. It could hold the entire ship and still have plenty of room for others to sail over it. Escaping from there would be difficult indeed. Of course, if Atsuma had wanted to play it safe, he could leave now and have the ship sink at a much slower pace, but he didn’t want to play it safe. He didn’t become a Great One by playing it safe. And if he left now, the Blues still had a chance to save their ship. Should he open this last hole, the water would flood faster than they could cope with.

So, wasting no time, the Leader grasped the blade part of his sword preparing to use the other end as a hammer. It was a good thing the Blue weapons weren’t that sharp, otherwise he would have had to be more careful with how he held the blade. He brought the handle of the blade just in front of the patch.

“Okay Atsuma, follow the plan. Destroy ship, run like crazy, laugh at Blues once I get to shore.”

He took a deep breath and prepared to charge forward. Suddenly, he stopped at the voice he heard from behind.

“So that’s what’s going on.” Is what the female said. Atsuma quickly jumped on his feet, turned around, and tossed his sword to re-catch it with the handle in his hand. Upon seeing the figure, he gritted his teeth with regret.

“Oh great, it’s you.”

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Vatti swung her sword horizontally to attack Baas. Baas shifted his right shoulder to have the shield block the attack. This might have been a good time to counter attack had it been someone who wasn’t Vatti. For Vatti knew Baas’ strategies and could easily follow up. That’s exactly what she did too. When her sword went in the air, Vatti kept the momentum flowing and brought it back down for a diagonal slice. It came low toward Baas’ legs. Baas jumped backwards, dodging the blow and putting some space between him and Vatti. He would have just jumped up, but that would have left him wide open for an attack. With this, he could examine Vatti better as well as keep himself safe. Analysis. It’s what they trained him to do best at the Center.

After the last attack, Vatti slowed her momentum down and brought her sword to her side.

“Baas,” she said “you’ll never hit anything if all you do is defend.”

Baas thought about that, and put a quick grin on his face.

“Oh yeah, well you’ll never hit anything if all you do is miss.”

Vatti rolled her eyes.

“Alright then fine.”

She then charged at Baas with her sword pointed toward him. Baas began to run to his left, as he did, Vatti changed directions to stay in front of him, bringing her sword back to her side. After a couple of steps, Baas suddenly came forward toward Vatti. Vatti stopped in her tracks to swing from her right. That’s what Baas had been hoping for. He didn’t just run because he felt like it, he wanted to lure Vatti. Right next to her, within the range of her sword, was the mast of the ship. Baas figured she would swing once he charged forward, thus he lured her over there. Now, once her sword came forward enough, it would hit the mast pole and she would be left open. That is why Baas did not stop when he saw the sword coming. There was no way it could hit him. Not with the mast in the way. He smirked as time seemed to slow. Focusing on Vatti’s sword, Baas watched as it came closer and closer to the mast. He watched as it… wait… it stopped. The sword was no longer approaching the mast. Baas’ focus went on the entirety of Vatti. It was her right foot. When she had swung, she spun on her left foot to have the sword come at Baas, now her right foot was on the floor which stopped her spin. Wait… now it was back in the air. Vatti hadn’t simply put her right foot down, she bounce on it to reverse her spin. As she spun in the opposite direction, Baas could make out her plan. Her right leg extended as her body moved. Baas was moving too fast. There was nothing he could do to avoid the attack.

\*POW\*

And with that, Vatti kicked the approaching Baas in the stomach. Baas fell back a good distance and landed on his back. As he fell, his sword left his hand. Upon hitting the ground, his body immediately reacted and his arms grabbed his stomach in pain. All the while, Vatti was moving slowly. Her leg was still in the air, but brought back to her body as though showing off that she had kicked Baas. She then lowered her leg and brushed her hair away from her face, a smirk appeared on her face.

As Baas tried to stand, his lungs forced him to take air in at a rapid pace. Being kicked in the stomach left him winded. In between heavy breaths, he could hear his friend talking.

“Did you really think I didn’t see that pole there Baas? This is my ship. If you want to beat me, you’re going to have to do better than that. After everything I told you in the Center, you still haven’t learned anything.”

Baas looked at Vatti seriously. While his eyes stayed serious, a smile came to his mouth. He reached down slowly and picked up his sword. Once he had it in his hand, he began to speak.

“Okay oh Great One.” There was a slight hint of sarcasm in his voice. “Come teach me a lesson then.”

The two friends smirked as they prepared for their next attacks.

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Atsuma looked at the figure in front of him. Then, he smirked. He dusted himself off and straightened out his hair. He then looked at the person and spoke.

“I’m sorry there, beautiful, I didn’t quite catch your name.”

The female took her twin swords and put them in preparation for a fight. “It’s Decson. And could you please not pretend to be hitting on me. I don’t need to go out with anyone so old.”

Atsuma gave a hurt look. “Hey I’m not old, I’m just more mature than you.”

“Oh please,” Decson said, “though you don’t look older than me, we all know your age. If people have been talking about you for atleast 15 years, you’re considered old.”

“Consequences of being a Great One.” Atsuma said to himself.

He then looked at Decson and smirked again.

“Look, I don’t really want to fight right now…”

“No, you just want to sink our ship.”

Atsuma let out a little chuckle. There was no use hiding it.

“Yeah. But look, the ship’s going down. I’ve already done enough damage to ensure that. There’s really no point. So why don’t you just put those dangerous toys down? You can fight me when we get back to land.”

“Why not fight you now? Huh?”

“I kinda want to get out of here before the ship sinks.”

“Then what’s stopping you. I thought the ship was already sinking, why come down here.”

“Well, it is going to sink, but I want it to sink faster. I just want to finish what I started.”

“And I’m not gonna let you.”

“But the ship’s already sinking, there’s no point in stopping me now. Why try?”

“Because I feel like it.”

Atsuma couldn’t argue with that. He let out a sigh and twirled his sword.

“Alright, it’s your funeral.”

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“Panda, can you please jump over board!”

“Koroko, can you please shut your mouth!”

“You know, if I didn’t know any better, I’d think you two weren’t on the same team.”

But Sheina knew the truth. These two cared about each other very much. Pandora didn’t want to leave because she wanted to keep protecting Koroko with her bow. Koroko wanted Panda to leave so he wouldn’t have to be forced to protect his Far friend. Why was it that good friends always argued so much with each other?

\*SHING\*

Sheina couldn’t think about that right now. She too was fighting to protect Pandora and it was extremely hard to keep up as they were outnumbered and Sheina was much less experienced. Not to mention the rocking of the boat. Sheina took a quick glance at Baas. How was it that he was keeping his balance? He was acting like he had been fighting on a moving base all his life.

Baas himself was running across screaming as loud as he could.

“AAAAHHHH!!!”

It was a mocking scream as he was not really scared, but Vatti was indeed chasing him. As Baas got closer to the captain’s chair chair, he turned around and showed his shield to Vatti.

“Back demon. Back I say.”

Vatti swung her sword with full force in a vertical slice. Baas let it hit his shield and the impact pushed him back a bit. Vatti had gotten stronger. Upon striking, Vatti did not stop, but Baas was ready. Vatt swung again with a vertical strike. Baas switched to his left hand and blocked the attack using his sword. After a few seconds of struggling, he let his right hand join his left to increase his strength. This allowed Baas to move the attack to his left, away from his body. This also made Baas’ sword come out on top of Vatti’s. Baas then proceeded to travel along Vatti’s sword, the force of his sword kept hers pointed toward the floor. At this rate, Baas sword would reach Vatti’s body and she would lose. Vatti saw the situation and in that second, reacted correctly. Her free left hand grabbed Baas’ right arm before the sword reached her body. This stopped Baas in his tracks. With her sword pinned down in her right hand and her left occupied with grabbing Baas’, she could not use them to hurt Baas, but she had other options. She wanted to kick Baas but he was too close to her body for her to fully extend her leg. So instead Vatti lifted her left leg, screaming as she did, and kneed Baas. Because Baas had crouched to attempt his attack, the knee met him on the right side of his ribs. Instantly, Vatti pulled back her leg and pushed it forward for another blow. Again and again. Baas wanted to cringe as he felt the blows to his side, but Vatti had his hands pinned. He couldn’t move from this spot. The next blow was coming, he had to think of something quick. Almost instinctively, and screaming as he did it, Baas lifted his right knee as Vatti lifted her left. The result was that Baas knee impaled Vatti’s shin before it could reach Baas for another blow. The resulting pain made Vatti scream and let go of Baas’ hands. Baas saw his opportunity. He quickly got low to the floor and spun his body to sweep Vatti’s one foot that was still standing. It worked and Vatti fell. Baas took this opportunity to back away from Vatti. When he was far enough, his brain began to realize the pain his body was in. He grabbed his right side with his left arm in pain.Vatti quickly picked herself up off the floor. At the sight of seeing Baas cringe, she smirked.

“Does the wittle baby need a time out?” she said in an insulting tone. However, right after saying this, her brain realized the pain her shin was in from the impact with Baas’ knee. Instantly, she grabbed her left leg in pain. Baas smirked at this site and said in the same tone as Vatti, “Yes, I think she does.”

Vatti gave Baas a sarcastic look. He returned it with the same look. Then, the two friends tightened their grips on their swords and charged forward. Baas jumped and attacked with a vertical slice. Vatti went low to come up with a diagonal. Their swords would meet in the middle of the ship.

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Decson charged forward at Atsuma. Atsuma jumped backwards. There was a barrel there and he landed on top of it. He then proceeded to hop across other barrels that were scattered. Decson soon homed in on him. Moving her twin swords all around her body to confuse him, she brought them down to meet where his feet were. The attempt to throw Atsuma off balance failed as Atsuma did a little hop and let the blades flow under his feet. Reacting to this, Decson tried again to sweep Atsuma’s feet with the swords. Again, a quick hop. Without hesitation, Decson did it a third time. And a third time, Atsuma hopped, but this time he didn’t jump as high. This made it so that he laded on the swords as they came under his feet. After realizing that her swords were caught, Decson looked up at Atsuma. Atsuma gave her a quick smirk. Then he lifted his right leg and kicked Decson in the chin. Decson fell back with a thud.

“And with that.” Atsuma said with a smirk. “I win.”

But to Atsuma’s surprise, Decson sat up and wiped her mouth. Her face showed extreme anger.

“Wow,” Atsuma said with a shocked face, “you’re tougher than you look. But still, I’ve separated you from your weapons so you should just give up...”

Immediately after Atsuma finished his sentence, Decson scurried up to another part of the room. She reached in one of the barrels and pulled out two axes.

Atsuma raised his eyebrows.

“Riiiiggghhhhtttt. I completely forgot about that.”

Atsuma then immediately charged to attack. As he did, he took notice of the room. Analysis, it’s what the Center had trained him to do best. This room was too full, he couldn’t move at his full speed. And simply separating the girl from her weapons wouldn’t be enough. He didn’t have time, though, to keep doing this. He was gonna have to end it now. But with junk everywhere, a slippery floor and a low ceiling, there was hardly anything he could… wait a second… a low ceiling!

Atsuma attacked the girl with some slices, spinning as he did. The girl deflected his attacks using the axes in both of her hands. She then proceeded with some swings of her own. Atsuma was able to dodge them. In doing so, he backed up to give himself some room. Looking around, he tried his best not to hit barrels or get tangled in ropes. Decson also backed up a bit, but she was not worried about her environment. Her eyes were focused on her prey. On Atsuma. He was a Great One and she couldn’t underestimate him. Whatever attack he did, she had to use her best counters.

Atsuma spun his sword and put it in front of him horizontally. Decson knew that sign. That was the sign of a low attack. Sure enough, Atsuma spun his sword and charged in, bringing his weapon in low. Decson knew how to counter it. As though instinctively, she jumped in the air with the axes held up high. A low attack could be best met with a high attack…

\*CLUNK\*

In that split second, Decson’s body became confused. She had been moving in the air, but for some reason the axes had stopped. She was staring at Atsuma so she didn’t know why, but Atsuma could see the axes and he knew why. In fact, he had planned why. Atsuma attacked low so Decson would jump high. However, there wasn’t enough room in here to do so and when Decson tried, her weapons hit the ceiling. Doing so threw Decson off. Atsuma took this opportunity. As Decson fell weaponless, his body and fist came up…

\*POW\*

Decson was met with an uppercut right to her jaw. Again, she landed with a thud on her back. This time, however, she did not get up. The fight was over. Atsuma had won.

“Well that was fun.” Atsuma said brushing his hands off. “But a big waist of time.”

He then looked up at the ceiling where the axes were still at. In doing so, he got an idea. He grabbed one of the axes and yanked it out of the ceiling. He then proceeded over to where he had been before Decson had found him. He grasped the handle of the ax and with a heavy swing, let the blade hit the patch on the wall.

\*THUNK\*

Instantly, water began to come out. Atsuma let out one more swing.

\*THUNK\*

Lots of water. One more swing.

\*THUNK\*

Water poured into the room from the little opening. That’s what Atsuma had wanted. With the ship now full of holes, there was no stopping it from sinking. Which meant it was time for him to go. Atsuma dropped the ax and quickly headed toward the hall. He ran through the maze of barrels, jumped over the unconscious Decson, and hurried out the door. As soon as he did, the rushing water in all sides of the ship caused it to shake violently.

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"Did you feel that Koroko?” Panda asked.

“What? You mean the violent shaking that everyone on this ship can feel? No Panda I didn’t feel it at all.” Koroko responded sarcastically.

“What’s it mean?” Sheina asked coming toward the two.

“It means that Atsuma’s about done with his work.” Pandora said.

Suddenly, another shake was felt on the ship. Now, the people on board could feel it lowering.

“We need to get off this thing!” Pandora continued.

“Right.” Koroko agreed. He placed his weapon on his hip and grabbed Pandora. He lifted her high over his head with both his arms and walked over to the edge of the ship.

“What are you doing?” Pandora shrieked, struggling to get free from Koroko.

“Abandon ship!” Koroko screamed. He then threw Pandora off the side of the ship into the river below. Putting his ear to the water, Koroko listened to Pandora scream on the way down.

Sheina hurried over just in time to see Pandora hit the water.

“Did you really have to do it like that?” She asked Koroko.

Koroko brushed his hands off and grinned at Sheina. “I’m Koroko, I don’t HAVE to do anything. If I do something, it’s because I WANT to.”

Sheina half closed her eyes and made a plain look to show her disapproval. At that moment, Pandora reappeared from under the water. She turned back up toward her teammates.

“Koroko, I am so killing you when you get down here!”

“Panda, I am so laughing at you when I get down there!” Koroko called back. “Oh wait, I can do that from up here.” He then burst out in laughter.

Pandora groaned angrily. She then turned and began swimming toward the grassy shore.

“Ah.” Koroko sighed. “Nothing pleases me more than to hear that girl scream in frustration. Well, better get going.”

He then proceeded to hop over the side of the ship and land in the water.

Sheina turned back toward the ship. As she did, she could see Blues imitating Koroko and throwing themselves off the edge, some scurrying from below deck, others who were already on, but that wasn’t what she was looking for. What she was looking for were the only two who weren’t abandoning the ship. In the middle, near the mast, Baas and Vatti were still going at it. Vatti swinging, Baas dodging. It was like they didn’t even notice the catastrophe around them.

“Baas! Vatti!” She called out to them. No response. She tried again. “Guys, the ship is sinking!” They didn’t even acknowledge her. They were too caught up in their own world with each other. Well, they would eventually realize it sooner or later. Sheina decided to leave them to their fun as she jumped over board.

In truth, both Baas and Vatti were always observing their surroundings and they both had known the ship was sinking long before anyone else had. Normally Vatti would do anything to keep it from happening. She would have left the fight and told the others to follow her in order to ensure the ship did not go down. But this time, when the thought of her ship going into the water came to her mind, she simply thought “I’ll get another one” and continued her fight with Baas.

The fight continued back and forth. The two friends both tried their hardest to win, but it wasn’t easy. Even with their time separate from each other, the other one still knew the techniques of their friend well enough. Both had increased in strength and speed. They couldn’t keep this fighting up for long. The longer they fought, the more water the ship took in. The more water the ship took in, the faster it sank. The faster the ship sank, the less time they had to fight.

The two friends were now almost on level with the land. If they didn’t do something soon, the fight would have to end. In the midst of fighting, Baas looked around. He saw something. A rope tied to the edge of the ship. The other end of it was tied to the top of the mast. He quickly left his fight with Vatti, grabbed onto the rope and cut the bottom end of it. The rope snapped back up to the top of the mast taking Baas along with it. He landed easily in the crow’s nest .Vatti followed Baas’ example and found her own rope. Cutting the bottom end, she too zipped up to the top of the mast, but when she came down to the crows nest, she came with an attack. Baas had been able to see it coming though and was able to block it with the shield on his shoulder. And there the two friends continued to fight. Swinging back and forth, both trying to outdo the other. The sounds of their swords clashing could be heard a great distance away.

Though they had went to the nest to buy time, it seemed that it wasn’t enough. The water was now close to the bottom of the crow’s nest. As it rose, the two friends stopped fighting to observe the situation.

“No!” Baas shouted. “I want to finish.”

“Will you quit crying you baby?” Vatti said sassily.

“But it’s not fair, I want to finiiiiiiiiiiish.” Baas whined as though he were a toddler.

“Baas you moron, did it ever occur to you that we can finish on land/”

Baas was silent as he felt the water the water touch the bottom of his feet. He then smiled and said…

“Oh yeah.”

Vatti gave a smile and then jumped in the water.

“Come on.” She called when she came back up. “I’ll race ya!”

Baas jumped in after her. It wasn’t until he hit the water, that his memory hit him. He had been taught how to swim in the caves of the Center, but he had never actually been in a situation that called for him to do so.

“It’s okay.” Baas said to himself trying to swim. “Just keep kickblur blurp gur... justgirblur keepblur...”

Something was wrong. Even though he was doing the technique right, his body was still sinking. He couldn’t... couldn’t get himself to stay above the water.

Vatti was half way between Baas and the shore. Upon hearing Baas struggling, she turned around. She was in time to see his head quickly go under water.

“Baas!” she called after him.

Baas was freaking out. Air! There was no air under water and he needed air! Why was his technique not working!? Even though he had never actually swam before, he was observing his hands and could tell that the motion they were carrying out was creating enough force to keep his himself a float... so why wasn’t it working!? Was he too heavy? That couldn’t have been it. Humans bodies would float so unless he was being anchored down… the shoes!

Baas tried to bring his feet to his hands. He still had time. Though he was sinking, he was doing it slowly. If he could get the shoes off now, he could still make it. But… moving in water was so much more difficult than in air. He had no land to push on, and it was harder to get his legs up. Still, he was desperate. With all his strength, he bent down and forced his right shoe off. But, he could see the timing. He wasn’t going to get the other shoe off in time. His vision was starting to get blurry. He had never practiced holding his breath, so he couldn’t last long. He began to slip into unconsciousness. This was something Baas couldn’t do on his own.

But Baas wasn’t on his own. As Baas’ body became limber, Vatti swam as fast as she could down to him. Her speed and movement mimicked that of a fish itself. She quickly shouldered Baas so she could use her strength to pull him up. However, even with her kicks, the two friends were still sinking. Vatti could feel the weight was coming from Baas’ lower left side. Taking a guess, she kicked Baas’ left shoe until it came off. And with that, the two friends headed up toward the surface.

When Vatti and Baas reached the surface of the water, Vatti quickly swam Baas toward shore. They both choked and gasped for air, their chests moving in and out as the savored the oxygen they took in.

After a couple of seconds, Baas was the first to speak.

“Where \*huff\* did you learn \*puff\* to swim like \*huff\* that \*puff\*.”

“I \*huff\* live \*puff\* on water \*huff\* if you can’t swim well \*puff\* you can’t be a Blue \*huff\*.”

The both collapsed on the shore of the river. Examining the situation. Then, a smile came on Baas face. He turned toward Vatti and said to her…

“Hey, did you notice.”

Vatti turned toward Baas as he continued.

“I reached the shore first. I won. Don’t worry, losing to me is the hardest part of war. Once this is over, everything else will be easy.”

Vatti and Baas stared at each other for a second more. Then…

The two friends laughed.

They laughed hard. Extremely hard. The joke made the two friends laugh so hard that between it and gasping for air that their bodies ached.

It wasn’t Baas’ best joke, but then again, they never were.

Chapter 62 End

Chapter 63

Koroko exited the water of the river coughing as he did. He turned back to observe the opposite side of the river. From his spot he could see Pandora. Good, she wasn’t on the same side as him. With what he did to her, he would have to stay far if he wanted to avoid getting smacked. He turned to his right. The Blues were all swimming down the river. It figures. That’s what they always did when they lost a battle. Koroko kicked some dirt to show his frustration. He had barely gotten to have any fun. Not once did he kill anyone on the ship, and now they were all gone, swimming away. Koroko would swim after them, but everyone else on the team was here. If he followed them, he’d be out numbered. He let out a sigh. Oh well. There was nothing he could do now. He sat down on the shore and began looking around. Panda was across the river. So was Sheina, though she was some ways away from Panda. Where was Atsuma? He began to scan the area. He hoped that he had… wait a second. Koroko looked over at where Baas was sitting. A little grin came on his face. There was still a way he could get his kill in.

Pandora kneeled over to catch her breath. That Koroko. She searched to see if he was anywhere near. Of course not. She could see him sitting across the opposite side of the river. No doubt to avoid the punishment she had waiting for him. Hold on. He wasn’t sitting anymore. Using her sharp eyes, Pandora could see the look on his face. He was about to go after a prey. She looked to the right, directly across from her at the river. A blue band and… Baas. They were laying down. That was weird. Usually Blues swam away from their sunken ship to avoid fighting on land. But then again, these guys did attack her team so it was safe to say they weren’t exactly like other Blues. She again looked at Koroko and could see him sneaking up on the Blue. Typical. Going in for the kill without thinking. The Far pulled her bow off her back and readied her arrow. She had to aim more carefully than usual, as this wasn’t a sturkfur bow. That didn’t stop her from locking on to her target however. Should Koroko get into some kind of trouble, she would be able to end the Blue’s life herself.

Sheina crawled onto the beach. She was soaked and freezing. Most people find a sudden swim to be quite enjoyable. Sheina, on the other hand, was from a dry part of the world. The only time she got wet was to bathe and never did she plunge when doing that. Thus, her body was shivering from the experience of having to suddenly dive into water like she just did. Also, she had almost drowned. In the Center, the Discretes had taught her how to swim, but this was her first time actually doing it. It had taken all her strength to get to the shore. Now, she was tired. Her chest was moving up and down due to her heavy breathing. She lay on her back as she took in the experience. Just wait until she got back to the main base and told Tant everything she had went through. Knowing Tant, she would want to jump to some imaginary story about Sheina making out with – Sheina’s thoughts were interrupted as she realized she never saw Baas get off the ship. She sat up quickly to search for him. Whoa, dizzy. She should have sat up slower. After getting rid of the uncomfortable feeling in her brain, Sheina was able to make out her surroundings. She found Baas and Vatti lying down a good distance from her across the river. Seeing them let Sheina’s feeling of worry die down but… there was a new feeling dwelling inside. Though her eyes weren’t as god as a Far’s, she could tell that Baas and Vatti were happy. The joyous look about them made her smile. These two friends, these two best friends despite everything that went around them, still acted like their old selves around each other. The happiness that was about them made Sheina smile a soft smile. It was almost naïve and childish at how they were acting. Something you’d only find in a story. Still, at the same time, she couldn’t help but feel some envy. That best friend feeling, she didn’t know of. With the protection of being an Official in training, her friendships didn’t go as deep as theirs. And because of that, her friendships couldn’t go that deep because eventually, she’d never be able to see them again. It was good that Vatti made her way back to Baas because eventually, Sheina would have to leave him. In the end, it was better that Vatti was with him than Sheina. Still, that didn’t make Sheina completely happy about it. Just… kinda… glad.

She watched the two enjoying each other’s company, still with a grin on her face. Then, the grin slowly faded away as her eyes noticed something else. Across the way, she could see Koroko. He was sneaking up to where Baas and Vatti were lying. Why would he do that? Did he want to scare Baas? It couldn’t have been to scare Vatti because he didn’t even know –

Sheina gasped as she came to the realization. She said to herself in a low voice. “They don’t know who she is.”

She then heard a noise come from her right. It was Pandora. She was standing up straight and taking aim with her bow. This confirmed Sheina’s thoughts. Koroko and Pandora didn’t know who Vatti really was. They only saw her as the Great One Vatti, not as Baas’ best friend from the Center. They were planning on killing her. If they did that, the results on Baas’ emotions would be-

Sheina couldn’t finish her thought. She got herself up and began to run to where Pandora was. She had to stop them.

Baas and Vatti stared at the sky in peacefulness. It was a nice blue with a couple of clouds. They enjoyed the time they were having. Just sitting there relaxing. Which was weird because neither of them ever enjoyed just sitting there. Vatti often enjoyed drawing while Baas had been known to observe things. But to just sit and stare… it was a nice sensation.

“How did you know?” Baas asked breaking the silence.

“Know what?” Vatti replied turning to him.

“How did you know it was my shoes that were weighing me down?”

“Oh that? I just took a guess.”

Baas raised an eyebrow. “You realized that if you had ‘guessed’ wrong, I would have drowned.”

“Hey, don’t even try to blame me for any of this. It was your team that sank the ship and you were the one that decided to wear heavy shoes. Why were you wearing heavy shoes anyway? That has to mess up your fighting.”

“I got them as a gift. I’m kind of upset that they’re at the bottom of the river.”

“Yeah, well, shoes aren’t the most important thing.”

“Yeah.” Baas said. “Atleast I kept my weapons.”

“You weap… What about your life!? You almost drowned and you’re upset that your shoes didn’t make it and worried that your weapons almost didn’t.”

“Speaking of things that didn’t make it,” Baas switched up smiling, “you’re taking your ship being sunken pretty well.”

“Ah, it’s just a ship.” Vatti said brushing the air. “I’ll get another one after some months of waiting. Our builders love to just throw things together, especially ships.”

“Sounds like us with fighting and weapons. The people in Orange are really passionate about the war. Every weapon is incredibly made, including the string on the bows.”

“Blues like making weapons too, but I’ve definitely seen better.”

“Yeah, cause you’ve seen ours.”

The two friends snickered. As they did, the preying Koroko was coming in ever so quietly. The lake was not far from the forest and he was using it to cover himself. It was perfect. Whatever Baas was talking to the blue band about, she was totally distracted. He didn’t have to wait for the opportune time to strike, he had so many, and an Near only needed one.

His peripheral vision caught something in the distance. Panda. Oh great, she had seen his prey. If he messed up, she would get the credit for killing a Great One. That figured, but Koroko wasn’t going to let himself mess up. He readied his sword. Then… he charged. Sprinting forward at great speed. He had to reach her before she noticed him, but then again, even if she did notice, Koroko was moving to fast for her to do anything.

He had not been far from the girl and Baas so it only took a few seconds to reach them. Koroko lifted his sword to strike. Baas and Vatti didn’t see him. They had been talking to each other. However, something got Baas’ attention. It was the scream of Sheina her from the distance.

“NO!” she called trying to stop Koroko with her voice from across the river. It wasn’t enough to stop Koroko, but it did give Baas and Vatti the notice. They both turned to see Koroko coming toward Vatti, his sword raised. Vatti’s heartbeat quicked. There was no time to act. No time to do defend, attack, or do anything. She had not seen the man at all and now his sword was coming in striking range. Seeing the blade coming down toward her, her body reacted. She looked down, closed her eyes, and covered her head with her arms. Such a defensive position was useless against a sword, but her body did what it could to protect her. Still, she knew the sword was coming, it was only a matter of time.

\*Shing\*

She waited a second. Nothing. Another second. Still nothing. What had happened? Vatti lifted her head from her arms at where Koroko had been coming from. There was a figure standing over her, his sword clashed with Koroko’s. It was hard to make him out with his figure inbetween Vatti and the sun, but Vatti knew who it was. As a cloud covered the sun making the figure easier to see. His stance wide, his shield still on his back, his clashed short sword in his right hand. Vatti spoke his name in shock.

“Baas!”

Baas held his position, though he was struggling. Koroko was strong and had put a lot of force into his attack, but Baas wouldn’t let up. He kept his sword pressed up against Koroko’s. All the while, Koroko himself was shocked. After a couple of seconds to take in what had happened, he spoke.

“What are you doing Baas?”

Baas was about to answer, but before he could, he noticed something. Koroko’s pupils had slightly looked past Baas. He had glanced at something across the river.

Pandora was shocked. She had anticipated that something might happen, but not that Baas would interfere. It was enough to make her question whether or not to fire her bow, however, not enough to completely stop her. Her target already locked, she let go of the arrow. As she did, Sheina did her best to try and reach her. Again she screamed to try and stop Pandora vocally, but was too late. The arrow was in the air and headed toward Vatti.

Baas turned upon hearing Sheina scream. Time seemed to slow as the arrow came toward Vatti. He had time to calculate. Analysis, it’s what they had trained him to do best at the Center. There was no way he could simply move Vatti out of the way. He could see when the arrow would hit her. He would make sure it would. Timing the movement, waiting for the arrow to be in position, Baas lifted his left leg and spun on his right. The resulting spin caused his sword to push up against Koroko’s and make the Near jump back. Baas’ left leg now extended, his foot when barely over Vatti’s head, heel first, and intercepted the arrow. Should Baas have come front of the arrow, it would have pierced his shoelace feet. Thus, he had decided to intercept it from the side. Like a ball in the air, Baas kicked the arrow away just before it reached Vatti’s face. The resulting blow broke the arrow in half and sent the pieces flying to the left. Baas ended his spins and put his sword in a horizontal stance in front of his face. Baas spoke as seriously as he could.

“No on is touching her!”

Vatti turned away from the river and backed to Baas. What had just happened? She knew Baas had blocked the incoming attacks, but how? Such speed. He had not been moving this way when she had been fighting him. There was no way he had been holding back that whole time. Yet somehow, his speed and reflexes were much faster than Vatti.

Koroko stared into Baas’ eyes and saw fury. Baas had been serious. Koroko didn’t know why, but Baas wanted to protect this girl.

“Baas,” he said to him, “get out of the way.”

Baas held his position with the look of an angry dog on his face.

“Make me.” Came the smart reply.

This peaked on Koroko’s ego. This little kid was getting smart with him? Still, maybe there was some way he could talk to him.

“Look, kid, I don’t know what kinda of little crush you have on that girl, but this is a war. You’re supposed to kill the enemies when it comes to war. Now you can either help me, or get out of the way, but I’m killing that girl.”

“No you’re not.” Baas snarled. “I don’t care what war you’re in, I’m ordering you not to.”

“You’re ordering me?” Koroko almost laughed. “I outrank you-“

“Check it again. My band says I’m a Leader

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