Chapter 63 : Infighting

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 his team was here. If he followed them, he’d be out numbered. This thought made him 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 or getting captured. 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. The speed wouldn’t be as great and thus could decrease the chance of hitting the target. 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 good 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. Both of them enjoyed fighting. In times of quiet, Vatti often enjoyed drawing while Baas had been known to observe things. But to just sit and stare… it was a nice sensation for a change.

“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 looked at his friends and 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 a 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 too 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 quickened. 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. 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. And Sheina… why did she scream? It was enough to make Pandora 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. Baas 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 wouldn’t. 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 in front of the arrow, it would have pierced his shoeless 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 spin facing Koroko in a squat stance and put his sword in a horizontal stance in front of his face. He spoke as seriously as he could.

“No one touches 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 suddenly much faster than Vatti’s now.

Koroko stared into Baas’ eyes and saw fury. Baas had been serious when he made his comment. 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. “Don’t think that you can tell me what to do-“

“Check again. My band says I’m a Leader. I outrank you, Near. That means you have to do what I say. And I say you’re not touching her.”

Koroko began to grind his teeth in frustration. Baas was challenging him in authority?

“Kid, I don’t know what world you live in where you think you can talk to me like that, but I’m warning you, get out of the way.”

“And I’m warning you, back off.”

“You think I won’t fight you? Cause I will.”

“You think I won’t beat you? Cause I will.”

“That’s it kid I’m sick of you’re-“

\*Shing\*

Before Koroko could finish his sentence, Vatti took action. The Near had been so focused on Baas that it was hard to see Vatti. She took that opportunity. Using Baas as a base, she swung her body around his, keeping her back facing his body, to swing a horizontal slice at Koroko. However, Koroko had fast enough reflexes to put his sword in a horizontal position. The two swords collided. After a second of grasping everything, Koroko used his strength to repel Vatti’s attack to his right. He then brought his sword back up to hit a vertical slice on Vatti’s body.

\*Shing\*

Again, there was Baas. He blocked the attack that had been headed for Vatti using his shield that somehow got to his left hand. But that wasn’t all. With his sword in his right hand and Koroko now open, Baas brought his sword forward toward Koroko’s head. Koroko moved his head to his own right while keeping his sword hand still. Baas’ sword just barely missed him. Such speed… But Koroko didn’t have time to marvel at that. Because Baas had blocked his attack, Vatti had been given a huge advantage. She took it and charged into Koroko’s stomach. As the two landed away from Baas, Vatti rolled farther and used the momentum to quickly get back on her feet. Koroko landed on his back. As he did, he saw Baas coming down toward him with a vertical slice. Koroko rolled to his right to have the sword miss him. Vatti saw an opportunity. She brought her sword low and pointed it toward Koroko as she ran toward him. Koroko took notice. As the sword came within three inches of his stomach, he used his hands and legs to lift the rest of his body off the ground. The sword went under Koroko’s arched back, however, the gap was not big enough for Vatti herself. Koroko did not stop. Adding extra kick to his legs, the bottom part of his body came up to have him do a hand stand. Vatti’s body continued right past Koroko’s upside down stance. Koroko completed his handstand and brought his body forward to land squatting on his feet. He could not rest yet though. Baas was at it again. Koroko barely had enough time to jump back away from Baas. Baas began swing his sword wildly. Koroko could block the attacks, but Baas speed was incredible. Last time he had fought Baas, the kid couldn’t even see Koroko’s movements. Now he was able to match, maybe even pass Koroko’s speed. Soon Koroko’s back came up against a tree of the near by woods. That wasn’t good. He could no longer back up. Baas saw this and jumped back onto his hands, pushed off and landed on his feet to complete the back flip. He then pulled his left arm back and sent his shield flying at Koroko as though it were a frisbee. The attack did not give Koroko much time to react, but he did. He ducked, allowing the shield to sink its side into the bark of the tree. Immediately, Vatti came from Koroko’s left. Because he was squatting, it was hard to defend, but he saw a way to do it. However, Baas had decided to match Vatti’s attack and come from Koroko’s right. The two confused Koroko’s senses. His body did not know how to react in this situation. There was no quick escape and no way to block both. His arms had already been in the position to block Vatti’s attack and that’s where it stayed. But surely, Baas’ attack would get him.

\*Shing\*

\*Shing\*

Koroko’s sword did intercept Vatti’s sword and not Baas’, however, another blade had been put into Baas’ sword’s path. Vatti and Baas looked up away from Koroko at the figure who had caught Baas’ attack. Water was dripping from all over his body, which was in a position that suggested he had sprinted there.

As the two friends and Koroko stared at Atsuma, shocked to see him suddenly arriver there, he spoke to them in anger.

“Does someone want to tell me why in the Wig my teammates are fighting each other!?”

Chapter 63 End

Chapter 64 : Tag Team

“You have got to be kidding me.” Pandora responded in disbelief.

“Nope, it’s true.” Sheina confirmed.

Pandora put her face in the palm of her hand. This conflict was the last thing the team needed. “Well this is just great.” She said. “No wonder Baas is throwing a fit. If anyone had tried to attack Atsuma when he wasn’t ready, Koroko would’ve responded just like Baas did. But how is it that so many people on our team find their friends from the Center? It’s supposed to be extremely rare to do so.”

Sheina gave a shrug. “Maybe fate just likes us.”

“Well where are all my friends from the Center, huh fate?” Pandora asked the sky. “Why’d you stick me with Koroko instead?” She then put her hands on her hips and sighed. “Oh well. Atleast Atsuma’s over there now. He’ll handle the situation once he finds out the truth about Baas and Vatti’s relationship.

Atsuma was indeed trying to get to the bottom of the situation. He pulled his sword away from the now calm Baas and spoke with authority.

“Well?” He asked, looking at Koroko.

“Hey, don’t look at me!” Koroko fussed, standing up on his feet. “Baas is the one who freaking switched sides out of nowhere! I wasn’t even attacking him when he suddenly jumped in my way!”

Atsuma turned to Baas. “Is that true?”

“Of course it’s true!” Koroko answered for Baas. “I was attacking that Vatti girl when Baas suddenly blocked my attack. I would have had her too if he hadn’t jumped in the way. I think he might have some kind of crush on…”

“Koroko! I’m asking Baas!” Atsuma said raising his voice. Koroko stopped talking upon seeing the seriousness in Atsuma. It was rare for Atsuma to get serious with Koroko. Then again, Atsuma always hated in team fighting when it wasn’t for training or comedy’s sake.

The angry Leader spoke again to the younger one. “Baas, is that true?”

Baas fiddled nervously, yet assuredly. He switched sword and shield hands to show so. He knew he was in trouble, but he did not regret what he did. Still, his mind contemplated the situation and how to best handle it. Had Baas calmly told Atsuma why he had blocked Koroko’s attack, Atsuma would have been able to handle the situation. If Baas had told Atsuma that Vatti had been his childhood friend, Atsuma would have felt compassion and worked out the situation. If Baas had even only told Atsuma that Vatti had saved his life only recently, Atsuma would have let her go without much of a fuss. But Baas didn’t tell Atsuma any of that, because Baas hadn’t been asked that. He hadn’t been asked why he intercepted Koroko’s attack, he had only been asked did he do it. Most would go into detail, in fact, normally Baas would too, but for some reason his brain told him to only answer the question that had been asked of him. And so, he did.

“Yes.” Was the only thing that came out of Baas’ mouth.

“See? Koroko emphasized.

“Come on Koroko,” Atsuma pointed out, “I’m sure Baas isn’t some random person who would just decide to switch countries in the middle of a fight.” He then turned back to Baas. “Baas, why-“

But Atsuma couldn’t finish. For from his left, Vatti attacked with her sword using a horizontal slash.

In the midst of the talking, no one had really been paying attention to her and thus had not taken account as to what she might’ve been thinking. She had only been half listening to the conversation when it came to her attention that she stopped fighting because Atsuma interfered. Why? Atsuma wasn’t in charge of her. She didn’t have to listen to him if she didn’t want to. But that wasn’t what made her attack the Leader. In the middle of the conversation, she had heard Koroko say that maybe Baas had a crush on her. Though the phrase hadn’t been completed, it made her blush. What was worse, Atsuma had asked Baas was it true and Baas said yes. Vatti didn’t know what to believe. She had only interpreted what she half heard so couldn’t confirm the truth. Her emotions ran wild. She couldn’t bare to hear anymore, it was too much anxiety for her, too… embarrassing. She especially couldn’t let Atsuma ask why and have Baas go into detail. And thus, her body seemed to move on it’s own as she attacked.

Atsuma was faster than Vatti, so he was able to block the incoming attack. He held the curved sword he stole in his left hand vertically, blade down, to block the slice. This stopped Vatti’s attack and left her wide open. Koroko, upon seeing his best friend get attacked without warning, became infuriated. He jumped back a little with his blade in his hands and attacked Vatti with a vertical slice from above. Seeing his best friend in danger, Baas’ anger rose once again. He jumped forward to stop in front of Vatti’s sword, which was extended in front of his body, and lifted his right leg under the blade. Not touching Vatti or Atsuma, Baas’ leg kicked Koroko in the abdomen before his attack could reach Vatti. After which, he jumped back. The Near landed against a tree, hurt but not injured.

The attack on his best friend, made Atsuma’s rage grow exponentially. It didn’t matter if it was Baas, Vatti, or the most powerful Discrete in all of Wig-Or-Log. Nobody gave a cheap shot to Koroko like that. Not while Atsuma was around. He spun on his left foot to push the attacking Vatti away. After a 270 degree spin in under a second, Atsuma charged forward at Baas to unleash his fury. Baas, still feeling the fury from seeing Vatti attacked, jumped back with Atsuma’s attacks. Atsuma was prepared. He knew Baas’ speed and that there was no way Baas could… what was this? Though Atsuma was attacking at a speed he knew Baas couldn’t match, Baas was… matching it! Always, Atsuma’s sword was swinging from left, right, up, down and any other possible way, but it always met the metal of either Baas’ shield or his sword.

Vatti watched as the two moved farther from her. Baas’ speed had indeed increased since the fight he had just had with her but Vatti had no time to marvel at that. Baas was in trouble. Even if he was holding his own, he shouldn’t have to. Not when he had Vatti around.

Vatti charged forward, prepared to attack Atsuma from behind. But she wasn’t the only one. Koroko saw the assault that was coming at his friend and ran to intercept it. Baas blocked the most recent vertical slice with his sword in his left hand. With the way he was positioned, he could turn to his right to see Vatti coming to his aid, but that wasn’t all he saw. Koroko was right behind her and soon would intercept. All the while, Baas could tell that Vatti did not see him coming. Feeling that using his voice wouldn’t be as effective, Baas, without letting go of the hold he was using against Atsuma, pulled his shield arm under his neck. As he did so, his shield slid down his arm where Baas caught the disk in his hand.

Vatti recognized that pose. Baas, was about to throw his shield. But why? Atsuma was right in front of him. Then again, his stance didn’t show that he was throwing the shield at Atsuma but at… her! Why would he do that unless…

Baas released his right arm and sent his shield flying toward Vatti. Vatti, running full speed toward the shield, stopped short and ducked. The shield’s target was now Koroko, who hadn’t been prepared for it. He stopped and put his sword in a vertical position, just in time to block. However, this left his lower part wide open. Vatti took this opportunity to slide her feet under Koroko’s. Normally Vatti would finish off her opponent, but Baas still needed her help. She picked up his shield and continued her journey to him. Atsuma looked over his left shoulder and saw Koroko fall. Normally, he would stay and finish, but in the rare times Koroko needed his help, he was there to help him. Pushing up against Baas, Atsuma turned around and ran toward Koroko. As he did, he passed Vatti who was sprinting toward Baas. The two reached their friends and began speaking quietly.

“Koroko, are you okay.” Atsuma spoke softly.

“I’m fine!” Koroko said firmly. “Only thing really hurt is my pride. But see Atsuma? I told you! He’s helping that girl.”

“Yeah, I can see. I don’t know why, but for some reason he’s taking sides with her.”

“Do you think he likes her?”

“Maybe. That could explain it, but I doubt Baas would betray us just for some crush. He may get distracted easily, but his personality proves otherwise.”

“Well, we’re not gonna let him get away with it are we?”

“Of course not! He’s got to learn his place. But there’s something… not right about him today. Something physical.”

“You mean his speed?”

“Exactly. I wasn’t going full force, but my speed should have been more than enough to outmatch his. It might be his anger. It could be making him fight better than usual. Since he’s hardly ever angry, we’ve never really seen him fight when he’s raged.”

“But we get people angry all the time. We use it against them. Its suppose to throw off there fighting.”

“That’s cause they don’t know how to channel it. If you can control your anger, it can become a very powerful weapon. Plus, Baas’ drive isn’t in protecting his pride. It’s in protecting that girl.”

As the two teammates contemplated their situation, Baas and Vatti were having their own discussion.

“Baas.” Vatti started in a low voice. “What are you doing?”

“What’s it look like I’m doing? I’m fighting.”

“But why are you fighting your own team. This is a war! You should be fighting against me, not with me!”

“I’m not going to let anyone kill you.”

Vatti tried hard to hide her smile.

“Baas, you moron, I know we have… feelings for each other but this isn’t the Center. You can’t choose to be friends with an enemy and rebel against your own country. You keep this up, and you could be black banded. I’m sure Orange won’t keep someone who fights their own-”

“Vatti, I have to do this.”

“No you don’t. You just think you do because emotions are telling you that you have to.”

“Vatti I’m not gonna let them kill you.”

“Baas, I’m getting tired of arguing with you. Now get your crybaby butt up and stop protecting me like I’m some helpless little…”

“I’M NOT LOSING YOU AGAIN!” Baas said fiercly. He didn’t shout it, but he said it with enough intensity that it shocked Vatti. She had known Baas her whole life. For him to get this emotional was extremely rare. Baas looked Vatti in her eyes to make sure she understood.

“Losing you was the hardest part of the Center Vatti. Once that part was over, everything else was easy. But I didn’t care, I just wanted my best friend back. Now that you’re back, you think I can just let you leave again? Even if you’re a Blue, even if you’re an enemy of my country, you’re still my best friend. I can’t sit by and let someone kill you. Just like you couldn’t sit by and let me drown.”

It was a little… awkward, to hear Baas talk like this. He had always been an honest guy, but to be this honest? Vatti was silent for some seconds more. Then, a little smirk came on her face.

“Baas, you moron. You have got to be the biggest baby ever. Fine! Do what you want, but if you get black-banded, don’t come crying to me.”

“Fine, I won’t.” Baas said. His attitude had completely changed. He had gone from an emotional teenager back to his old self, and that is what Vatti had wanted.

“Fine.” Vatti said.

“Fine.” Baas repeated.

“Fine.”

“Fine.”

“Fine!” they both said simultaneously.

The two friends then turned back at Koroko and Atsuma. Simultaneously, the other two friends looked at Baas and Vatti. As though rehearsed, the four fighters spun there weapons and pointed them at the opposite team. They were ready to continue fighting.

“You call that ‘handling it?’” Sheina exclaimed.

Pandora made a face to show her embarrassment. “Not exactly.” She said sarcastically. “Something must have gone amiss.”

“Gee, ya think?” Sheina said with high sarcasm. This comment made Pandora look at Sheina sternly.

“I’m sorry.” Sheina said nervously. “Been spending too much time with Baas.”

Pandora refocused her on the scene across the river. “I know Atsuma wouldn’t have attacked Vatti if he knew she was Baas’ childhood friend. Koroko might, but even he would think twice about killing her.”

“What should we do?” Sheina asked.

“Well, we tried yelling, but when those two are fighting they only care about the fight.” Pandora said shaking her head.

“Yes they do.” Sheina agreed talking about the other team.

“Come on.” Pandora exclaimed. “We have to get over there before they start fighting again. If we can’t stop them with our voices, we can do it with our bodies.”

Pandora began to head toward the water when she noticed Sheina wasn’t following her.

“Come on!” She called to her. “What are you waiting for?”

“Uh…” Sheina exclaimed embarrassed. “I’m not the best swimmer.”

Pandora rolled her eyes and went back to help the Leader.

The air between the two team of friends was still. The atmosphere seemed quiet. Both teams felt that either could attack them at any moment. Baas watched the two in front of him. Atsuma was calm, observing him, as he always did. He then looked to Atsuma’s left. Koroko wasn’t calm at all. He was getting antsy not being able to do anything. What was good was that Atsuma had not noticed his partner’s unstillness. He was too busy observing Baas and Sheina. This was good news to Baas. If Koroko charged forward without waiting for Atsuma, it would be two on one with Baas and Vatti having the advantage. Baas was happy about this. Soon, Koroko would charge and Baas and Vatti would be able to take him.

Atsuma watched his prey. He would have to be more careful with Baas. Baas already had the keen mind needed to be a good opponent, the only thing he had been missing was the strength and speed, which he now somehow possessed. Still, as good as Baas was, Atsuma could see the difference between him and Vatti. Vatti was growing ever so frustrated. Standing there, waiting for the moment to strike; she seemed very impatient to come and attack Atsuma and Koroko. And what made things more interesting is that Baas didn’t notice her. He was too busy analyzing Atsuma and Koroko to see that his friend would charge in without him. That meant all Atsuma had to do was wait, and Vatti would charge at him and Koroko alone, thus giving them the advantage.

The Leader smirked as he thought of his plan that would work. Baas saw the smirk. Atsuma was planning something, but that didn’t matter because he still didn’t see Koroko. This thought made Baas smirk as well. Atsuma saw the smirk. Baas was planning something, but that didn’t matter.

Baas knew.

Atsuma knew.

All the had to do was wait-

“YAGH!!!”

Koroko and Vatti both screamed at the same time. Koroko ran charging in to attack. Simultaneously, Vatti did the same thing. They both ran toward each other until they were close enough to strike. Vatti and Koroko’s swords clashed with each other in seconds.

Both Baas and Atsuma had the same look on their face. Wide eyed and shocked. Neither had noticed that their own partner was getting tired of waiting around. Meanwhile, the two in the center glared angrily at each other in the eye. Their swords pressed up against each other with great strength. After a couple more moments in this stance, the two pressed up against each other so that the attacks would repel. This movement left a gap between the two. Vatti’s sword returned to the gap first. She sliced horizontally to make Koroko move back. And so Koroko did, as though he were losing. Vatti continued her slices and it seemed as though Koroko was barely holding his defense. It appeared that between the two, Vatti was winning. But something was off, and Baas could feel it. He knew Koroko’s speed and he knew that he could be blocking some of the attacks Vatti was giving him. Yet he was dodging them and moving backwards as though he were losing his balance. Baas could see through this strategy. Koroko was trying to lure Vatti away from Baas, toward where Atsuma was, and catch Vatti off guard. Baas wasn’t going to let that succeed though. He noted Koroko’s movement, his speed, how long it would take him to reach where Atsuma was; everything had to be timed right if Baas’ plan was going to work. He had to launch… NOW!!!

Baas took took a step forward and pulled his right arm under his neck, preparing to launch his shield. As he moved, he gave the heads up that was needed.

“Vatti duck!” Then, his shield left his arm as his body continued to move forward.

Upon hearing Baas’ voice, Vatti acted on instinct. Not knowing why, she got low and the shield flew over her head. Koroko had not expected Baas shield to come at him, but he had been preparing a counter attack. Because of this, he was prepared to move his sword. He brought it up in a vertical position to block the frisbee like shield. The sword’s stance made the shield ricochet to Koroko’s right, directly at Atsuma. It was thanks to Atsuma’s reflexes that he did not suffer an injury. When Koroko deflected the disk at him, he quickly mimicked his friend’s actions and brought his own sword up using both hands to block the incoming shield. The shield deflected and was now heading directly away from Atsuma toward Baas. Baas had started running just before he launched the shield. In the half a second that it ricocheted back to him, he had made it half way to Atsuma. This had all been a part of his plan. As his feet moved, Baas stretched out his right arm as though he were reaching for the shield that was soaring his way. The shield slid on Baas’ arm perfectly and the weight made his body spin as he was running. Baas knew that would happen and he used the spin to his advantage. He prepared his sword as he spun and attacked the now in range Atsuma with a horizontal slash. Atsuma had had to deflect the shield, thus when he suddenly saw Baas directly in front of him, his sword was not in a good enough range to block the attack. He gasped as he suddenly saw Baas in front of him. Baas felt that he had this, Atsuma would fall. And Atsuma would have fallen, had he been some lesser fighter. But, with seeing Baas, he instinctively lifted his right leg with his knee up high. The knee met Baas’ hand, not his sword. Baas screamed. Part from pain, another part from not expecting the counter. Atsuma shifted his hips to push Baas’ sword hand away. He then brought his left hand down for a vertical slice on Baas. Baas’ left side had been pushed away, thus his right side came forward. Baas realized this and shifted his shoulder so that the shield on it blocked Atsuma’s attack. Atsuma saw the block coming and, at the last second, increased the force on his sword so it would not bounce. The result led to the sword and shield pressing up against each other with Baas and Atsuma struggling to push the other.

After Baas had told her to duck, Vatti had realized the advantage he had given her with Koroko. She quickly tried to attack him with a stab. Koroko, however, saw it in time to dodge. Because of the momentum, Vatti’s body also flew past him. She quickly rebounded and spun for a horizontal attack. Koroko leaned back to have the sword fly over his stomach. Vatti continued with a multiple of slices, all of which Koroko dodged easily. His speed had changed from a second ago. Vatti looked and saw the smirk on his face. This made her angry, and she charged in for another stab. Koroko dodge the attack again, but this time, he popped Vatti lightly on the back of the head using his free left hand. Vatti turned around with one hand rubbing the back of her head. Koroko laughed. Vatti couldn’t believe it! He was mocking her!

Koroko stuck his hand out to Vatti and moved it as though to say. “Come and get me.” Vatti clutched her sword, only for a few seconds though. After those few seconds were up though, she smirked at Koroko.

“Okay then…” she said under her breath. She then charged at Koroko, her sword low signaling a diagonal slice. Koroko widened his stance. He wanted to time the attack just right so he could mess with Vatti some more. That’s what Vatti had hoped. She suddenly let her legs fall and she slid toward Koroko. With his wide stance she was able to go under his legs with ease. As she slowed to a stop, her sword was the only thing under Koroko’s legs. She quickly brought it up. Koroko, fearing the worst, quickly lifted his right leg. His leg moved slightly faster than the swords and he was able to bring it over the sword before the sword could make contact with anything.

Vatti quickly stood up. At the same time, Koroko quickly turned around to face her. He gave her a look of disbelief at the move he had just seen.

“Wow,” he said. “You are evil.”

Vatti tilted her head as if to suggest that what he said might be true.

“In that case,” Koroko said. He tossed his sword lightly only to re-catch it. “I must purge the world of your evilness!”

He then approached to attack Vatti with a vertical slice. His speed was too fast for Vatti to make out. The sword was going to hit her. Suddenly, without either of the two seeing him, Baas came in directly from Koroko’s right. Without stopping, he blocked the vertical slice by holding his sword up to it with his right hand. Though hard to see, Baas had twisted in the air to send Koroko’s attack back up. He then continued on his journey falling to the ground. Vatti was prepared to attack. With Koroko now open and stunned, she could take him out. Her sword came up toward his chest as though upper cutting him. It did not reach his chest though, as a curved sword directed the attack away. Atsuma, who had been chasing Baas, came in between the two and with one arm, and without looking away, he knocked Vatti’s sword up. He then continued toward Baas. Baas scurried off the ground to continue running. Atsuma called back to Koroko as he ran.

“You should be more careful!”

“I know you’re not talking!” Koroko called back. “You need to keep tabs on your opponent. That’s the only reason I haven’t won yet.”

Atsuma smirked. There was no way Baas was getting away from him. Baas, himself, hadn’t intended to. He quickly stopped short and bounced back at Atsuma. Atsuma, somewhat shocked, stopped in his tracks. Baas attacked with a really fast horizontal slice. Atsuma bent his back to have the sword just barely go over his chest. Atsuma still couldn’t believe how fast Baas had gotten. But speed wasn’t the only thing that it required to win a battle. Atsuma stood up and smirked at Baas.

“Got a little faster I see.” He said to the intense looking Baas. “Well then… lets see if you can dodge THESE!”

Atsuma then came at Baas with an arsenal of slices. Baas dodged and blocked with his sword. That is not what Atsuma had been waiting for. He brought his attack from his upper left. Baas dodged it. Still not it. Again, Atsuma came from the upper left. Baas spun on his right leg to bring his sword forward and block it. Again not what Atsuma had been looking for. Once more. Atsuma attacked with a barrage this time to throw off Baas’ timing. Then, he came in from the upper right. Baas spun his body to have his shield fly in front to block the attack. That’s what Atsuma had been waiting for. As his sword came down from the upper right, he brought his knee up from the lower left. Baas was too busy noticing the sword above to notice the knee below. The shield blocked the attack and a sword blocked the knee. But it wasn’t Baas’ sword. Both Baas and Atsuma looked down to see Vatti holding her flat sword against Atsuma’s knee. Because it had hit the flat part, Atsuma’s knee had avoided the blade of the sword.

“You moron.” Vatti said to Baas. “Watch your openings!”

“Believe it or not I saw that coming oh master of seeing obvious attacks.”

“Right,” Vatti said rolling her eyes.

The comments peaked Atsuma’s curiosity. They sounded familiar to how he and Koroko spoke to each other. Speaking of Koroko, he was headed directly toward the action. Baas was free to confront him, and so he did. Their swords collided close to where Vatti and Atsuma had clashed. Koroko pushed through Baas’ attack, Atsuma pushed his leg make Vatti jump back. Baas and Vatti landed back to back against each other.

Atsuma and Koroko circled the two as though they were prey. Atsuma was the first to strike, as he came in for Baas lower left hip. Baas blocked it with his sword with out changing his stance. This left his right hip open, which Koroko tried to exploit. Vatti turned to her left, without moving her stance, and blocked Koroko’s attack. And thus it continued like that. Atsuma and Koroko attacking with Baas and Vatti blocking. Finally, Atsuma and Koroko let up to step aside. Baas and Vatti, pointed their swords toward the other two; keeping them close to their faces as though posing. They then slowly spread away from each other. Once a couple feet apart, it was clear that Baas would be going after Atsuma and Vatti after Koroko.

Baas glanced over at Vatti, all the while keeping his stance. Her stance looked familiar to him. Was she going to…? She was! She was preparing for the curved attack! Baas thought about what would happen next. That move would actually give Vatti the edge. With Koroko’s fighting instinct, he would fall for the fake mess up that Vatti was about to do and Vatti would be able to sink her sword into him! Then… then… wait a second. Then Koroko would be dead. That wasn’t what Baas wanted. Not at all!

Vatti approached Koroko and brought her sword low. Real low. So low, that Koroko assumed that the sword would hit the dirt and came in with an attack from up high. That is just what Vatti had been looking for. She brought kept her sword moving. Koroko was wide open. All she had to do was not trip up, and this big guy would fall.

Suddenly, a foot stepped on Vatti’s sword and pushed it into the ground. It was Baas’. He stepped on Vatti’s sword and, with it in a now ramp like position, jumped off it and kneed Koroko in the face. Koroko landed on his back and rubbed his chin from the pain he received. But that was not on the forefront of his mind. In fact, he, Atsuma and Vatti were all pondering something similar. Baas’ speed had just increased incredibly to get from in front of Atsuma to in between Vatti and Koroko.

Atsuma was flabbergasted. The speed he just witnessed was not possible for many, let alone someone like Baas.

Vatti wasn’t sure what to do. For one thing, she was shocked at the astounding speed of Baas’ attack. Then, there was the anger she received from Baas interfering with her clear victory. Of course, that might not have been his fault as it was a clever move.

Koroko stood up and re-readied his fighting stance. The speed that Baas moved had indeed shocked him, but he was never too astounded to give up on a fight.

Atsuma moved close to Koroko and readied his fighting stance. Baas moved back to where Vatti was. But now his brain was beginning to get confused. He had engaged in this fight because he didn’t want to see Vatti die. Now, he was also in the midst of protecting Koroko. What was the point of all this fighting? Baas was trying to fight to protect lives but in doing so, he was endangering his them. What would he do? Would he jump in and save Koroko again if he was in trouble? Would he continue to save Vatti as well? One thing was for sure, everyone else was still amped up for fighting and he still needed to be on his guard. The last time he dropped it because he was confused, he lost the fight and everyone around him had to pay for it.

The two young friends backed away from the older ones. Baas could see that Vatti was getting tired. She was breathing heavily. Usually she could last quite a while in a fight, but with such tough opponents and such close calls, she had to have been exasperated. Baas knew where this would lead. No matter who won, the next collision of the fighters would be the last.

As the fighters faced each other, once again the atmosphere grew intense. They were waiting and waiting for the correct moment to strike. As they waited, the fighters were instinctively getting farther and farther from each other.

Then, suddenly, the waiting was over. All four charged in, prepared to attack intensively. As they charged, the adrenaline got to them, and they all let out screams.

“YAAAAAH!!!”

“STOOOOOPPPP!!!” came two voices. Then, two females ran in between the fighters, one facing toward Koroko and Atsuma, while the other was facing towards Vatti and Baas. This appearance made everyone stop in their tracks. For soaking wet in front of them with their arms held out to their sides were Pandora and Sheina.

“Atsuma.” Pandora demanded. “You have to stop this! It’s just a misunderstanding.”

Atsuma raised an eyebrow. There were few voices that could make him second guess what he was doing in the middle of a ight. Pandora had one of those voices.

Sheina was also doing her best to convince her friends to stop.

“Baas, why must you resort to fighting so much?”

“But Sheina…” Baas started.

“Sheina?” Vatti asked. She then looked at the girl in front of her and a smile came across her face. “Oh my goodness, SHEINA!!! I can’t believe I didn’t recognize you!”

“It’s nice to see you too Vatti.” Sheina said. “But listen, you’ve got to stop fighting.”

“Ats,” Pandora continued. “If you just let Baas explain the situation, you’ll understand why he’s doing all this.”

Atsuma and Koroko looked at Pandora. There was no reason to doubt her word. They began to calm down and lose their defense. Koroko then began to speak. “I don’t know Atsuma. She’s more evil than those two combined.” He joked. “I think we should switch from fighting them to-“

Just then, Koroko’s words were silenced. For in front of Baas, there was an arrow. It had just suddenly been shot in front of him and was now sticking out the dirt. Someone had shot it from the inside the woods.

For a second, everyone was confused. Then, they quickly tried to prepare themselves for battle, but it was too late. Emerging from the woods came several lightly colored dressed Fars all pointing their bows at the fighters. They all had on Gold bands and they were all screaming at the Oranges and the Blue.

“Drop your weapons now!”

“Drop it!”

“Don’t move!”

“Put your weapons on the ground NOW!”

There was no chance of fighting back. Everyone put their hands in the air to show a sign of surrender. Those whom had had weapons in their hands now had them on the floor. The shouting continued as orders were being demanded. In all the confusion though, everyone could make out what was going on. The Golds had captured the group of fighters.

Chapter 64 End