Chapter 65 : Golds and Prisoners

“Panda…”

“Don’t say it Koroko.”

“But I must Panda.”

“No, you must not-“

“Aren’t you suppose to be-“

“Stop it.”

“-the one looking out for the enemy. How could you let this happen?”

The truth was, because of her Far eyes, Pandora was indeed supposed to warn the others when the approaching enemy came. However, her eyes had been a little preoccupied at the time when the members of her team had been trying to kill each other.

“Quiet!” A voice screamed from inside of the woods. After that, the man who had made the scream emerged from the shadows. He wore all gold, including his band. As he came in front of the now bounded group of fighters, the feeling of familiarity came over Baas. Hey had seen this man before.

“No more talking and put your weapons on the floor.” The Gold ordered.

“We already did that.” Atsuma said in an upset manner. “What the point in telling us to put down our weapons. Plus, you’ve bounded us. How counld we possibly even have weapons?”

“He’s got a point Dolg.” said another Gold emerging from the shadows of the woods. He had on some fancy blue clothes which again, Baas found familiar.

“Telling them to do things that they’ve already done is a waist of breath.” The man’s familiar voice seemed to hold little emotion, as though he only spoke logic.

“Zordo’s right about Atsuma being right.” came a third voice. This time a female emerged from the darkness with a smirk on her face. A mesh of shiny looking white and silver clothes surrounded her. She also wielded a long sword a bow and a quiver full of arrows. Not to mention her sword that match the ones that the other two had. “Wow, to be out talked by an Orange…”

“I don’t want to here it from you, Magatha. You’re the one that missed that easy shot. You were suppose to kill the boy, not surprise.”

Magatha shrugged, keeping her smirk. “Hey, don’t blame me. This one’s sword knocked my bow at the last second.” She was pointing to Zordo.

“Indeed.” Zordo said. My apologies.”

Now Baas remembered. These guys were-

“The Great One Dolg and his two followers Magatha and Zordo.” Atsuma said with a smirk on his face. The three turned and looked at Atsuma as though posing. Dolg then got a huge grin and walked up to the Orange Leader.

“Ah, I see our reputation precedes us.”

“Not really.” Atsuma said with a light grin. “But my team saw you some time ago. I was trying to remember who was barking out those annoying yells like some kind of stupid animal. Then I heard you do it again, and I remembered!”

\*POW\*

Atsuma received a punch in the face.

“Really Dolg,” Magatha said crossing her arms. “Are you really gonna let this Orange get under your skin?”

“Hardly worth hitting if you ask me.” Zordo said. “We’ve already captured them. If you respond to their replies, that just makes you more like a Blue.”

“And what is that suppose to mean?” Vatti said sternly.

Magatha looked over at Vatti and smiled a smirk smile. She then slowly walked over to her and, because she was taller, bent down to speak.

“It means, little girl, that we don’t want to be like your people.”

Vatti gritted her teeth and growled a little.

“But you I guess that’s a little harsh on our part.” Magatha continued, standing up straight and walking away. “I mean after all, they don’t call you guys bluesers simply because it sounds like the word losers…” she then turned only her head to look at Vatti. “Oh wait… yes they do.”

Vatti suddenly jumped forward to tackle the woman in front of her. But before she could get half way, she found herself on the floor. Zordo was on top of her making sure she didn’t get up.

“Really Magatha.” He said looking toward his partner. “And you say Dolg does things unnecessarily.”

“That’s true, I did. But I never said that I didn’t either.” She then stuck her tongue out at Zordo while still keeping her smile.

“You know.” Atsuma said. “Your teammates are really creepy.”

“Yeah.” Dolg agreed.” I don’t know why but they… dah… hey, you can’t talk about them like that.”

“Baas.” Sheina whispered. “What’s gonna happened to us?” After not getting a reply, Sheina turned to look at Baas. He was snickering. “Baas!” She said low getting angry. “How can you laugh at a time like this?”

Baas looked at Sheina while still snickering. “Did you see what that guy did to Vatti. That was so hilarious!”

Sheina couldn’t believe how random Baas was. This was the same guy whom moments ago was throwing a hissy fit over protecting Vatti. Now he was laughing at her pain?

“Excuse me.” Koroko said bored looking to one of the Golds.

“What?” the man responded responded.

“I’m hungry, do you guys have anything to eat?”

“Will you all shut up!” Dolg said getting loud. “Geeze, you Oranges are annoying.”

“Hey, it’s not our fault you Golds don’t know how to have fun in life.” Atsuma said assuredly. Dolg quickly walked over to him and got close to his face.

“Life’s not about having fun all the time. But I guess you guys will have to learn that the hard way once Gold wins the war.”

“Pbtsh. Yeah right.” Atsuma said rolling his eyes. “As if that would ever happen.”

Dolg open his mouth to speak some rash sayings, but Zordo, now off of Vatti and standing to Dolg’s right, put his left hand over Dolg’s mouth. He pulled Dolg back away from Atsuma and spoke while looking down with his eyes closed.

“Perhaps it would be best to not engage and simply take them back to the base.”

Dolg gave Zordo a look of disagreement. Zordo returned it with his own look of seriousness. Magatha then walked to Dolg’s left.

“I think Zordo’s right on this one.” She said seriously. “The longer we’re out here, the better chance they have of escaping. If an Orange ship happens to pass by, we’ll be in a fix. I don’t have to tell you what will happen if a Blue one does either.”

Dolg looked at Magatha in disagreement. Then he looked at the ground as though contemplating the decision. Finally, he shook Zordo’s hand away from his mouth.

“Fine then. Everyone, we’re heading home. Make sure you keep an eye on the prisoners. I’ll be the laughing stock of Wig-Or-Log if anyone finds out that I let the Great One Atsuma and his team escape. And if I’m a laughing stock, then you’ll be something much much worse. Understand!?”

“Yes sir!” The Golds all said at once. They then began marching their captives into the forest. Some pointing their bows at them to keep them from running. Others carrying the weapons the fighters had been holding. Dolg, Zordo and Magath left last, as they tended to do so when they wanted to speak privately.

“Another crisis averted by the great Zordo.” Magatha said.

“And what’s that suppose to mean?” Dolg asked.

“Atsuma was getting you riled up. It’s one of his specialties, remember? Had Zordo not intervened, Atsuma would have eventually talked you into doing something you would have regretted.”

Dolg stared blankly at Magatha. He then turned to Zordo.

“Is that true Zordo?”

Zordo looked at Dolg, and then turned forward.

“I did what I felt was necessary.”

Dolg sighed and shook his head. He hated not getting yes or no responses to yes or no questions, but Zordo tended to do that. He then looked at his two friends and smiled.

“Come on.” He began to move faster. “We’re supposed to be leading this march, not holding it up.”

Magatha and Zordo did not speed so quickly and thus soon, Dolg was out of hearing range from them.

“Do you think the Commander will ever realize that you’re the only reason Dolg is still alive.” Magatha said.

“You shouldn’t underestimate people. Blaming me for Dolg’s success is would not be wise when confronting him in an actual fight.”

“True. The guy may be a great Leader, but it’s the little hints you throw in that keeps him that way.”

There was a slight pause before Magatha began speaking again.

“Id say the one I underestimated isn’t Dolg, but you.”

“Pardon?”

“You didn’t want to see that boy die, did you? That’s why you ‘accidently’ hit my bow with your sword just before I released the arrow.”

“I’m sorry?”

“Hey, I understand. He’s pretty young after all. Probably straight out of the Center. It’s easy for someone to let their emotions get in the way. Still, I didn’t think you would eventually be one of those people. I guess we’ve all got a little Blue in us after all.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

Magatha’s voice switched to sarcasm. “Of course you don’t. You, who is actually an expert swordman with great timing, just so happen to ‘accidently’ bump my bow, at the exact moment it would throw off my shot, but still not mess up the plan to capture Atsuma and his team.”

“Your words annoy me.”

“It’s okay to have a golden heart Zordo. It just means you’re a good guy.”

“Interpreting one’s actions should be left to experts. Namely, not you.”

“I love how you avoid all my comments by saying weird statements.” Magatha replied sarcastically.

“I hate how you force your interpretations to mean things they don’t.” Zordo remarked realistically.

“Fine. Deny everything as you usually do.” Magatha said with a light smile. She began to walk faster to catch up with Dolg. “But know this.” She called back to him. “I know your secreeeet.”

Zordo did not show much reaction to the comment. He just kept walking, and soon, assumed his place next to Zordo at the front of the group of Golds.

Chapter 65 End

Chapter 66 Gold Territory

The multitude of color bands left the scene of the Great River of Wig-Or-Log. True, that the Golds owned some of the territory surrounding it, but generally water locations in Wig-Or-Log were considered Blue territory because their ships roamed those waters and could not be beaten using other ships. Where the group was heading was East of the river, somewhat away from where the Center neutral territory where Atsuma’s group had intended to go. The trip took a couple of days which frustrated the group considering they were on a quest. They were all constantly looking for opportunities to escape from the clutches of the Golds. However, the Golds always had some sort of weapon pointed towards them. Should anyone try to escape, they wouldn’t get far before having some kind of blade go into their bodies, and even if the fighters could find a miraculous get away opportunity, it would mean leaving their comrades behind. Not wanting to take that chance, the Oranges and Vatti practiced self control in their actions. They did not, however, practice self control in their mouths. Atsuma continued to talk to different Golds, hoping to strike nerves. Koroko just let his mouth run, letting whatever fell out be heard by whomever was near. For the most part, unless they were telling their team mates to be quiet, Sheina and Panda did not do much speaking. Vatti talked to Baas about different things that came to her head. Baas sometimes listened to Vatti, but usually he asked questions about things the Golds nor Oranges cared about. All these constant comments made the Golds grow more and more impatient with the Oranges. Were it not for the calmness or Zordo and Magatha, there may have been some unnecessary bloodshed.

Soon, more Golds started showing up from the opposite direction of the traveling prisoners. Once that happened, everyone knew that they were now in the Gold territory. Baas was curious as to what exactly what one of the Gold’s bases looked like. They were so confident in themselves to be walking around openly. Back in the Orange base, everyone stayed inside the protection of the mountains. He began to ponder that maybe the group was already in the base and that it was just scattered… until he actually saw the base.

“OH MY GOODNESS! THAT’S YOUR BASE!?” Baas shouted when he saw the large structures from the distance.

“Baas!” Vatti said annoyed. “You don’t have to shout.”

“YES I DO! THAT THING IS HUGE!!!”

It was no surprise that Baas grew excited. In the distance was one of the bases of the Golds. It was a huge structure that spread across the field in the distance. As the group got closer, it could be seen that the place was tall too. There was a wall that surrounded the place. A big wall. Bigger than any wall Baas had ever seen before. Getting closer, he could see archers on top of it, preparing to fire on any intruder. It was no wonder so many Golds were lingering outside the wall. If you left the Orange base, you were in immediate danger, but here, you could feel safe. Before even entering the base, Baas could see the tops of some of the buildings inside of it.

“Hey, why did you make this wall so high up?” He asked the Golds. “If you wanted to expand your territory, it would be difficult having to move the marker.”

“Wow what a dummy.” Said a Gold who’s name Baas did not know. “The walls aren’t for marking our territory, they’re for protection.”

Suddenly, Zordo’s voice appeared to the left of Baas. “You see, unlike your Orange base which is protected by mountains, or the Blues’ base which is protected by a great body of water, this territory has no natural protection around it.”

“Feeling chatty today, Zordo?” Magatha asked smirking.

Zordo did not respond. He simply, and inconspicuously, sped up his pace.

Baas looked around. It was true. In the direction they were coming from, there were hills and grassy meadows and behind the base there was a forest, but nothing save the wall actually protected any part of the territory from people coming in.

“But,” Baas asked. “If this spot was so open, why’d you choose this to be the location of your main base?”

The group of Golds grew loud with laughter.

“Main base?” said a female gold. “We don’t have a main base.”

“Our bases are all so grand that they all could be considered main bases.” Another unknown male voice chimed.

“You see,” Dolg chimed from the front of the group, “unlike you Oranges and Blues, we take charge and keep the bases we claim. Thus, we don’t have only one main base.”

“A lot good that’s done.” Atsuma said. “We’ve conquered your lands lots of times, but you guys have never captured our main bases.”

“You’re one to talk. Orange may have gotten some of our smaller territories, but that’s simply because our structures weren’t finish. No one can get in or out of a REAL Gold territory without our permission… well… you know… unless they’re a Discrete.”

“Well, we’ll have to put that to the test.” Koroko said with a huge menacing grin.

Dolg gritted his teeth and almost turned to address the comment, when he felt Zordo’s hand be placed on his shoulder. He then looked at Zordo who shook his head, signifying that whatever Dolg was thinking was a bad idea.

The group of Golds and their prisoners soon made it past the other many Golds in the fields to the large stone wall of the territory. The wall went so high, Baas had to look straight up if he wanted to see the top. Comparing the wall to his own height, he calculated in his mind that it was approximately… no exactly, 46 feet high 7 inches high. With no water around, one fall from there, and it was instant death.

The group began to slow as they approached the gate of the wall, for standing there were Gold Nears, acting as guards, all holding spears. Some male, others female, they all also shared a fashion sense of gold vests with white long sleeved shirts with brown pants and boots. Dolg approached one of the guards who looked much younger than him.

“Sir. Welcome back, sir.” The guard said at attention.

“Good to be back.” Dolg said with a smile. “We’ve got some prisoners among us. You know the drill. They come in, but not out.”

“Understood, sir.” The guard said.

“Right. Let’s go people.”

As everyone marched into the entrance of the way, Baas couldn’t help but analyze it. The archway for the entrance was 30 feet high. Connected to it were two doors that opened opposite ways. Baas was astounded that doors that big could actually be created. He then took not of the thickness of the wall itself. 6 feet and 3 inches thick. If the inside were hollow, someome would easily be able to move around in there.

But the real marvel, was the territory itself. For inside the wall of the Gold territory were massive buildings as far as the eye could see, and since the eye could only see as far as the back wall, that how far the buildings went. And unlike the grey territory, all the buildings were different. Some had towers with bells in them. Some were attached to the wall. Some turned corners of streets. Yet the buildings did not seem like they were put there messily. The dirt streets that paved the way kept all the buildings tucked in their own blocks. It was a neat and organized community.

Baas’ eyes began to glow with excitement. This is what it was like in the Gold territory. This is what the current winners of the war were living like. This is how-

“Hey, keep moving.” One of the Gold guards said, pushing Baas.

Baas sped up his pace, a little quicker than necessary as he wanted to fully take in the environment. It was a lot like the Orange and Grey territories during the day time. Many people were moving about, handling their own business. However, there were often a multitude of Nears that were found marching together with similar weapons. Baas also noticed that anyone who used a bow, with the exception of the group he was in, was nowhere to be found on ground level. They were all up high on top of the wall. It was as though the people had been categories on where to be based on their weapons.

Every once in a while, a Gold would stop and look at the prisoners who had been caught. Baas had expected to be laughed at, seeing as how mean the Golds usually were, but rather than doing that, the people just rushed by as though they didn’t have time to worry about Baas and his teammates. Busy people who lived big lives. Back at the Center, Baas hadn’t been sure what Country he would join, but he often thought it would be the Golds since they were winning. He pictured himself a grand fighter surrounded by lots of attention. Since he had joined Orange, that thought had left him completely. But now, seeing the differences in the bases, he was starting to feel it again.

“Envying our greatness?” Zordo asked Baas as though right on cue. Baas grew embarrassed. He didn’t want to admit that he actually liked this territory better than his.

“Considering the situation your in, you may want to think of switching sides.”

“Don’t give the boy false hope Zordo.” Magatha said smirking her secret holding smirk. “Commanders these days never allow people who have been with other countries to join theirs. The loyalty is missing and there’s the possibility of sabotage.”

“Given the motivation.” Zordo said. “I bet I could change the Commander’s mind.”

“Even if you could.” Dolg voice came boasting in. “There’s no way I, or anyone, would allow a lazy Orange to join a country as grand as the Golds.” Dolg then walked away from his two friends to check on the rest of the group. Soon after, Magatha and Zordo left Baas’ side.

“You’re doing it again.” Magatha said not glimpsing at Zordo with only her eyes.

“What?” Zordo said, not looking back.

“You’re not one known for your talkative ways and compassion. Suddenly, you see a boy fresh out of the Center and you want him to think he has a chance?”

“It’s the truth. Even a hidden truth is true.”

“Yes, but why release that hidden truth to the enemy. Do you see some hidden potential in that boy, or do you simply feel bad that we’re going to kill him at such a young age?”

“Sixteen year olds die in war all the time. They’re often Blues because they don’t wait to be trained. Why should I care if one more Orange kid goes?”

“I don’t know.” Magatha replied. “Why should you?”

That question ended the conversation as Zordo did not reply.

Continuing the journey, the group finally ended up toward the back of the territory, completely opposite from the wall. They came to a building that seemed to be separated from the rest of the territory. It spread along the back wall and was about half the height of the wall. At the end, it held towers that looked over the base. This place obviously held some importance.

As the group halted in front of the large structure, Dolg stepped in front of the group of people.

“Okay guys, we had a real good mission. We succeeded in what we set out to do, lost very few lives, and captured the Great Ones Atsuma and Vatti.”

“So he does know who I am.” Vatti said under her breath.

“See Panda.” Koroko whispered. “They never say our names.”

“Now then,” Dolg continued. “I, Zordo and Magatha will escort the prisoners inside their cells, the rest of you go finish the rest of your duties here and check to see if you guys have another assignment.”

“Geeze.” Koroko said. “Don’t you guys ever take a break?”

“Time doesn’t stop just because we want it to. The more breaks we take, the closer we become to winding up like you Oranges. Lazy losers.”

“I would find that insulting if it wasn’t coming from a Gold.” Atsuma said with a smile.

Dolg looked at Atsuma with anger. Then an angry smile came on his face and he got real close to him.

“Laugh up now, punk. But it’s over for you. Take a look at that gate behind you. That is the only exit from this territory that doesn’t involve a fall to your death. This is the farthest spot from that exit. About 250 yards.”

“277 yards 5 feet and 9 inches.” Baas said correcting Dolg.

“Whatever. The point is, even if by some miracle you escape this prison, which you won’t, you would still have to run all those yards to that exit, hoping that the doors would still be open when you get there. And on your way, every Gold in this territory would be aiming to take your head off. Now I’m no genius at math, but I like those odds.”

“I’m no math genius either buddy,” Atsuma said with a smirk “but I do know that as long as there’s a chance, that doesn’t mean it’s impossible.”

Dolg growled under his teeth. Then, his angry smile came back.

“You know, it’s too bad you’re going to die here. Because I would love to get the pleasure of fighting you in battle and taking your life myself. But I got orders. Still, there’s a chance if you want to save yourself. And that goes for all of you.” Dolg then began speaking to all the Oranges.

“If any of you are willing to give us vital information about your country before we kill you, then we will let you go once we make use of that information.”

“We’d rather die.” Koroko said.

“Well I know that, as you are stubborn Oranges.” Dolg continued. “But as much as I want to see ya’ll die, destroying your country would be a much more pleasurable sight. So I still give you the choice.”

Everyone there was now silent. The captives stared angrily at the Gold threatening them. After a few moments, Dolg turned around.

“Okay, have it your way. Let’s go guys.”

From behind, Magatha and Zordo pushed the captives forward to have them step into the large facility. The rest of the Golds left to go about their own businesses. As they did, they could hear the sound of the large wooden door of the Gold prison closing behind them, trapping the prisoners inside.

\*Thud\*

Chapter 66 End

Chapter 67

The hallway that lead from the big door was dark and dreary, completely opposite of the sunny disposition the outside atmosphere presented. When it was open, the door had let plenty of light into the stone structure. Now that it was closed, only the two windows next to it let in light but those couldn’t reach far back into the structure. Eventuall, looking far back enough you could see light from lanterns coming from around the corners, for the hallway split into a fork. The march to the fork was slow and steady. The prisoners could only wonder which way they would turn, left or right. Soon enough, an answer was brought to their wondering minds.

Dolg, leading the way, turned left at the fork. After walking about three feet, he stood to the side to signify that the others were to past him. Atsuma was the next. Around the corner didn’t look much different to him. It was a long hallway filled with lanterns. Apparently wherever they were going was a little ways off as Atsuma could not see a door and the hall curved left continuously so that the end could not be seen. After Atsuma came Koroko and then Pandora. Baas began to turn left when a hand placed itself firmly on his chest to stop him from moving. He looked up to see the Zordo guy with his hand sticking out. Zordo then signified for Baas to turn around. He turned and looked to see that the woman called Magatha was standing to the side of the right turn of the fork. Baas understood. He turned around, away from where Atsuma was heading, and walked past Magatha. Vatti and Sheina followed him solemnly. After all three were in front of them, Zordo and Magatha followed them.

Hearing footsteps getting farther away, Atsuma turned to see the kids of the group going down the opposite way of him.

“Hey!” He shouted turning around. “Where are you taking them!?”

He turned trying to walk toward them, but was stopped by Dolg whom had been close behind him.

“Keep walking.” Dolg said sternly.

“Why are they going that way?” Atsuma asked upset.

“That’s none of your business. You worry about yourself.”

“What are you going to do with them?” Koroko stepped forward.

“They’re kids!” Pandora said terrified. “You can at least let them stay with us.”

“Keep moving.” Dolg warned.

“Not until…” Atsuma started, but he wasn’t able to finish. Dolg headbutted the Orange Leader mid sentence. Atsuma, with his hands tied, lost balance and fell back. Upon seeing the move, both Koroko and Pandora rushed in to help their friend by fighting back. However, with their hands bounded, they couldn’t fight properly. Koroko found himself with a knee in his stomach from Dolg. After bending over, he was hit in the back by Dolg’s bare hands. Once done with Koroko, Dolg grabbed the approaching Pandora with one hand by her throat. After about three seconds of staring her angrily in the face, he threw her up against the wall. The teammates were now all on the ground in pain. Dolg stood sternly and spoke angrily.

“Try something like that again and you won’t get off with just a beating. What we do with our prisoners is our own business. Now get to marching or I’ll kill you right here and now.”

The three looked at Dolg defiantly and angrily. They were all thinking the same thing. They hated this man and wanted to kill him. But, they were all also bound. Add that to the fact that Dolg’s fighting skills were actually on level with theirs, they knew that to defy him more would not lead to a victory. So, despite every instinct in them that told them to keep at it, they all stood to their feet and kept walking away from their younger teammates. Atsuma looked back one last time, as if on cue, Baas did the same thing. The look on his face stuck with Atsuma. Baas was scared.

It seemed like forever to the prisoners before they reached their destination. Along the hallway, there were no more forks. It only went straight at a continuous curve. Finally, they reached the end with nothing but a door to their left. Dolg opened it and had the three step inside. Had they not been used to living in caves, the group may not have been able to see what was inside, but now they could see clearly. Inside was a circular room. It had a diameter of about 15 feet. The walls were not solid stone, but stone bricks. All along the walls were metal… uh… metal something? Atsuma had never seen things like those before. They dangled on chains that were too high to reach. At the bottom of the chains were big metal loops. There was one loop on one end of the chain which went up and came down to another loop.

The room was also very tall. It would take ten, perhaps fifteen Atsumas to reach the top. But just before the top, there was a single window that shined a little sunlight inside. The sunlight was a golden orange. Atsuma could tell from it that the sun was setting.

“Okay Atsuma.” Dolg said. “You first.”

Atsuma wasn’t sure what was gonna happened but he stepped forward. Dolg pointed to the center, opposite of where the door was.

“Stand there and lift your arms.”

Atsuma stood facing his friends with his back toward the wall. He was expecting Dolg to pull out his sword and kill him. That would be good. Koroko and Pandora could use that opportunity to rush Dolg and escape. It’s true that they couldn’t fight Dolg without their hands, but they could still use their feet quite easily. Of course, this might’ve meant that Atsuma would lose his life. But if it meant that his friends could escape… well… okay.

As Dolg approached Atsuma, the Orange closed his eyes preparing to feel the sting of death.

\*Clink. Clink\*

Atsuma opened his eyes and looked up at the cold feeling on his wrists. The metal loops were now wrapped around his wrists. He pulled on them a little to see if they would give. They didn’t at all. He then pulled harder. Still no give. He then continuously pulled on them, letting the chains rattle as he did.

“Oh cut it out already.” Dolg said now placing the metal loops on Koroko. He then proceeded over to do the same to Pandora.

“What are these?” Atsuma asked still pulling.

“An old tool of war that you guys don’t use any more. They’re called shackles. Much more effective then simple ropes. You can pull on them all you want, but it takes more than simple will to break metal chains.”

Dolg then took his sword out. Right. He was smart. Rather than kill Atsuma with his back turned toward his teammates, he would kill them all while they were bound by these metal tools. He again, prepared himself for the feel of the sword in his flesh. He thought to lift his leg, but then he realized that he would just lose it before he died. Once again he braced himself for the death that awaited him…

Nothing. He opened his eyes at Dolg to see him cutting the ropes off Atsuma’s wrists. Well that made sense. Now that they had these… shackles? they didn’t need the ropes on their forearms. Still, Atsuma was confused.

“I thought you were gonna kill us.” Atsuma said.

“Oh don’t worry.” Dolg said moving on to Koroko. “We’ll get to that. But, as I said, we want your countries’ information more than we want your lives. So we’ll give you guys a little time to think about it.”

“Time?” Koroko asked.

“Yes, little Orange. Time. It’s that thing you non-Golds like to waist. If one of you changes your mind before that time is up, you can tell us whatever you know and we will escort you safely out of this territory. And if you don’t, then, well, I’ll still be happy either way. You have 24 hours.”

“24 hours!?” Pandora asked shocked.

“You can’t give us a little more than that?” Koroko said.

“Nope.” Dolg said simply.

The three then gave Dolg their angry stares once again.

“Ah, you can look at me all angry like all you want, but we all know that you’re not going to talk. So what’s the point in giving you a few more minutes?”

Dolg then turned around and began to exit, but before he could make it out of the heavy door, Atsuma’s voice caught him.

“This is why you separated us isn’t it?”

Dolg reached the entrance and then half turned. Atsuma continued to talk.

“You wanted to offer Baas and the others the same deal didn’t you. But you knew they’d be less likely to say no if we weren’t there.”

“Well.” Dolg said. “As adults, you tend to be real loyal to your countries; you’ve seen enough war and death to stay loyal and die to the end. But those kids, they barely just got out of the Center. They could easily change their mind as long as their older more respected members aren’t constantly yelling in their ears to not do so. Now, the older girl may be harder to break and we all know Vatti has a reputation to uphold. But maybe, just maybe, that boy will giver in and tell us something interesting.”

“Baas won’t tell you anything.” Atsuma hissed sternly.

“Then he’ll die for being stupid and make his idiotic country proud. Just like you three will.”

And with that, Dolg closed the heavy wooden door. The sound of a lock could be heard. About two seconds passed after the Gold leader left before the Oranges began pulling and tugging. The rattles of the chains echoed up and down the tall room they were in. They continued this action for who knows how long, determined not to give up. However, even when the brain is determined, eventually the body is louder than the brain. By the time sunset had ended outside, the three had aching wrists and exhausted arms. What was worse was that they didn’t have anything to show for their pain. They were no closer to getting free then when they had started.

Eventually, they all rested and began to talk.

“I would just like to point out, that this is all Baas fault.” Koroko said out of breath. “If he hadn’t stopped me from killing Vatti, we wouldn’t have been so distracted and we would have seen those Golds coming from a mile away.”

“You can’t blame Baas.” Pandora said. “Sheina told me that Vatti is actually Baas best friend from the Center. Like you two were.”

Atsuma and Koroko were silent. They looked at each other and then back to Pandora.

“Well why didn’t he say that?” Atsuma asked.

“I…” Pandora started, “I don’t know.”

“Like I said,” Koroko boasted, “all Baas’ fault.”

Soon, twilight left and night fell; the three began to feel extremely tired from trying to escape. Their tiredness fought with their anxiety. Often, they would drift off to sleep, for different intervals of time, only to wake up eagerly to see that it was not yet dawn.

Finally, there came a point where all three of the teammates were wide awake. None of them could be sure what time it was because they had all fallen asleep at some point, but the lighting outside showed that the sun had not yet risen. At this point, Koroko began pulling and tugging on his chain again. This sound began to frustrate the Far of the group.

“Koroko.” She fussed. “Give it up already. You’re not any closer to getting free than you were when we first got in here.”

Koroko paused to respond to Pandora. “Maybe you can give up, but I’m a Near.” He then began yanking the chain as spoke. Pausing just before he tried. “We’re tough… and don’t give up… just because… we get a little tired… and WHY WON’T THIS THING BREAK ALREADY!?”

“Koroko.” Atsuma said. “Pandora’s right, save your strength.”

Koroko stopped and stared at Atsuma as he spoke.

“We’re not the first prisoners these guys had captured. There’s a reason that they’re so confident that their plans will work. If I had to guess, I’d say no one has escaped from these weird metal things.”

“But we’ve escaped before Ats.”

“Yeah,” Pandora said, “but never from a country’s main base specifically. Maybe if we were in Blue territory we might have a chance, but Golds never do anything half way.”

“The main point is that we can’t escape these bonds.” Atsuma concluded.

“So we should just give up?” Koroko asked shocked.

“Now I never said that.” Atsuma said. He then gave his friend a smirk. “Look around. Do you see any bones in here?”

The two looked around and noticed that there were no bones apparent.

“Nope.” Atsuma said, answering for them. “That’s because the Golds are most likely going to take us somewhere else to be executed. But in order to do that, they have to take these things off first. That is the one and only time where these metal things will be off our wrists. That is our only chance of escaping.”

It was quiet after Atsuma was done establishing his plan. Eventually, Pandora broke the silence.

“Is that it?” She asked. “Is there not more to this plan? That’s not really thought out Ats. What about escape route, or a backup plan incase they tie us up before they let us loose.”

“I don’t really have more to go on Pandora. I don’t know this territory at all and our window of opportunity is small.”

“But Atsuma, if we do that, the chances of escaping are almost impossible. We almost definitely wouldn’t make it out of this building, let alone get across this entire base to that huge door before it closes.”

“And what about Baas and the others?” Koroko asked. “We have no way of telling them this ‘plan.’ If we try and rescue them, there’s no way we’d make it out in time.”

Atsuma looked down. “Yeah guys. I know.”

That said it all to Atsuma’s teammates. Though he was trying to put up a strong face and make plans, the truth was Atsuma didn’t think that they were going to make it out alive. This so called plan was just a last ditch effort to keep fighting until the end.

“Look guys.” Atsuma said. “I know it’s not perfect. I for one don’t want Baas and the Squirt to become casualties, but…,

“You mean sacrifices?” Koroko asked, a little angry.

Atsuma’s mind flashed back to something. He looked down and smiled softly.

“That’s funny.” He chuckled. “That reminds me of something Vee said before all this even happened. She made it sound like I didn’t know the difference between casualties and sacrifices. Maybe she was right.” There was a slight pause. “But this is the best strategy I have. If I could think of a better one, I would. I want us all to get out of here. I want us all to save Vee. But I just… I just don’t know how.”

It was awkwardly quiet for a moment longer. To see Atsuma give up, THE Atsuma of Orange, was not a common sight. It was leaving quite a mark on his teammates. However, they still hadn’t lost their spirits completely. After that awkward silence, Pandora spoke up.

“Atsuma, we all decided that risking our lives for Vee was worth it. Sheina and Baas too. Though I’m not too happy about the thought of leaving them here, I know you wouldn’t do such a thing unless it was absolutely called for. Whatever happens tomorrow, I’ll trust your judgment.”

Atsuma looked up at Pandora shocked. He did not know what to say.

“Oh thanks a lot Panda.” Koroko said jokingly. “Way to make me look like the bad guy.” He then turned to Atsuma. “If she’s in Ats, then you know I’m in. I can’t let a Far make me look bad. That doesn’t mean we absolutely have to leave Baas and Sheina, but whatever happens, happens.”

Koroko smirked at Atsuma which made Atsuma’s smirk come back to his face.

“Thanks guys.” He said. “I lost hope there for a second. Don’t worry. We’ll find a way to get us all out of here. Even if it kills us.”

“Well, that sounds like a lovely idea, but I think I can offer you something much better.”

The voice that came surprised everyone. They looked around and saw nothing The next thing to do of course was look up. At the window, Atsuma could make out movement, however, it was between him and the moon so it was difficult to see exactly what. Atsuma did not have to wait though because soon, a rope came down from above. The figure then used the rope to hop down the wall using large leaps. After it got to the height of where Atsuma’s head was, it leaped off the rope and landed in the center of the room. Due to the drop, the figure had had to kneel to stick its landing. It stood up slowly.

“Well, that was fun.” Atsuma had just waken up so his eye were hacing a hard time seeing the figure because of the darkness, but from the voice, it sounded like it was a… boy. Younger then Baas even as there was no base in the voice.

Once up, the figure began to brush itself off. “You know.” He said. “For people that are so strict on cleaning, the Golds sure don’t tidy up these prisons.”

The stranger was now fully standing. Living in caves his whole life allowed Atsuma’s eyes to adjust quickly to the dark. He could now see the figure in front of him. It was indeed a boy. He was lean and about 6 inches shorter than Baas. He had dark hair and peach skin. The last thing Atsuma noticed about the boy’s body was his eyes. They were a ruby green that seemed to look into Atsuma. His face, however, suggested differently. It had a type of smile on it that said it was ready for mischief.

“Let me guess.” The figure said looking at Koroko. “You must be the Great One Atsuma of Orange.”

Koroko gave the kid a strange look and shook his head no.

The kid then suddenly laughed.

“I’m just messing with you. This guy over here’s obviously the Leader of the group. I could hear you talking from up there.” The kid then began to whisper. “By the way, you should probably learn that sound travels when making an escape plan.”

Now Atsuma was beginning to see the boy’s clothes. He wore brown corduroy pants, a white cotton shirt, brown boots, a black blazer, and a red bandana around neck. But none of these things were of concern to Atsuma. What was of concern was the color of the boy’s band around his left bicep. He saw it, but he knew better than to directly say it out loud. Koroko, however, did not.

“Wait a minute.” He said squinting his eyes. “You’re a black band!”

“Really?” the boy said pretending to sound surprised. “Oh my goodness, when did that happen!?”

He then began to laugh at his own joke.

“What do you want with us lowlife?” Pandora said sternly.

“Ooh, feisty.” The boy grinned. He then grabbed Pandora’s chin with one hand as though he were examining her. “Lady, if you weren’t so old, I might be into you.”

“Eew.” Pandora said shaking her head away from the boy.

“You’re right.” The boy replied. “It would never work. I’m way out of your league.”

“Listen,” Atsuma said getting angry. “Why don’t you just skedaddle under whatever rock you came from. We’ve had enough of creepy black bands in our times. You guys make us sick.”

The figure looked at Atsuma’s serious face. He then made one of his own and glared at Atsuma directly in the eyes. Those green eyes met Atsuma with great intensity. Then, with sudden swiftness, the kid looked away and shrugged his shoulders.

“Okay.” He said with a simple smile. “I can see when I’m not wanted.”

The boy then walked back to where the rope was against the wall while continuing to speak.

“I mean I was gonna help you guys escape the certain death that the Golds were gonna give you by showing you the way out of this place, but you obviously can’t stand black bands so much that its not worth it. Atleast you’ll die knowing you didn’t work with ablack band.”

“What?” all three Oranges asked simultaneously.

“Yeah,” the boy said as though he were still leaving. “Dragon said you guys would be willing to work with a black band if it meant escaping here and getting back to your mission, whatever that was. I thought it must be pretty important if you were willing to work with someone who crawled out from under a rock, but I guess I was wrong.”

“Dragon?” Atsuma asked confused. “You mean Keely?”

“Yeah, though I prefer to call her Dragon. I don’t know why girls prefer their full names when their nick names are so much cooler. Right Panda?”

Pandora glared at the boy.

Atsuma was still confused as to what he just heard “Wait, what’s going on? How do you know Keely? And who are you anyway?”

The boy let go of the rope and turned back to Atsuma with a smirk. He took something out of his pocket, some kind of chain, and began twirling it on one finger.

“Now that is an interesting story.”

Chapter 67 End