Chapter 68 : The Start of An Interesting Story

Keely felt warm. That was thanks to the sun that was shining down on the back of her neck. The wind that blew and the water in the air helped to keep her from getting to hot though. This thought did not pass through Keely’s head at all. If it had, she would have felt that over her body’s temperature was the least of her problems, for she was not alone. Pushing her forward, and carrying her weapons, was the blue band Vatti had called Decson. She was taking Keely through the woods that lay near the Great river of Wig-Or-Log. She was taking Keely away from Vatti’s ship. She was taking Keely away from her teammates. Keely wanted to fight back. She wanted to suddenly charge at the Blue and race back to save Atsuma and the others. She imagined herself saving Baas and Sheina, using the Dragon and its sheath to get past any of the people in her way; just like the stories of war her dad had told her about.

There were a couple of problems with her fantasy though. For one, she was still tied up so fighting was impossible. Also, Decson had the Dragon in her midst. Until she relinquished it, Keely was at her mercy.

The two continued to walk away from the ship through the forest. Keely tried to glance back and see the sails, but the trees were too short and covered the sky from her. Their leaves did not allow her to see anything but the sunlight that slipped past them. It seemed as though hope for her getting back was disappearing.

Eventually she and Decson came to an open field in the middle of the trees, much like the one Keely had been in when the Blues ambushed the Oranges. It was there that Decson stopped shoving Keely forward. She then began to slow down.

“Okay.” She said. “Here’s far enough.”

Decson then proceeded to untie Keely from her bonds. Once she did, Keely quickly took a step back as though Decson were a threat to her. Decson wrapped the rope around her left arm, uncaring of what Keely did. Once that was done, she tossed Keely her sword.

“I trust you can find your way home from here. We’re told that Greys know their way around Wig-Or-Log greatly incase they need to be an escort-”

Decson suddenly stopped talking as Keely swung her sword, sheath and all, toward her. Decson. Decson stepped to the side to dodge the blow. Seeing that she had missed, Keely brought her left hand to the handle of the sword. She turned around and as she did the Dragon separated from its sheath. The sword was first to attack Decson. The Blue leaned back and dodged it. Immediately after it came the sheath being used as a second sword. It came down toward Decson’s left foot. The Blue lifted her leg, dodging the blow. Keely then proceeded with multiple attempts at this again. Attacking with both her sword and her sheath, but Decson was not being effected. In fact, the opponent had not even pulled her weapon out. She dodged all of Keely’s attacks with ease. Finally, Decson grabbed the sheath in mid swing with her left hand. Keely was shocked. Though it was true that the sheath did not have a sharp edge so catching it would not pierce the skin, but still, the force would usually throw off any of Brute and his men.

After catching the sheath and stunning the Grey, Decson kicked the girl causing her to fall on her back. Keely tried to get up but the kick and fall had hurt her to a degree.

“Are you crazy?” Decson said to the girl. “Why would you attack me? You’re a grey band. If the Discretes found out about this, you’d be dead.”

“I’d rather die than betray my friends.” Keely said, still trying to push past the pain.

“That’s sounds really noble doesn’t it?” Decson said. “Dying for something like honor. What if I had killed you here and now? No one but you would know that you died trying to save your friends. Does that sound noble?”

Keely kept quiet. Decson sighed. She then examined the sheath Keely had left in her hand.

“You have a fighter’s instinct, or a really good teacher. To use a sheath as a weapon isn’t something most people think to do, let alone someone who doesn’t fight at all in the war. With proper training, you would make a really good ally.” Decson then turned her attention back to Keely. “But take it from me kid, fighting in this war, isn’t all its cracked up to be.”

“What do you know?” Keely said rebellious. “You’ve only been in the war for a couple of years.”

“Maybe.” Decson replied with a light smile. “But I’ve been in it long enough to where I can take you out easily enough.”

That made Keely grow quiet.

“ Listen,” Decson continued with a serious look. “Rather than wishing you could spend your entire life fighting, be thankful. The way a Grey lives isn’t perfect, but at least you’re not expected to be on your toes for your enemies everywhere you go. Things could definitely be worse for you then they are now. Go. Live your life and hope you never have to spend it fighting like I do.”

The Blue threw the sheath down next to Keely and began to depart. Before she could vanish into the forest though, Keely had one more thing to ask her.

“Why don’t you just quit then?” she called out. Decson turned around to see Keely stand up and repeat her question. “You don’t have to fight. Anyone can become a Grey band at anytime. Why don’t you just stop fighting?”

Decson turned back, there was a soft smile on her face. She answered loud and clear.

“What I want is more than just what the life of a Grey band can offer.” Decson then turned around and continued forward. Before she left Keely completely, she said under her breath so that only she could hear.

“And not everyone can quit.”

The blue band then disappeared into the forest. Keely stared in the direction that she had left for a moment. Then, she looked at her sword and sheath which were on the floor. She picked them up and placed the Dragon in its flames as she began to walk forward. For a moment, she felt determined to help Atsuma and his team, just like her dad would. But that feeling only lasted for a moment and she slowed down to a stop. She recalled at how easily Decson had beaten her. It was weird. Keely had glanced at how Atsuma had fought the same girl. He made it look so easy when he was fighting her. Not to mention her own fighting ability. In her home town, Keely had always been seen as a great fighter, but Decson had tossed her aside so easily. What was worst is this Decson person did not even have a reputation for fighting. If Keely had fought someone like that Vatti girl who was a Great One…

With that thought in her head, Keely sat back up against a tree and sighed to herself. She began to wonder about her situation. Who was she kidding? She wasn’t ready for this. She had no training and no knowledge. The only thing she did have was knowledge of the landscape of Wig-Or-Log, but in reality anybody who fought in the war for atleast fifteen years had that.

She again let out another sigh which lead to her staring up into the blue sky.

“I’ve got to go back home.” She said to herself. “Well, it was fun while it lasted. I wish I could help you guys, but there’s no way I can break you out by myself. And I doubt anyone would help me rescue you. You guys have made a lot of enemies.”

She continued to gaze into the sky, the heat bellowing down on her, but it was okay because the shade of the tree she was leant up against blocked her from the most of it. It seemed very peaceful. It was so calm and relaxing. So calm… and…

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**“Wow…”**

Keely woke up suddenly from her slumber. Because she had not intended to go to sleep under the tree, she was confused and anxious. She took a second to observe her surroundings to help her remember exactly what had happened. Atsuma was gone. And so was everyone… oh that’s right. They had been captured, and she had been let go. She must have fallen asleep from the heat of the day. She wasn’t sure how long she had been napping, but she needed to get back home. There was nothing more she could do here, so it would be best to get back. She stood up and stretched her body.

**“Wow, oh wow…”**

Keely instantly stopped stretching and looked towards her left in fear. She had heard a voice. She was sure of it. She quickly reached for her sword and held it in a stance that showed she was ready to pull it out.

“Who’s there?” She called out in fear.

\*Twitch\*

Keely quickly pointed her attention towards where the noise was coming from. She was extremely nervous at what might come at her. With Atsuma and the others gone, she didn’t have any extra protection in case her minimum training didn’t work out. Still, she was confident in herself. She could do this. She was the daughter of a Commander, she had Orange blood running through her veins. She could do this.

Keely watched as the figure walked towards her out of the shadows.

“Come on!” she called getting antsy. “I’m not afraid of you!”

What she saw, she was not expecting at all. Even the wild dangerous animals that were said to be extinct would have been less of a surprise to her. It was a boy. A young boy. Younger than herself, or maybe just immature looking. He was certainly shorter than her. And the boy looked sad. He was sad. He was… crying. There were tears in his eyes, not yet flowing down his cheeks. Upon seeing the small person with such a sad face, Keely’s muscles began to relax and her face became less tense. This movement signified that she was starting letting her guard down, and she would have done so completely… had she not seen what was on his left bicep. Her eyes widened at the sight of it. She had often imagined what she’d do if she ever saw one. She would tell herself that if she did, she would immediately strike his evil heart. Or, if she wasn’t a match, she would trick the person who stood before her some how. But now that she finally saw one; now that she’d finally encountered a black band, and seeing that the wearer was this boy; this crying boy approaching her, she didn’t know what to do. She didn’t know what to think. Was her life in danger? How could it be?

“Please miss.” The young boy said. “They’re after me. You gotta help me. Please. Can you help me find my mommy?”

“You lost your mom?” Keely asked. She then quickly shook her head as though trying to shake an idea loose. What was she doing? This was a black band. They were to be killed on sight. She couldn’t try to talk with him. Still, when she looked at him, she couldn’t see anything but a helpless child.

“Some…some people in black…” the boy continued “they said she did something bad… and… and they took her... she told me to run… or they’d take me too… Please miss. Help me.”

“People in black?” Keely thought. “The Discretes.” As the thought of their name came into her head, a shiver went down her spine. She remembered her last encounter with them. How cold they seemed to her. How emotionless they were with Brute. Looking at this boy, she began to guess his story. His parents, or maybe just his mother, did something against the rules of Wig and was black banded. But that didn’t explain why this boy himself was a black band. The Discrete did not black band people unless they did something wrong. Perhaps the little boy helped her and did not know he was doing it. Then, Atsuma’s story of his son, Sean, was brought back to her brain. Perhaps the mother did not send this boy to the Center and kept him hidden for ten years. But, that didn’t make sense either because babies weren’t born with bands. Also, Atsuma wasn’t black banded for what he did, so that meant the mother shouldn’t have been. There was no way she would know unless she got involved. She looked at the boy who was still pleading at her with her eyes. She wanted to get involved, she really did… but she couldn’t. Whatever the case of this boy, as much as her motherly instincts told her to help him, her survival instincts spoke much louder. The Discretes would surely be after him, and she did not want to encounter them.

“No.” She said outloud. “No, I don’t want to get in trouble with the Discretes. You need to go. Go, before the Discretes find you here.”

“But…” the boy started.

“GO!” Keely screamed surprising both the boy and herself.

The boy scrunched up his face as though foretelling he was about to cry even harder. He turned around and walked back into the woods.

Keely stood there with an angry look on her face., her sword and sheath still in their same ready position, only now they were shaking.

She thought of what had just happened, what she had just done. She let in sink into herself. Then, she started to cry. It was hard type of crying; tears flowed, noises came from her mouth. She threw her sword to the side, hating it, and sat back against the tree she had fallen asleep on. As she continued to bawl, she covered her face with her both of her hands. What was she doing out here? Her friends had been captured. They were all probably dead from the time she hd fallen asleep. And now, she just threatened to attack a little boy because she was scared that she could get involved with the Discretes. She didn’t go to help her friends, she didn’t help the little boy, she couldn’t even kill the boy like she was supposed to. She had no honor in what she stood for, which she wasn’t even sure was anymore. It was no wonder she was a grey band. This world was not meant for her. The world of war was too much for her. She couldn’t take it any longer. She should just take the Dragon and go home now before she had to make any other big decisions.

Keely took her hands from her face and wiped her eyes. She looked at where she had thrown the Dragon, preparing to pick it up and leave. There was a long branch where the sword had landed. Keely’s eyes looked around frantically. Where was it!? All she saw was empty grass. Then, her eyes looked up into the woods and saw it. Only it wasn’t by itself. Someone was carrying it. It was in the hands of… the little boy? It was the same black band she had just saw a moment ago. He was looking at her, however, immediately when their eyes met his faced turned into fear and he ran the opposite way of Keely with the Dragon.

“Hey.” Keely called beginning to understand what was happening.

“Hey!” she called even louder. She quickly forgot her despair and replaced it with frustration. Jumping to her feet, Keely ran into the woods chasing after the black band.

Chapter 68 End

Chapter 69

“‘Be more careful’ he says. ‘You could get caught’ he says. ‘Henry, you’re too reckless.’ He says. What does he know? Always on my case. I’m shocked he doesn’t still have people babysitting me. I’ve proven myself time and again and he still treats me like I’m a little kid. Just because dad left him in charge…”

The person talking to himself was indeed a kid. A boy. Being his age often meant people treating him younger then he would have liked. How old was he? He didn’t know for sure nor did he care. For black bands, it didn’t matter how long you had lived, only how long you could stay alive. And that’s exactly what this boy was, a black band. His band on his left bicep was displayed proudly. If he could, he would write his name in big bold letters on it. H-E-N-R-Y. There was the rule in Wig-Or-Log that you could not cover your band because there was the possibility that you could be a black band. Henry knew different though. Real black bands, not those cowards who spur of the momentarily broke rules, but people like himself who were dedicated to the life style, didn’t care if others knew they were a black bands or not. They were actually quite proud to show you so; as if you could ever catch them.

Though this kid was talking out loud to himself and had nothing covering his criminal display, he was being more careful then he let on. He was not simply walking through the woods, but he was sneaking from tree to tree, searching for prey. What kind of prey? The kind that were afraid of his kind. The colorful kind. He had to be careful if he wanted to get a good find. Though he was not afraid to cover up his band, if a colored band saw him it would mean having to either fight or flee. Fighting was fun, but most people in Wig-Or-Log had more experience than Henry. They hadn’t had more experience than him in running though. Colored bands always tried some strategic way to win a battle or died trying, thus fleeing was an activity that was new to most of them. Even if someone could keep up with Henry’s speed, which he highly doubted, escaping was more than just running fast. Escaping was an art. It was knowing when to move, when to hide, what route to take and all things that came to REAL black bands with ease. Henry had often heard stories the others told of the other colors of the war. The Oranges were known for their boldness; the Golds for their decisiveness; the Blues for their artistic designs; even the rarely seen Greens had a reputation for being great strategists. If the others colors could talk about one quality for black bands more than any other, it would be their ability to make a clean getaway. Not that the other colors knew enough about black bands to tell stories. To them they were simply scary figures told of that would be taken care of by the Disccretes. But Henry was real. If they didn’t know it, that just made it easier for him to do his job.

After traveling some distance, the black band spotted something in the clearing of the forest. He came to a quick stop and looked out from the safety of the shadows from behind a tree.

What he saw was someone lying in the opening underneath a tree. He moved to the next tree closer to the clearing to get a view. Henry popped his head out… and what a view he got.

Before him was a girl, a beautiful girl, sleeping in the clearing. She was older than him… or could have been. He wasn’t sure. As he examined the girl, he swallowed hard in his throat. The sun shone down on her light skin which reflected beautifully back at Henry. Her face was so calm and peaceful to Henry. Her clothes looked good on her. Sleek and black. And her band was… not black. Too bad. Her band would have really matched nicely with her…

At that moment, Henry’s attention diverted away from Keely’s beauty and toward her weapon. His eyes widened at what he saw. A nice beautiful long sword. He couldn’t tell if the sword was high quality, but even if it wasn’t, it would still be great for the collection. The design of the handle alone was great. A dragon, a rare find indeed. He had to make sure he got the sheath with it. Those flames went excellent with the design of the handle. This find alone would be enough to go home and call it a day, maybe even a month. Even Brothamo wouldn’t be able to say anything, though knowing him, he probably would anyway.

Henry began to creep around the opening towards the girl. The girl sleeping made it easy enough for him to take his prize, but he knew better than to approach her by stepping into the sunlight. He remained hidden and silently approached her in a circle like manner. Now, he was more than half way there. He took another look at the girl. Once again, he noticed how the sun reflected off of her skin.

“Wow.” He said reacting to the sight.

Suddenly, the girl stirred. Oh no. His voice had woken her up. He stopped dead in his tracks, hoping he hadn’t been caught. The girl looked around, drowsy and confused. Then, she relaxed and when she did, so did Henry. That was good. She hadn’t noticed him. He continued to observe the girl, hoping she wouldn’t grab her sword. He needed it to be left on the floor so he could grab it. He continued to creep slowly. As he did, the girl stretched out her body from exhaustion. That was an extremely valuable sight to the young boy. Again, as on instinct, his mouth responded to what his eyes saw.

“Wow, oh wow.”

Immediately after he said his statement, the girl looked toward his direction and became cautious. Henry face-palmed himself in humility. Twice now his mouth had turned an easy steal much more difficult. The girl ran to grab her sword and held it as though she were prepared to separate it from its sheath.

“Who’s there?” she called out.

Henry continued to beat himself up. With the sword in her hand, this would be much more difficult. If the girl had seen Henry, he would have to flee. Everyone had orders to kill black bands on sight. Anyone else in his position would have fled by now, but Henry did not want to leave so soon. Maybe there was someway he could salvage this. It would depend what color this girl was. If she was a Gold or Orange, he would have to leave her. They were not scared to kill their victims. If she were a Blue, however, Henry might have stood a chance. He may be able to talk her out of giving him the sword or… something. He looked closely at the band on the nervous girls arm. When he saw the color it had, he gasped, then a huge grin came across his face.

Henry stepped out with a plan in his head.

**Talk here….**

Henry steadily approached the female before him. He could not help but notice that she looked even prettier when she was pittying someone. Still, he had to stick to his helpless gesture or his plan would be thrown off.

The mommy thing was a bit much. Generally, the younger you look, the more sorry one will feel for you, but that was a risking move.

The girl did not seem to be bothered by it though. Though her guard was still up, she showed curiosity.