Chapter 85

Light. It was piercing through the darkness. It disturbed his peace, but at the same time he knew it was a good sign. The peace needed to be disturbed; the light needed to come in. The light became a big blur. The blur, became a mix of colors that became figures. Trees. He was looking at trees. And grass. He was in a forest... it was day time... what?

“Baas!” A voice came. Baas? Oh yeah, that was him. And that voice... it belonged to Sheina! His friend Sheina.

Sheina came to Baas who was laying down on the ground. Her chains rattled as she moved her arms. Right behind her was Dragon, carrying both her sheath and her sword.

Baas tried to move, but it felt weird. There was a shield in his left hand. His wrists held shackles on them. But the weirdest thing was his body. It felt tired. More tired than he had remembered in a while.

“Baas are you okay?” Sheina asked.

“Sheina...” Baas said struggling to see. “What happened? Where are we?”

“We’re... we’re in the woods Baas. We got out of the base.”

“Base? Right we were captured. Golds. Golds had us.” Baas sat up and was quiet for a while. “How’d we get here?”

Sheina looked at Dragon who returned the same look to her. She then put her arm on Baas’ shoulder.

“You don’t remember?”

Baas stood to his feet, squinting his eyes in strain.

“I remember... we were locked up. Then... Dragon... Dragon came to save us. We ran... we fought... and Vatti...”

Baas eyes widened.

“Vatti.” He said low. His memories came back. The feeling of his chest against the floor. The sound of the knife hitting his chain. The look in Vatti’s eyes.

He quickly turned to Sheina and Dragon. “Vatti! She... she didn’t, did she?”

Sheina and Dragon both said nothing. They looked away, as though they couldn’t tell Baas the truth. Baas looked down at the end of the chain on his right hand. It showed signs of being broken by a sharp, metal object. Baas could feel the swelling in the back of his eyes. He didn’t care. Tears built up. He didn’t care. His legs gave way and his knees hit the ground. He didn’t care. There was rustling in the bushes. Baas simply did not care.

“See?” Koroko said, approaching from the bushes. “I told you there was nothing to worry about.”

A boy approached Baas, one he had never seen before.

“Hi,” he said, “I’m Henry. I arranged this whole escape.”

Baas remained quiet.

“Baas?” Pandora asked, moving Henry out of the way. “Baas what’s wrong?”

The Orange teenager was kneeled on the floor, his hands were grasping the grass hard. And he was doing something Baas rarely did. He was crying. Hard. Tears were running down his face without end. Influenced, Sheina too had started crying. Keely had lifted her mask, trying and failing to hold back the tears.

“Kid.”Atsuma asked. “Baas. What happened?”

Baas punched the ground with rage and ignored Atsuma’s question completely.

“Vatti, what is wrong with you?” he said. “Why’d you have to do something stupid like that?”

“What?” Atsuma asked. “Sheina, what’s he talking about. What did Vatti do?”

In between gasping breaths, Sheina answered Atsuma’s question.

“Vatti, let the Golds capture her to help us escaped. She’s… she’s still in there.”

“What!?” Atsuma, Koroko and Pandora all said at once.

“She’s still in there.” Dragon continued. “Probably dead by now.”

Baas punched the ground again in anger. And again. And again.

The rest were quiet. They weren’t sure what to say. Finally, Atsuma spoke.

“I’m sorry Baas. It’s never easy losing a friend in the war. But death is a part of it.”

“A part of it?” Baas said low. His voice then started to grow.

“A part of it?” Baas lifted his head, there was anger in his tear filled eyes. “Vatti only wanted one thing! To be a part of this stupid war! To embrace it! She wanted to be the best ever, and she wanted me to be one too. And now she’s gone.”

Baas’ fist went into the ground one more time.

“What’s the point of this stupid war anyway!?!” Baas shouted into the heavens. His attention turned towards the group. “What’s the point in fighting a war if I can’t protect people I care about!?!” Baas went back to facing the floor, tears falling from his cheeks.

“What’s the point in fighting this war…” he said lowly.

The air grew quiet again. The sound of the wind was the only thing that could be heard.

“That is the question indeed.” A voice came from the air. It was deep, dark and sinister, sending shivers down the group’s spine. Immediately, everyone except Baas stood firm and to attention, subconsciously getting closer to each other, their eyes searching the trees.

“The pain of losing a life. You now understand it well.”

“WHO IS THAT!?!” Henry said freaking out. “IS IT A DISCRETE!”

“Calm down boy.” Atsuma said, “We know that voice, and trust me, it’s no Discrete.”

“I can’t believe he survived” Koroko said.

“Weren’t you the one who was so sure he died? And you wonder why people insult your intelligence.” Pandora said.

“Sheina, what’s going on? Whose talking to us? Where’s his voice coming from.”

“Calm down Keely.” Sheina answered. “Atsuma got rid of him before, he’ll do it again.”

“What do you want from us Diablo?” Atsuma yelled into the air. “Come to kill us off finally.”

The wind blew harder, as if it was in rhythm with Diablo’s voice.

“I thought I made it clear that I wasn’t your enemy. I’ve been following you for quite a while. If I wanted to kill you, you would be dead.”

Where was he? Why did it seem like his voice was coming from everywhere?

“I’ve come to speak yet again about my opportunity.”

“Can’t you leave the boy alone?!” Koroko shouted. “He lost a friend! Why do you feel the need to ask him now?!”

The wind continued to howl.

“Because Koroko, now he has suffered. Now he is ready to answer with a correct mindset.”

Finally, the voice had an origin. It came from where no one was facing. Everyone turned ready to fight. However, what they saw made them lower their guard immediately. Baas sensed something. He too looked at where Diablo’s voice was coming from. His eyes widened with hope.

“Now, Baas” Diablo said, “you understand the true value of a life.”

Diablo emerged from the shadows of the forest. In his arms, he held Vatti.

“Vatti?” Baas asked in disbelief. “Vatti!” The Orange got up and ran to Diablo. Diablo set Vatti into Baas’ arms.

“Vatti.” Baas said. “Vatti, are you okay?”

Her face was dirty. Her entire body looked like she had just emerged from a fight. Baas did not care about that.

“Vatti. Vatti say something.”

Vatti’s eyes twitched. Slowly, but surely, they opened.

“Baas?” she said. She spoke low as her voice, as well as her eyes, were straining to work. “Baas... are you... crying?”

Baas grinned and nodded.

“You big baby.” Vatti said with a soft smile.

A big smile came across Baas’ face. Tears were still flowing from his eyes, but this time, they weren’t tears of sorrow anymore. Baas let out chuckles as he brought Vatti over to a tree to rest by Sheina.

Atsuma, Koroko and Pandora couldn’t help but appreciate the moment. All of them had grins on their faces. Pandora had tears flowing from her eyes. Atsuma turned back to Diablo.

“How’se that arm? I figured you’d be crippled for months.”

“I’m a fast healer.” Diablo said simply.

“You know, the way I see it, that girl had the entire Gold base after her. What happened to not exposing yourself for one life?”

“Saving the girl was convenient. She had something of mine that I couldn’t let get lost.”

“Thanks.” Atsuma said with a simple grin.

\*Thud\*

Faster than anyone knew to react, Baas had his arms around Diablo, hugging him very tightly.

“Thank you... thank you so much.” He said. Tears were still flowing from his eyes.

Diablo had his hands up in the air, as though Baas were some sort of infestation. This he had not expected, and did not know how to react. Finally, he grabbed Baas and removed him.

“I trust I have earned an audience.”

“Let me guess.” Atsuma said. “You want to talk to us about joining you on your mission.”

“Yes.” Diablo said. “But this time it will be different.”

“Different?” Baas repeated.

“Yes. This time, you will get answers. But we can’t discuss it here. The Golds are still after you and we are too close to their base. It won’t take them long before they start searching the outer area out of desperation.” Diablo walked away from the two Orange Leaders. They stood quiet for a while, both confused at what just happened.

“Answers?”

They both asked starting to follow.

“Answers.” Diablo said not stopping. “Who took your Commander and why. What my mission entitles. And a lot more answers to questions you didn’t think to ask. But first we have to keep moving.”

Atsuma and Baas looked at each other.

Chapter 85 End