

## Chapter 45

### **Seq Day 47**

"Riter!" I screamed, as I arrived just in time to see Meelo fall onto the ground. My knife was drawn and ready in my hand as I moved closer. The only thing I could feel was anger. I was going to finish what Meelo started and get both of us out of there, somehow. Meelo had only been stabbed once, so he couldn't have been fatally wounded, at least, I hoped he wasn't.

Meelo's mother looked up from her bleeding son and her expression quickly changed from surprise to smugness. She held her head high as she stood over my hurt boyfriend. "Well, well, well. I guess I'll get to kill two faggots with one stone,"

I stopped about ten paces from the Kreq leader. Every part of my body was screaming to drive my knife through Riter's eye and kill her, but I gazed at the bloody knife that was still in her left hand, Meelo's knife, and kept my distance.

Since I was close enough, I shot a look at Meelo to see how he was doing. His condition was worse than I thought. His eyes were unfocused, but still blinking in what could have been his effort to keep them open. A lot of blood was on his bare chest, enough to burn a hole of fear in my heart. His stomach rose and fell faster than any heartbeat and he squeezed his wound with curled fingers. If he had any chance of living, we would have to get out of there quickly. Could he hear me if I spoke to him? *Worth a shot.*

"Don't worry, Meelo," I comforted him, while trying to hide my fear. "Everything's going to be all right. Just stay awake. I'll take care of the rest,"

Now, I focused my attention back on Riter, who still held Meelo's blade. Her expression didn't change and she kept her cold blue eyes on me, while she stepped over Meelo, as if he were a patch of mud.

Once Riter was over Meelo and on solid ground, I charged. Slashing through the air, I moved forward, aiming for the leopardess' neck. She stepped sideways and away from my swing, causing my knife to only sink into air.

Immediately after dodging my attack, Riter came at me with her blade ready in her left hand to piece my chest. I was quicker. I stepped to the side of her attack, feeling the rush of air from the blade as I did so, and slashed my knife outwards in mid-step. While I had aimed for her neck again, I had only cut Riter's left shoulder. The wound was deep, though, and I could see the tiniest hint of bone, so I leapt out of Riter's range.

Riter turned and faced me again, snarling as a fresh layer of blood emerged from her shoulder and poured down her arm. "Do all of you Kyan fight like faggots?"

She clearly wasn't happy about me skipping around her, but I didn't let her comment get to me. If I was going to walk out of there alive with Meelo, I had to play it safe.

Swiftly, Riter dived forward and stretched out her arm again, to try and skewer me with Meelo's knife.

I saw an opening in her stance. Since I had cut her left shoulder, Riter wasn't holding her the knife as high as she could. Her arm also didn't seem as sturdy as it

was before I cut her. I only had one chance to have made the moment count. If I didn't take it, I would have ended up on the ground with Meelo. Everything depended on this. Meelo's life, my life and everybody else's lives back at camp all hung on this crucial moment. If I could do it just right, we'd win. If I didn't...

Riter's arm sprang forward with the blade ready. I stepped to the right and dodged the attack. My left hand grabbed Riter's wrist and pinned it against my side so that she couldn't use Meelo's knife. Before Riter even had time to try and free herself, I attacked.

You never expect fighting to be so bloody. Sure, you know there is going to be some blood because of some war story you were told once, but you would be surprised at just how much blood truly comes out of a person when you make your first kill. I can't even describe it very well. It makes my fur crawl to think just how much of the stuff we carry around inside us everyday of our lives.

Traumatized. That was good word to describe how I felt when I plunged my knife into the side of Riter's neck. As I withdrew it for the first time, a burst of red thickness came roaring out of the Kreq's neck. Red waves splattered against my face and onto the tip of my nose. I ignored them and brought my knife down once again, to make the bleeding hole in Riter's neck twice as big. Even after I stabbed her seven or eight more times, only more blood seemed to come coursing out the front of Riter's neck, which was only a few strands of flesh at that point. I thought the blood would have stopped by then, but it kept going, as did I. Now that I had Riter pinned down, I wasn't going to allow her the chance of escaping. Blood, blood and more blood came as I continued to pierce Riter's neck. I didn't care that my clothes were drenched. Nor did I care that Riter managed to gurgle a drowned scream as I stabbed her for what could have been the twentieth time. All I wanted was to do was take my boyfriend home.

My rage caused me to not notice Riter's limpness for sometime. Once I did, I let go of her arm. I then watched Riter collapse onto the ground with her empty eyes, full of disbelief, and a gaping hole that still bled rivers onto the snow.

I stood there for a moment and stared down at Riter. Her chest didn't rise or fall and her eyes stayed still. She was certainly dead.

When I remembered Meelo, I turned around to go help him, only to stop in my tracks and stare at the five Kreq who pointed their guns at me. A moment passed by and my heart grew still.

Shots were fired and screaming followed.

In unison, all of the Kreq warriors' bodies burst open and revealed their red insides, which fell onto the snow below them. None of them showed a single sign of getting back up.

I turned my head back towards the woods behind me and saw Grix, leading a patrol of five other Kyan that stood behind him. All of them were armed with guns of their own. It was so unbelievable to see them that I almost ran up to the patrol and hugged each one of them. But, before I could, I remembered Meelo.

"Seq?" Grix called after me with worry in his voice. "Are you-" He didn't finish his thought and his eyes attached their gaze onto Meelo, who still lay on the ground behind me.

With my knife still in my hand and drenched in Riter's blood, I hurried over to Meelo and knelt down in the snow next to him. When I got close enough to Meelo and moved his hand that still clasped onto his wound, I was able to see that Riter had stabbed him very deeply and that a lot of blood was still coming out.

*No. No. No. No.* I placed my knife on the ground next to me and pressed both of my hands over Meelo's open cut to try and slow his blood loss. As I applied pressure, Meelo moaned in pain. He was still conscious, thank Taiya.

"Meelo?" I whispered. "How bad does it hurt?"

His eyes blinked quickly at the sound of my voice and strained to focus on me. "Seq... you can't be here... Leave before Riter-"

"Don't talk," I said. "You'll just waste your breath. Don't worry. I took care of Riter. Grix and a patrol are here. Meelo, you're gonna make it! We'll get you back to Sera's and she'll fix you up good as new,"

"Seq,"

I looked over from Meelo's wound and gazed into his dim eyes. They seemed to be empty of all their color. "Meelo," I ordered. "Don't talk,"

"Seq...we both know I'm dying,"

My ears burned at the very mention of death. I shook my head and looked at Meelo's wound as my eyes began to feel moist. "Don't say that, Meelo! You're going to be fine! We'll get you back to camp and you'll be just fine. Everything will be fine!"

Despite my efforts to hold back my tears, streaks of warmth began to roll down my cheeks and drip onto the snow. My hands, still covered in Meelo's blood, continued to hold his wound and quiver.

Meelo tried shifting where he laid. "Don't cry, Seq. Please... I don't want to make you cry,"

I was nearly screaming. "It's not fair! First my dad and now you... I can't lose you, too," My throat was tightening with every breath I took and my cheeks burned, only to be comforted by my fresh tears.

Somehow, Meelo was still able to speak. "Seq, don't punish them,"

I looked back at Meelo's dreary eyes in confusion. "Who?"

"The Kreq,"

*What?* How was he defending the very tribe that had caused him to be lying in the snow as he bled? All they ever did was hate and belittle him! Why should he give a shit about them? What was the point?

"Meelo," I said.

"Don't..." Meelo gasped for air. "Don't make them suffer...for what Riter did,"

I shook my head, spilling a few tears as I did so. "Then what would you have me do?"

He swallowed and cleared his throat. His voice was almost a whisper. "Take them in...like you did me,"

I couldn't believe he was wasting his breath like that. Take in the Kreq? "What? Why?"

"Because they have nowhere to go...just like I did...when you found me. Take them in...and give them a home. Show them love and forgiveness. Let them know that they belong. Belonging is something nobody can live without...even the Kreq."

Don't keep that from them. If you do...they'll keep hating us and this fighting will never stop,"

Meelo ceased his talking and his eyes slowly began to close.

"No!" I screamed and pressed my hands harder against his chest. "Don't go! Don't leave me all alone!"

He smiled. "Oh Seq...I love you, Seq...I love you more than anything. Just don't cry. Be happy... Just don't cry,"

His eyes dulled and his head loosely rolled to the side to stare off into nothing. Through the tears in my eyes, I could see that his breathing had stopped.

I buried my face in Meelo's bare chest, staining my fur with his blood, and cried into his still-warm body. I didn't care that my tribesmen were watching me cry on my dead boyfriend. In my mind, they were no longer there, I was no longer in the forest, my knees weren't freezing the snow, blood wasn't splattered across my muzzle and Riter's body wasn't next to me. It was just me, alone, holding Meelo's body as I cried in grief. For a moment, we were all that mattered. We were all that existed. There were no Kyan, no Kreq, just us, together for one last moment in time.

"Seq?"

I raised my face off of Meelo's motionless chest and felt droplets of blood sprinkle off my nose. After I looked back over my shoulder, I saw Grix, standing closer to me than the other Kyan behind him. All of them looked at me with wide empty eyes of pity. It made me sick. I didn't want their fucking pity. I wanted my boyfriend back.

Once Grix took a step towards me, I realized it was him who called my name. "Riter," I sniffed, "stabbed Meelo. I killed her and tried to stop his bleeding, but he..."

I couldn't finish.

Grix gracefully walked over to me and placed his hand on my shoulder, letting me know with the warmth of his touch that he understood and was there for me.

*Take them in.*

Meelo's words repeated in my head. Why would he ask me something like that? Still, he did have a point. If we didn't try and show them kindness, this might all happen again. I still couldn't believe that with his dying breath, Meelo asked such a favor of me. *His dying breath.* I sighed. If it was that important to him, then I was going to try my best to fulfill it.

"Grix," I said and turned my head forward to look down at Meelo's corpse again.

"Yes, Seq?"

"Don't hurt those other Kreq after Callix tells you where their camp is,"

The Kyan leader was silent.

"Can you..." Fuck. It was hard to say. "Can we take the in, like we did Meelo?"

Based on Grix's tone, I could tell that he was pissed off that I would say such a thing, but he tried to hide it. "What? After all they did? Don't you remember what happened to Sebastian and Dew? Or your father?"

I shook my head at the bitter memories. "Riter did that. She ordered the Kreq to do everything since the very start. She was the one who killed our friends,"

"Well," Grix spoke, trying less to hide his irritation, "what about Isabel? She was raped, Seq! I can't just let that go,"

I didn't have an answer for that one. What happened to Isabel couldn't be forgiven. While there was no way we could find out who did it, there still had to be justice. Yet, I couldn't bear myself to agree with Grix out loud. I had to respect Meelo's last wish. If I didn't, I would probably have been the worst boyfriend ever.

A moment later, I was happy I didn't say anything. Callix, who had been tied to the tree next to all of the dead Kreq, broke his long silence. I had almost forgotten that he was there. "Riter only had eight warriors that supported her in the end. They didn't question her orders and she trusted them with all the guns in camp. The other Kreq have wanted this fighting to be over for a long time, some since the beginning. But Riter and the Kreq that were loyal to her kept them in line. Those same eight Kreq were the ones who raped Isabel and I can name every single one of them,"

Grix stood behind me, silent. I couldn't see his face, but I assumed he was thinking. Then, he spoke again. "Where are these loyal Kreq, Callix?"

Callix tilted his head to the side, towards the dead Kreq, and I noticed the little stub where his right ear used to be. "Five of them are right there. The other three stayed back at camp, in case any other Kreq tried to run away,"

For a moment, the wolf was silent again as he stood behind me. I was certain that he was giving Callix a firm stare. "Are sure, Callix? You saw what happened to Isabel. I can't let anybody who did that get away,"

Callix now spoke with a steady seriousness. "Grix, I'll gladly point out the rest of those fuckers so you can blow their heads wide open. Nobody wants to see them bleed and die more than me for what I saw them do. But, I promise you, everybody else is innocent. There's women and children, Grix. We have to put them somewhere. And, Seq is right. If we don't show them the same kindness we gave to Meelo, this will just happen all over again. We have the room, too. They could live in all those empty huts we have back at camp,"

No words were spoken for a moment. I thought that maybe Grix was going to move out to the Kreq camp, but instead he spoke to me again. "Are you sure this is what you want, Seq?"

My hands slowly rubbed against Meelo's bloody chest. "No. I want my boyfriend back. But, since you aren't Taiya, I guess you might as well go,"

"Seq," Grix said. "I can have somebody help you bring his body back to ca-"

"No," I cut him off. "Just leave me alone with him for a while. You can help me when you guys get back,"

A brief pause was followed by Grix's next question. "Are you sure?"

I looked down and stared at Meelo's head, which lay against the ground with dead blue eyes. "Yes,"

"Are you okay, Seq?" Grix asked.

I slowly shook my head. "No,"