

Chapter 11:
Glif 6th, Grada
Year 10,053 AE
(Just Outside The Nigelle Farm; Okatako)

The sky was deep red and black from the early sunset struggling to shine through the thick layers of smoke in the sky.

Ka'harja anxiously fussed over Distro as she prepared to fight Kay'oten. He didn't want her to do it. A fight to the death! What if she lost? Kay'oten had fought in hundreds of these battles and won; Distro had never killed anyone before.... At least not that Ka'harja knew about.

The rules of Gra'gahoo da were simple: no clothes, no weapons, no help. The fight must rely completely on the strength and skill of the two sides, with no outside forces interfering.

'Please, Mum, don't do this!' Ka'harja begged his mother as she tugged off her skirt. The long, deep scratches in her side had leaked blood that soaked the fabric and made it stick to her skin; it peeled off with a disgusting trail of brownish-red following it. 'We can fight them together! You don't need to do this!'

'He's right,' said Sken. 'The Har'pies outnumber us, but we have weapons. And Scara's blessing.'

'The Goddess is a myth! I'd rather rely on my own strength; I know *that's* real,' snorted Distro. 'If I die, you can do as you want... but you're already doing enough favours for those two and I don't want anyone else risking their lives! This way it might be resolved with only one death. *Her* death.'

'You're brave,' Sken bowed her head and flicked her tail. 'It's admirable.... I just hope you know what you're doing.'

'Of course I do!' Distro snapped. 'I've been waiting to rip into this bitch for *years!*' Sken stared at Distro, confused.

'I expected her to come sooner,' Distro explained. 'After Ka'harja told me what she did to him I knew *I'd* be the one to kill her, one way or another. I've been wanting to break this bitch's neck since she broke his leg!'

Sken glanced to the scar on Ka'harja's leg, then looked up with awe. 'You really care about him, don't you? Even though he's not really—'

'That sentence better finish with "very bright,"' Distro hissed. 'Because if anyone else *dares* to imply he's not my son, I'll kill them, too!'

Sken's gills pressed down in shock and she gave a curt nod.

'Mum, I'm scared,' Ka'harja gripped Distro's arm. 'Please, don't do this! There has to be another way! What if you win but they still try and take us away?'

'They won't. It's Heck'ne tradition. And they have actual harpies with them; they wouldn't *dare* defy it,' Distro put an arm around her son and gave him a comforting squeeze. 'If I win they'll leave. Har'pies never break the Gra'gahoo da oath.'

'And if you lose they'll take me and the girls away,' Ka'harja swallowed. He was on the edge of another panic attack again, and it was hard to stay calm.

'No, they won't,' said Distro. She glared out of the corner of her eye at the Har'pies, who stood in a half-circle around Kay'oten. 'If I lose Sken's lot will fight them. Har'pies may honour Gra'gahoo da, but that doesn't mean we have to!'

With that, Distro let go of her son and walked over to Kay'oten. The caravaners slowly surrounded her, completing the circle.

'Are you ready to die?' Kay'oten hissed through her grin.

Distro shrugged casually. 'Eh.'

Insulted by Distro's dismissal, Kay'oten gave an angry, bird-like screech.

'Caw caw,' Distro replied flatly, sticking her hands in her underarms and flapping them like wings. 'Tweet tweet.... Cluck.'

The jutt-jaws screamed at the insult, flashing their wings and lifting their tails— But they made no move forward.

Ka'harja flinched as his mother blew a raspberry. That hadn't been an insult to Kay'oten, personally— It had been an insult to the *entire Heck'ne!* What was his mother *thinking?!*

Was she trying to psych them out somehow?!

Kay'oten's muscles twitched eagerly as she tensed. She wiggled like a cat as she crouched down and prepared herself to spring at Distro. Her tail was puffed out and her ears were pressed back.

Distro just stood in place, staring. Her face was blank and her expression unreadable as she watched Kay'oten, who stopped and waited for Distro to move first.

When Distro didn't move, Kay'oten licked her teeth, seemingly unsettled. 'Aren't you scared?'

'No,' said Distro, simply. 'What about you?'

'Not at all!' Kay'oten hissed.

'Could have fooled me,' Distro grinned, calmly stepping towards Kay'oten so she was within an arm's length. 'Come on then! If you're not scared, what are you waiting for? Come and get me!'

Kay'oten hesitated. Only for a second, but it was enough; Distro saw her chance and kicked Kay'oten in the groin.

Kay'oten hadn't even fully fallen to the ground before Distro began to beat her.

'YOU BITCH!' Distro screeched, her voice ringing out over the shocked silence. 'HOW DARE YOU?! YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST COME ONTO MY LAND, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, AND TRY TO TAKE MY SON AWAY FROM ME?!'

Ka'harja watched in shocked silence as his adoptive mother began to kick the shit out of his biological mother. It was merciless. He wondered if the fight would end like this; with the renown warrior Kay'oten screaming on the ground as she got kicked to death by a naked drunk.

'I'LL KILL YOU!' Distro leapt at Kay'oten, but slammed into the ground as Kay'oten finally managed to roll away.

Kay'oten struggled to her feet, coughing. She was winded and her nose was bleeding again, and one of her eyes was already starting to swell. She hissed as she turned to Distro. 'Of all the cheap, dirty, utterly *honourless* acts you could have—' Her angry screech became a panicked scream as Ka'harja's mother charged at her.

‘COME BACK AND FIGHT ME YOU COWARD!’ Distro shrieked as she chased Kay’oten around the circle. ‘I’LL RIP YOU APART! GET BACK HERE!’

Kay’oten was running like she was trying to escape a stampede of dragons, and the circle scattered as Distro jumped on her back and tried to strangle her from behind.

‘GET OFF ME, YOU HONOURLESS TISI’MAAR!’ screamed Kay’oten. She began to flail about wildly, desperately trying to shake Distro off. ‘If *anyone* dies today it’s going to be *you!* You cheat! You cheap shot! You mup maka kiita!’

As threatening as the words were, the tone was laughable. Ka’harja felt a strange, morbid pleasure when he heard Kay’oten’s voice break and he was transported in his mind to the times she and his father had laughed at the weakness in his own words.

Then he jumped in shock as Distro landed with a *thump* on the ground and Kay’oten turned and ran at her.

Kay’oten aimed a low kick at Distro’s face, but Distro leapt into the air with amazing speed and circled behind her adversary. Kay’oten kicked again as she spun, higher this time, but missed as Distro ducked. Kay’oten screamed and stumbled back, hissing angrily.

‘MUP BALAK HAL’KAKA!’ Kay’oten shouted. ‘What is it with you and *hitting me in the vagina?*!’

Distro grit her teeth shook her out her hand, reeling from the punch she’d thrown. ‘Come on *baby*, it’s not like anyone else has been touching it lately. I know all about Pert’ana!’

It was the wrong thing to say. With a burst of rage Kay’oten lashed out and kicked Distro in the side. Distro gave a shout as her wound reopened and blood gushed out. She managed to block Kay’oten’s next kick but the woman had gone as savage as a rabid dog. She sunk her teeth into Distro’s hand and the two collapsed in a heap.

Distro managed to put her knees up before she hit the ground and Kay’oten landed on her heavily. Kay’oten gasped and Distro was able to wrench her hand free, but the Har’py was still on top of her and pinned her arms down easily. Distro tried to kick her off, but Kay’oten leant her weight forward and Distro found her knees pressed tightly between their stomachs.

‘He’s *mine*,’ hissed Kay’oten. ‘I squeezed the tisi’maar out! I own him!’

‘MUM!’ Ka’harja shrieked. Sken had to hold him back as he desperately tried to get to his mother.

Distro’s gaze snapped to her son. His face was tortured with fear. Tears streamed down his cheeks as he struggled against the caravaners.

‘Mum!’ he screamed. ‘Please! I need you!’

‘Aw, what a pity,’ Kay’oten breathed into Distro’s ear, too quiet for the spectators to hear. ‘Let me share a secret with you, woman to woman... *kekik to kekik*: I’m not going to kill him when I take him back. Oh, no... I need to replace Pert’ana. And besides; *it wouldn’t be the first time I’ve had my way with him—*’

‘I’LL KILL YOU!’ Distro’s dry-throated screech exploded out of her throat like an animal screaming for its life and Kay’oten jumped back in shock. She stumbled and fell in the dirt, hands over her ears, as Distro screamed at her with such an unnatural volume and pitch that it shook the ground and rippled through the tall grass like a gust of wind.

Then Distro rushed forward and, out of nowhere, a dragon took her place on the battlefield. It was as if the creature had burst out of Distro's skin to defend her.

It gripped Kay'oten by the face and bit down, crushing her skull as its long serpentine body twisted and contorted in its frenzied mauling of the foxen woman. Blood splatted over the spectators as the dragon shook Kay'oten's corpse by her neck until the flesh severed and her now-headless torso was flung across the field.

The Har'pies screeched in panic as the black-and-green beast gave an unruly roar and hissed in a voice all too familiar, 'You *bitch!*'

'M-Mum?' Ka'harja whispered as realisation washed over him. He swallowed his fear and shouted to the creature. 'MUM! STOP! YOU'VE WON!'

The dragon turned to him and, as suddenly as it had appeared, Distro took its place on the blood-soaked ground. She looked... *different*.

But there was no time for Ka'harja to take in the changes as he rushed forward and caught his collapsing mother.

'What... happened?' Distro asked weakly.

Ka'harja's mouth was dry, but he smiled proudly and squeezed her hand. 'You called Klict.'

Chapter End.

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