

Chapter Six

The Jungle Master

Little did Bonnie or I realize how difficult training would be. Baris, as we would quickly find out, was not only the leader of the village warriors but he was also the most skilled. He began our training by having us do pushups, sit ups, and running. Typical kinds of things that Bonnie and I were used to doing anyway. Baris was somewhat surprised by how well we did on our drills that he immediately afterward took us to begin our weapons training.

This was where I felt our training truly began. For both me and Bonnie. While we had been used to the exercise part of the training we were not so use to the sword and shield training. Baris began the sword and shield training with me. Although I was strong enough to hold the sword and shield I was not quick enough to dodge many of his attacks. Funny thing was-he did not have a sword but was mostly attacking me with his shield. I had tried to take a few swings but he was far quicker than I anticipated.

“Too slow young man,” Baris said as he took his shield and knocked me back. I had made the mistake of leaving myself open to a push back. When I swung my sword my shield went to myself and he was quick enough to avoid my attempted strike while using his shield to hit me in the face and knocking me out for a few moments.

“Are you okay?” Bonnie asked.

“He will be. He has to get used to the training,” Baris replied.

“Yeah,” I said as I stood back up.

“Concentrate. A warrior is always aware of his surroundings. A warrior that is not aware of his surroundings is not a warrior that survives. Survival depends on you being aware,” Baris said.

“Yes sir,” I said.

“Now. Try it again young man,” Baris said.

This time I said to myself I was more ready. Although I again wanted to charge at him again my gut feeling told me to hold back. Despite that he was not even armed with a shield something still told me to be on my guard. I slowly approached Baris and again I gave him another look. I was not sure what he was thinking. I said to myself that I was here armed with a sword and shield and he was not armed at all. My advantage or so I thought.

I do not think it was possible that I could have been any more wrong than I was just then. Baris said nothing as he continued to stare me down. After a few minutes of patiently I began to lower my sword and shield-thinking that he had given up but at that moment Baris quickly knocked my shield and sword out of my hands. He had acted impossibly fast. Before I could even get a swing off he had knocked my sword and shield out of my hands as well as knocking me again onto the floor.

“A warrior never lowers his guard down,” Baris began. “Patience is a good and noble virtue and I commend you for taking your time and being patient, but that patience should not lead to complacency. Complacency causes you to lose sight, lose focus and when you lose your focus you lower your guard and hence gives me an opening to strike.”

“Yes sir,” I said as I again stood up.

“You have a lot to learn and grow but in time you will get there,” Baris said. “I did not become as skillful as I am overnight. No, it took time and training as it will for you. Training is vital. Princess Elmas herself saw a time when strangers would arrive to help us in time of need.”

“Princess Elmas foresaw,” I began.

“Our princess, even though she is but a young woman herself, was gifted with vision. She could see the past, future and even see ghost and other supernatural things that we could not. It is indeed a rare gift these days. So very few people these days understand the old ways. They do not understand that Verity was once a united kingdom and not split into many sections. The tales that the elders told you about the Witch Doctor and Demon Lord not many people outside of the forest knows. It is a long lost forgotten piece of history that quite frankly should have never been forgotten. All the tales about the last great chieftain of Silver Kingdom were true,” Baris said.

“Silver Kingdom,” Bonnie said.

“Silver Kingdom was the central location of the government of the old days. That was where all the leaders, knights, nobility and really anyone of any importance went,” Baris said.

“What happened to it? I mean after the battle with the Witch Doctor,” I asked.

“Silver Kingdom was no more. It is now from what I have heard nothing more than a barren wasteland,” Baris said.

“So I take it Verity split up at that point,” Bonnie said.

“It did. Each region has its own rulers, sets of laws and generally speaking no one from one region may visit another though there have been some exceptions,” Baris said.

“I wonder why?” I asked.

“Fear. Fear of what is outside. Kingdoms keep to themselves in part because they are afraid and not to say I can blame that. Just look at what has happened here,” Baris replied.

“I understand,” I said.

“Come. Let me show you two something,” Baris said. We quickly followed him and he quietly took us to a hidden house that we had not seen before. The house was small, like the ones we had seen when we came into the village but this one was next door to the elders house.

Bonnie and I looked at each other for a moment before we followed Baris into the hut.

Once inside the hut I immediately became smitten by what I saw. On the bed I saw was an extremely beautiful young woman. She was just a little shorter than Barris but still taller than me and Bonnie. She was also a little slenderer than me and Bonnie though she still was as thin as a toothpick. Like the other villagers she had extremely dark colored skin and wore only leaves and grass on her chest and pelvic regions though unlike the others she did have a crown of jewels on her head. Also, I noticed that unlike most of the villagers whose hair was dark brown this young woman had bright colored hair. Baris needed to say nothing. I already knew. This I said to myself must be Princess Elmas the leader of Azad.

“She is beautiful,” Bonnie said.

“Is she-,” I began.

“Dead,” Baris finished my question. “No. She is not dead. Not yet anyway. She is just in an induced coma state until we can get a hold of the needed medicine and learn Irmak’s techniques.”

“And you said the medicine is in the temple region,” I said.

“The medicine is in the temple. In the heart of the temple. And with the jungle people and Jungle Master going berserk going to the temple right now is out of the question,” Baris replied.

“And even if we got a hold of the medicine how are we going to learn his techniques.”

“Simple,” Bonnie replied. “As a doctor he would most likely kept himself a field guide reminding him of the ingredients and how to mix the ingredients together.”

“Field guide,” Baris said.

“Notebook. Journal. Something that would have helped him,” I said.

“He always did carry a little brown book with him everywhere he went,” Baris said.

“What happened to it?” Bonnie asked.

“Nothing. Still with him. We have not buried Irmak yet so it most likely still with him,” Baris said.

“Where is he now?” I began to ask. I had finished asking my question when we heard several villagers shout out for help.

“What is going on?” Baris said as he quickly turned and grabbed a spear. The three of us quickly ran out of the hut and saw a rider on a horse going and killing many of the villagers with his long spear. I tried to get a good look at this mysterious rider but could not see him well until he turned around and began charging at us.

I could not believe it I said to myself. This rider appeared to be made completely of leaves, limbs both large and small types, and flowers. He was in layman’s terms a plant man. He must be one of the jungle warriors that I had been hearing about. The jungle warrior’s horse was also like the rider in that it too was made of leaves, limbs, and flowers which gave it a tropical and colorful appearance. Getting a better look as it slowly approached us, I realized that simply throwing a spear with fire would not cut it. The rider and horse had that many layers of limbs, leaves, and flowers. Other than the fact that the rider and horse were made from plants they both had normal human and horse appearances. Their size and proportions were correct I saw.

“You,” Baris said as the rider approached us.

“I τολδ ψου σολιδερ τηατ ψουρ πιλλαγε ωιλλ διε. Φιρστ ιτ ωασ τηε Θυεεν Μοτηε ρ, τηεν ψουρ πρινχεσσ, τηεν ιτ ωιλλ βε ψουρ ελδερ τηεν τηε ρεστ οφ ψου,” the jungle warrior said.

“Not if I have anything to say about it Jungle Master,” Baris replied.

“Jungle Master,” Bonnie gasped.

“Jungle Master,” I added. I got another good look at the rider and for the first time I saw on its head a crown made of thorns. It was not a very big crown which explained why I did not see it the first time but now seeing it I understood this rider was indeed responsible for the troubles of the village.

“Βιγ ταλκ σολδερ. Ψουρ πεοπλε αρε νοτηινγ χομπαρεδ το μινε ανδ ψου ωιλλ νεπερ γετ βαχκ ιντο τηε τεμπλε. Ψου ανδ ψουρ πεοπλε αρε φορεπερ χυρσεδ,” the Jungle Master said.

“We shall see about that,” Baris said.

“Ανδ ωηο ωιλλ στοπ με? Ψου μυστ βε κιδδινγ ολδ μαν ιφ τηινκ ψου χαν. Ψουρ πεοπλε ηαπε δεμονστρατεδ το βε ωεακ ανδ χοωαρδλψ. Σο ασ φαρ ασ Ι σεε ιτ ψου ηαπε νονε,” the Jungle Master said as he got off his horse.

I did not know or understand it but somehow, I understood what the Jungle Master said. Despite not being able to understand this ancient language of the Azadians I understood enough that this was a challenge of some sort.

“Ψου. Ηα. Ηα. Ηα. Ψου αρε φυστ α κιδ ανδ νοτ αν Αζαδιαν ατ τηατ. Βοψ, τηεψ συρε αρε γεττινγ δεσπερατε ιφ τηεψ αρε σενδινγ κιδς φρομ τηε νορτη το ηελπ. Τηεψ μυστ τηινκ Ι αμ σομε κινδ οφ φοολ το νοτ σεε ωηατ ισ ηαππενινγ,” the Jungle Master said. The Jungle Master looked at me for a few minutes first with amazement then with slight annoyance.

He then took out a small sword as he began to approach me. Neither Baris nor Bonnie said anything, though I could tell they were afraid, as they watched the Jungle Master approach. “I κνωω νοτ ωηερε ψου χομε φρομ ανδ νορ δο I χαρε βυτ I δο κνωω τηατ ψου ωι λλ φοιν ψουρ ανχεστορσ ανδ τηε οτηερ πιλλαγερσ ιν τηε γρουνδ.”

“Is that a threat?” I asked.

Baris nodded.

“What are you doing?” Bonnie asked.

“Challenging this Jungle Master,” I replied.

“Χηαλλενγε με,” the Jungle Master repeated with disbelief. The Jungle Master roared with laughter at the mere thought. “Αλριγητ βοψ. Λετ□σ σεε ωηατ ψου ηαπε.”

The Jungle Master was not Baris I knew. Baris had taken it easy with me in our only combat practice session so I knew I needed to be extremely careful and pay heed to the words he had told me earlier. Patience was key I said to myself. Let hm make the first move. The Jungle Master was complexed by lack of movement.

“Αρε ψου φοκινγ? Ωηψ αρεν□τ ψου ατταχκινγ? Τηισ ισ νοτ γοινγ το βε μυχη οφ α χηαλλενγε αφτερ αλλ. Ωατχη ηιμ διε σολιδερ,” the Jungle Master said as he lunged at me and as he did I quickly jumped out of the way. As he swung and missed, I saw an opening and remembered the words of Baris of always to ‘*Pay attention to my surroundings*’ as I landed a few strikes on his back. I quickly jumped away from him as he turned back around.

“Good job Alex,” Baris said.

“Ψου. Ωηο αρε ψου? Ψου αρε νο ορδιναρψ κιδ φρομ τηε νορτη. Νο ονε στανδσ υ π το τηε θυνγλε Μαστερ ανδ λιπεσ,” the Jungle Master angrily shouted.

“I do,” I said, in a mocking tone.

“You dare to mock me boy,” the Jungle Master said but this time his words came out to where me and Bonnie could understand it.

“Why are you attacking these villagers Jungle Master?” I asked pointed.

“Foolish lad. Whoever you are,” the Jungle Master spat. “You now nothing. Either my people will become extinct or their people will. There is no negotiation.”

“Over my dead body,” I said.

Bonnie and Baris let out loud gasps after I said those words.

“Very well lad. After I kill you I will hang your naked corpse by my pole and everywhere I go people will see your naked corpse and say ‘Is this the boy who was foolish enough to challenge the Jungle Master? Is this the boy who thought he could save a doomed race of people?’ You my friend, whoever you are-,” the Jungle Master said.

“Alex,” I shouted. “My name is Alex, Jungle Master.”

“Alex huh,” the Jungle Master said. “Well, that Alex is the last mistake you ever make.”

With that the Jungle Master threw down his short sword and took out a spear. I did my best to keep my fear hidden though I was afraid. I was afraid not so much of the Jungle Master though he could be at times frightening but more so in knowing that I still did not truly understand what Bonnie and I were truly up against. He quickly lunged at me with his spear and like last time I quickly jumped out his way and as I did I took my sword and sliced off his hand that had been carrying the spear.

“Yes,” Baris said. “Be is better than he realizes.”

“Great job,” Bonnie said, with excitement.

That good feeling and excitement I had felt did not last too long as I turned and saw that the Jungle master’s hand that I had severed had magically reconnected itself.

“What the-,” I began.

“Foolish lad. I am made of plants and of course I can regrow my limbs as need be,” the Jungle Master said.

“Noo-,” I began.

“You know so little boy,” the Jungle Master said. “But because I admire and respect your courage which very few people have these days I am going to spare you. Cross me again boy and I will make sure your head is stuffed and mounted on my spear.”

With that the Jungle Master jumped back onto his horse and quickly left the village. Bonnie and I could nothing but wonder what was it we really got ourselves into. This time I was lucky but next time I knew I might not be.