

He woke up in the forest, hands wrapped tightly around his sword. Hunger gnawed at his belly, his throat was dry from thirst, and his back ached from laying down on the ground all night.

In other words, a better than usual night for Yasuo, given that he had actually slept more than a few hours.

Shifting himself to sit against the tree, he grabbed his flask, uncorked it, and brought it to his lips with an ease born of long practice. He took a swing of air, a scant few drops of liquid falling to his tongue. Frowning, he stopped the flask once more, before pulling his rucksack from the ground beside him. His expression intensified as he saw the sad, deflated state of the sturdy cloth. With resigned motions, he opened up the bag, hoping against hope that something there remained. The swordsman sighed as his hopes were in vain - there was nothing edible in the bag, though the cloth wrapping he was keeping as a replacement bandage looked fairly appetizing at the moment. Not enough money to buy even a snack from a street vendor, either, just a single lone coin.

Yasuo struggled to his feet, leaning against the tree. He made a small sound of displeasure as he was forced to keep his balance with his sword. This was very much not an ideal situation to be in. He was weak, tired, and thirsty. Should his pursuers catch up to him at this moment, he would die, and the assassin would go free. Grimacing, he took a step forward, limbs shaking as he did. He did not look up, but kept his gaze firmly on the earth. His cloth-wrapped blade, he used as a cane, the scabbard digging into the earth with every step he took. Sandal-clad feet crushed fallen leaves as the man walked onwards, body screaming in protest with every step.

After a while, the wound in his side reopened. Scarlet stained what little of white cloth there was left, the majority having turned to dark brown days ago. Blood, crimson and vibrant, marked every step of his path, having run down from his cut to fall in large globules off his skin. Pressing blood-stained hand against a tree to steady himself, he looked up, and his eyes widened at what he found.

Yasuo had come across a farmstead. By his mark, he was still nearly three days away from the nearest - well, anything even remotely resembling a village. While such farms were by no means rare, they had become much scarcer since the Noxian invasion, most having moved to villages to gain safety in numbers. But this farmstead was still occupied, as he could tell from the smoke gently wafting from the chimney and the rice growing in the fields.

A stream ran through the property, and by the stream was a large rack, upon which lay a drying fish. Once again, hunger cut through Yasuo's gut, and before he could will his body into motion, his legs were already moving, slowly hobbling over to the rack with his wrapped sword. He took one step, then another. He was starting to slow now, each subsequent step taking more effort than the last. The last step took nearly five seconds for the fugitive to bring into motion, and while he desperately struggled to stay awake, he could feel his mind slowly sinking into the mire of unconsciousness.

Yasuo woke, for the first time in a long time, on a soft bed, a cool cloth on his forehead. Glancing around, he could see that his surroundings had shifted - he was within a small, one-room home, a classic example of an Ionian farmhouse, one he had seen many times before. He struggled to sit up, and succeeded. The sheet covering him fell off, and he noticed his bandages had been changed while he had slept.

“Went through your pack to get those. Hope you don’t mind.”

The voice was gravelly and rough, old and tired. It came from a man old enough to be Yasuo’s father, who sat in a chair at the table, a shock of white, thinning hair hanging over brown eyes.

Yasuo shook his head, lightly brushing the cloth.

“It is no trouble. Had you not, I may have passed on.”

The old man nodded, and with a grunt, stood up. Walking over to a pot placed over the fire, he took a ladle sitting on the cobblestone of the fire place, and spooned a large amount of soup into a smooth wooden bowl. Moving back to the table, he grabbed a spoon, and plopped it into the bowl, coming over to Yasuo. He held it out to the swordsman, who hesitated.

“Come on, take it,” the farmer grumbled. “I wouldn’t have made nearly as much if you hadn’t been here. I used up some vegetables and fish, so eat it or it’ll go to waste.”

“Alright,” Yasuo acknowledged, and began to eat.

The two sat there in comfortable silence as the younger man ate, the only sound the crackling of the fire and the slurping of the soup. Minutes passed, and Yasuo finished the meal, lifting the bowl to drink the last drops of liquid at the bottom, after while a brief silence filled the air again.

“I was going to take the fish,” he blurted out, unable to contain himself.

The old man nodded. “I’m not that old, boy. I know.”

“Then why did you help me?” Yasuo enquired, confused.

The farmer shook his head, and levered himself up from his seat with a groan.

“Idiot. What a sad day it would be, when a fish is valued over a man’s life.” The man turned to Yasuo. “A life is priceless, boy. Once it’s gone, it can’t come back.”