

Stories told of a village that has constantly beaten back bandit attacks somewhere in Ionia. Wanting to see what she could do to help, Soraka travelled to this village. For an Ionian village it was bland. The houses made of wood that could have come from anywhere and the designs seemed a little lazy. Two buildings stood taller than the others. One seemed like the other structures, just bigger. And the other towered over the rest and had red crosses on either side. That's where she would start. As she approached the front gate, two guards stopped her. "State your business, or turn and leave!" said one guard. Before she could explain herself the other guard collapsed, exclaiming in pain. Instinctively, she ran to the guard and started to heal him. The other guard placed his spear near her neck, ensuring that her actions are being watched carefully. The guard rose up and with a sense of excitement said "She healed me. That pain was from three days ago and she healed me." "Come with me" said a new female voice. At the gate stood a hazel colored woman with long dark hair. Soraka followed her to the hospital while passing the guards as the one that got healed sounded joyous. Inside, she was brought to a young man with short brown hair and fair skin. "Jakeri," said the woman. "We have a visitor." He turned to see who she was talking about. With a look of surprise, he looked her over and extended his hand. "My name is Jakeri. Who are you?" "I'm Soraka." "She's a healer!" interrupted the hazel colored woman. Jakeri looked pleasantly surprised by this. Were they really in such dire need for a healer, Soraka thought? Just then, an alarm had been raised. They were under attack. Jakeri turned to the two women. "Are you ready?" They both gave a quick nod. "Then let's get out there and defend this place." Jakeri turned to Soraka and paused for a second before asking "You're a healer?" "Yes" was her quick reply. Then an unfriendly voice bellowed out. "JAKERI. WE NEED TO HAVE A TALK!" A chill went up Jakeri's spine as those words were spoken. "Stay close" was all he had said as they all stepped outside. To Soraka's horror, she saw that the camp was surrounded and all the men were either wounded or killed. A large man carrying an axe almost as big as him stepped from behind the grunts as he made himself apparent as the leader, sunlight gleaming off his bald head as he looked straight to Jakeri. "Your puny village has surrendered to me and you have not. I don't know why you're making this so hard for yourself so I came with an offer." "An offer?" asked Jakeri. "It's quite simple" said the leader. "You surrender your village, no one dies. You continue to resist, your people die. My offer to you is: pick one, or fight me one on one for this village. You lead it so you must be strong." Jakeri thought about it for a moment as he looked around to see all the damage that had been done in so little time. Soraka looked around the camp. The fighters were not ready for a fight. Then Jakeri spoke. "If I win," he said. "Will your men leave and never return?" This surprised the bandit leader. He grinned. "My men are not my concern" he said, laughing raucously. "If I die, there's gonna be no one left to hold them back." Jakeri figured as much. He motioned to Soraka. He whispered in her pointed ear, "Heal my men so they can catch the grunts off guard." Before getting a response, he began walking toward the bandit leader, drawing his broadsword from his belt. "One on one then." Laughing again, the bandit leader approached Jakeri, axe in hand. "Your loss. All this blood will be on your hands." As they clashed, the ground shook beneath them. Soraka took this time to creep around the camp, healing the wounded men and relaying Jakeri's plan. After a short while, Jakeri was hit hard and knocked to the ground. Jakeri shook his head and went to stand back up as the leader's axe was at his throat. He had lost. "Any last words, vermin?" loomed the giant. Jakeri said nothing and embraced his fate. The leader raised his axe into the air and brought it down with lethal force. "FOR LIFE!" cried out Soraka as Jakeri found his

strength again. Without hesitation, Jakeri grabbed his sword, spun, barely avoiding the axe cutting a few hairs, and plunged his sword into the leader's chest. Blood trickled from the wound. The other bandits were about to charge Jakeri as they noticed the blades being pointed at them. Soon after, Jakeri removed his sword from the leader and as he fell forward to the ground. He held his sword high, victorious.

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Later that evening, after everything settled down, Soraka had healed those she didn't heal before. While no lives were lost, the damage had been large and would take time to repair. As she was about to leave around the camp, Jakeri called out to her. She turned to see him walking toward her. He asked her "You're leaving already?" "Yes" she replied. "That's a shame. You just got here and you were a great help. I don't know how to thank you." "You don't have to. I'm always happy to help the good in need." For a moment they said nothing to each other. Soraka waved goodbye and turned to leave. As she walked away, Soraka could sense there was more to be said. "I hope our paths meet again." Soraka turned back to see a blushing Jakeri and smiled. As she left, she could tell she made an impression on him. She smiled at the thought and silently wished him the best.