

## Malipo.

He held the sun in his eyes. With his gaze, he put his tears in disguise. With his tight grasp of my finger with his tiny hand, I knew that he wasn't here to live.

He was here to be a hero.

Kinich never gave me any trouble as a child. He spent his days sticking to me and helping with chores, or spending time with the little yumkasaur and playing with them.

On those quiet days without his dad, I would see Kinich sneak out with a big bag hung on his shoulder around morning, and come back in the evening with a surprising amount of bruises and scars on his limbs.

"Ma-"

"Oh my, look at you."

"Ma, it's nothing."

I grabbed his arm and pulled him towards the water basin. I splashed his face with water and cleaned him with my scarf as he stood there, reluctant but obliging.

"Kinich." I moved forward, drying away the wetness from his hair. "Your mom knows more than you think." He pressed his lips, his eyes avoiding mine.

I took my first aid kit, and rinsed the cotton with antiseptic. Kinich winced as I dabbed it on his arm, but soon he held back.

After dabbing on the wounds, I took little bandaids and stuck them on the wounds, then took a bandage and wrapped it around his knee.

I put my palm on his smudged cheek. "Just so you know, courage isn't how big of a leap you make, but how you land and come back to me safe. Understood?"

Kinich gave me a little smile as he held onto my arm for a little longer.

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The night hung low as I dug the wet soil with a small shovel, my hand weakly clutching the Queaberry seeds. The loud cricket flaps sounded numb compared to the man's raging voice in the house a few moments ago.

I already fed Kinich and put him to sleep before that man could bring another bad dinner to the table. Today was not too terrible, there was only a hand mark on my cheek, a bruise on my arm, and my hair pulled into a mess. It hurt to walk again, but didn't have to crawl away this time. All that mattered was Kinich being able to sleep tonight.

As I filled in the seeds into the now dug hole, I was startled by a dark figure that was rather small, and footsteps that were rather soft. He looked at me, blinking away his tired eyes.

"Kinich, what are yo-"

He held a wet cloth that felt cold on my cheek and arm. He sat next to me, with a familiar box in his hand. He opened it and operated it diligently, aiding me wound after wound.

He was a pretty quick learner.

After he was done, he placed everything in neatly and set it aside.

"Ma, tell me the story about the crickets."

Warm tears rolled down my eyes as I held onto him like my only lifeline. Kinich reciprocated with his little arm rubbing my frail back.

*He was my hero.*