

SONS OF CAASI

Battle for Time

a novel
by
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SPECIAL EDITION PRE-RELEASE



The Sons of Caasi

Chapter 1

The cool air prickled the boys' skin. Rays of the purest white light emanated from the throne room of the FINISHER high overhead, illuminating the cloudy expanse of the sky. Green, yellow, purple, and orange leaves of soaring trees diffused the brightness from above. Beneath their feet, the ground erupted in a profusion of equally colorful grass.

Amo, the youngest son of Caasi, struggled under the weight of his older brother as they wrestled.

"Stop! That's enough! You're hurting me!"

Sier reluctantly let go and stood, a boastful grin of triumph beginning to curl his lips. Caught off guard, he tumbled backward, landing hard as Amo's leg whipped him.

"Oh, okay! Now you're in trouble!" Sier huffed and charged after his smaller, more agile younger brother.

The fight abandoned, Amo ran for the safety of their mother and home. Sier leaped at his back and lifting Amo from his feet, immobilized him in a stranglehold.

"I can't breathe!" Amo gasped, struggling to break free.

"Not again! I won't fall for that twice!" Sier grunted with the effort to restrain Amo. He squeezed harder, sweat stinging his eyes until he realized Amo's body had gone as limp as a rag doll's.

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Sier gaped in horrid fascination as the color rapidly drained from Amo's face. Heart thundering, he loosened his grip and dropped his brother to the ground. Fighting panic, Sier stumbled backward, eyes wide. The reality of what he'd done began to crystallize in the dark recesses of his mind.

Sier startled as Amo's eyes flew open. A second leg whip felled Sier like an ax to the base of a top-heavy tree.

"Gotcha again!" Amo raced for home. He was not willing to risk another bout with Sier, who was now bug-eyed with rage.

Sier roared, clawing his way to his feet in pursuit of his brother. He lurched wildly about, searching for anything with which to beat Amo to a pulp. He spotted long branches hanging loose from a purple tree. His face contorting with the effort, Sier wrenched a fist full of thick branches free in mid-stride. He closed the distance between himself and Amo. Mere yards away, he heard his brother's labored breathing. He could see the sinews of Amo's legs straining to stay ahead. Sier raised a branch, poised to swing.

A split second before Sier hurled one of the branches, Amo swiveled his head around to look back. Heart racing, he ducked low, just dodging a blow he was sure would have decapitated him. Amo resumed running in earnest. He was certain Sier was crazy enough to dispatch him, for real.

"Come on, Sier! That's enough!" Amo yelled. "You're out of control!"

Sier, recovered from the effort, was hot on Amo's heels. "I'm sick of you tricking me. Now, you will pay!"

Amo could feel Sier gaining on him. Soon, Sier was close enough to launch another branch at his brother's furiously pumping legs.

Shards of pain shot up Amo's legs. He landed with a thud, and before he could right himself, Sier was upon him. The two brothers grappled in the rainbow of grass, tumbling down a steep incline in a

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tangle of flailing arms and legs. They reached the bottom with Amo pinned beneath.

“Sier! Sier! Stop it now! Both of you come in to eat!” The familiar sound of a shrill and demanding voice halted the fight.

Sier’s raised fist stopped in midair even as he readied a punch to Amo’s face. Instead, he punched the ground inches from Amo’s head and leaned in close.

“You’re weak!” Sier said. “Your mother has saved you once again.” Sier stood, eyes narrowed, glaring with contempt. “You could never be Time-Ruler!”

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Amo lay panting, pondering his brother’s words. He wondered if Sier would one day succeed in dispatching him.

Catching his breath, he squinted at the hazy expanse overhead. The air grew warm around him, and he was mesmerized by the glow from above. Neither the kaleidoscope of leaves in the towering trees nor the haze shaded him from the growing intensity of the light. Transfixed, he had the strange feeling of eyes upon him. He lazily wondered if the FINISHER was watching.

“Amo!” His mother’s voice snapped him from the trance. “I will not call again!” she shouted from the house.