**Chapter 100**

“Why in the Wig did you do that Baas?” Koroko said screaming as he hopped and ran down the mountain side. “Pandora had that arrow headed straight through that guy’s skull and then you had to mess it up.”

“Instinct.” Baas said through the shuffling. “I saw an arrow coming, naturally I didn’t want it to hit flesh, so before I knew it I stopped it.”

“That arrow should’ve killed him.”

“I find it interesting that you’re more upset that he grabbed than astounded that he was able to grab it.”Atsuma noted, also heading down. “Discrete speed... go figure.”

The three continued hopping down the side of the mountain until they eventually reached the bottom. Once there, they took off running towards Pandora. Behind them, the three Golds continued their pursuit.

“That’s them!” Dolg shouted.

“Yes, we can see that Dolg.” Zordo replied.

“Hurry! We have to catch them before they get away!”

“I don’t think that’ll be necessary.” Magatha said.

Atsuma, Koroko and Baas caught up to Pandora. All four continued running North, away from the base. But soon they stopped. Usually they used Pandora to spot such things, but this time they didn’t need to. In the distance, running toward them, was a horde of Golds. The Golds all saw them, changing direction wasn’t an option.

“Atsuma.” Pandora asked “what do we do?”

“Running won’t solve anything. If anything, we’ll be scattered and they’ll pick us off.” He paused for a moment. “We’ll have to do a defensive formation.”

“Are you crazy, that won’t work!” Koroko shouted.

“It’s the only thing we’ve got.” Atsuma sighed.

The four black bands put their backs to each other with their weapons out. They could do nothing but wait, until all the Golds surrounded them.

“Well well well.” Dolg said. As he spoke, the crowd parted, letting him Zordo and Magatha through. “Looks like it took some time, but we’ve finally recaptured you Atsuma.”

“Yeah,” Atsuma said smirking. “And it only took a force 5 times as large as ours. I’m pretty sure this breaks the rules, Dolg.”

“We were planning to attack your base. This actually puts us at a disadvantage. The Discretes won’t see anything wrong with our actions. Besides, I don’t think black bands should talk about breaking the rules.”

“So what now, Dolg?” Atsuma looked around at the group around him. “You kill us in an ambush? You still won’t get that reputation. After all, we still beat your team back in your base.”

“I believe Zordo remembers things differently.” Dolg smirked. “But you know me all too well. I’d rather defeat you in a fair fight than do this. So why not make it interesting? A rematch. The best of Golds versus... well, I guess you’re the best black team now.”

The Gold group laughed at that. All but Zordo and Magatha.

“We’ll even let you keep the boy.” Dolg continued. “Think of it as a handicap.”

“Dolg, that is not...” Zordo started, but Dolg held his hand up as though telling his friend to be silent.

“We never back down from a challenge, Dolg. But we don’t need any handicap. Let the boy go.”

“And why should we?”

“He’s of no use to you. He’s a black band now, we all are. Killing my team might give you some personal satisfaction, but killing him means absolutely nothing.”

“Isn’t that sweet?” Dolg laughed. His joke was followed by chuckles from. “Although... I heard some tales from my fellow Golds here. Seems your little friend did a real number on our base. Lead a group through our base, and single handedly defeated multiple Golds. One guy actually died! Despite your lovely little sentiments, I’m sure everyone here would love some payback for the humiliation he caused them.”

Once again, the crowd made noises to show they agree with Dolg’s conclusion.

“But I tell you what. I’m in a very happy mood right now. I’ll let the kid sit on the sidelines and watch. If you can defeat my team, then maybe we’ll think about letting him go.”

“No way, I’m not...”

“Baas!” Atsuma said. “Just do it.” He then looked at Baas and smirked. “After all, having you on our team would be unfair.”

“Atsuma, you really think he’s gonna let me go?”

Atsuma’s voice then got low. “Maybe once.” Atsuma glanced at the smug Dolg. “But it looks like Dolg has changed since we first met him. I don’t think he’s gonna let any of us get out of here alive no matter what we do. Listen, use that Discrete brain of yours. Figure a way out of this. At the very least, get yourself out. We’ll buy you some time so you can think clearly.”

Baas took the time to give Atsuma a stern look, then he nodded in agreement.

“Come here you.” A big guy grabbed Baas’ hood and yanked him to the side. The shock cause Baas to drop his sword and shield. The guy held Baas’ arms tight behind the black band’s back. “Sit back and watch the show. Your friends are about to get creamed.”

“You never seen Atsuma fight, have you?” Baas retorted back smug.

The man tightened his grip, attempting to show signs of a threat. “Doesn’t matter whose in front of them, Dolg’s team is the best there is.”

Baas eyes drew toward Zordo. Zordo returned the look, as if feeling Baas’ gaze. He then let out a sigh, and readied himself to fight Koroko.

The two teams lined up across each other. As each fighter walked to the center of the ring of people, the events began to play in their heads from the fight that happened weeks before. Each fighter had some knowledge of their opponent’s tactics. The former Oranges knew that this would not be an easy fight, but there was one concern that kept pricking at each of their brains.

“Be careful Koroko.” Atsuma said turning his sword.

“Thanks for the advice Ats.” Koroko replied sarcastically.”Because you know, generally when I’m in a fight for my life against people who want to see me die, I’m not as careful as I possibly can be.”

“Actually, you aren’t.” Pandora replied.

“Not like before guys.” Atsuma continued, speaking about the last fight with this team. “No one on ones. Team fight. And everyone keep an eye on you know who.”

“I wonder who they could be talking about.” Magatha grinned. She looked pass Dolg over to Zordo who didn’t flinch. Seeing her remark made no progress, Magatha switched targets and pulled out her sword. “Is it really necessary to let the Far fight? I know we want it fair, but there’s not much she can do in a fight like this.”

“Says the one who lost to this Far on a one-on-one.”

“True.” Zordo said. That made Magatha frown. Her taunt had been used against her, and what’s worse Zordo was taking advantage of it. She’d make sure the Far would pay for that.

Pandora was glad to have countered the insult, but she knew Magatha was right. The win before had only been possible because she had a close range weapon. There was no way her arrows would be enough. If she could only rapid fire like Vanessa, Magatha would be dead right now. She backed up a little causing her foot to hit something. Out of fear, she immediately glanced at it. It was the tip of Baas’ sword... and right next to it was his shield. Near weapons! But... she couldn’t use those. If the Discretes caught her she’d be... Pandora looked at her band, and then smiled.

“Worrying about something like that now. Koroko’s stupidity must be rubbing off on me.”

She reached down and picked up the weapons. Baas couldn’t help but grow excited as Pandora put the sword forward and the shield back. Yet... there was something off. He was about to say it outloud, but then he stopped himself hoping not to embarrass the Far.

Magatha beheld the site in front of her. A sudden gust of air came out of her mouth. What followed was loud... and really obnoxious laughter. Pandora was confused.

“I’m sorry.” Magatha said, wiping the tears from her eyes. Amidst her sentences, she held back more laughter “I’ve seen many things, before, but I’ve never seen a Far use Near weapons. That is the most hilariously pathetic sight ever.”

Pandora growled under her breath.

“I guess I made you upset.” Magatha was legitimately trying to hold in her laughter. “But... here... let me show you why it’s so funny. What’s your dominant hand?”

Pandora remained quiet, sure that the question was a trap.

“That’s okay.” Magatha still holding in laughter. “Zordo?”

“It’s her right hand.”

And with that, many snickers began to arise from the Gold. Koroko too began to burst out laughing. Baas held in his snicker. He had seen it before everyone else, but the way Magatha had presented it did indeed make it more funny.

“What?” Pandora stuttered. “What’s so funny?”

Magatha began laughing loudly once again. “The fact that you don’t even know makes it even more hilarious.”

“Panda.” Atsuma said low and kind of nervously. “You hold your sword with your dominate hand. It’s Near weapon one oh one. Switch your shield and sword.”

Pandora shuffled her hands. A mixture of frustration and embarrassment filled her entire body. How was she supposed to have known what hand held what or that there even was a specific hand to hold it in? She had been a model Far since the beginning.

“Magatha are you done?” Dolg retorted “If you don’t mind, I’d like to get started.”

“Okay.” Magatha said clearly not done. “Okay. I’m sorry. Let’s continue.”

Once again, the fighters readied themselves. Atsuma twisted his sword to...

\*shing\*

Surprising everyone, Dolg charged in directly to Atsuma. Atsuma had been able to block it, but it had certainly been a surprising move.

“Ats!” Koroko said. He launched himself toward the two fighting...

\*shing\*

His sword made contact with Zordo’s instead.

“What kind of move was that Dolg?” Zordo said, completely ignoring that he was in mid-combat.

Dolg ignored his friend and continued attacking.

Pandora half worried about her teammates, but that was only from the surprise. Atsuma and Koroko were more than tough enough to take care of themselves. She had to worry about the one in front of her.

“Panda!” Baas cried out. “Shield forward, sword back.”

Pandora heard the instruction. Instinctively, hearing the sound come from an adolescent made her want to retort. But she forced that instinct down and did what she was told. Younger than her he may be, Baas was still a Leader which means he knew fighting tactics. And with Atsuma and Koroko in their own fights, he was probably her best bet.

“That’s enough out of you.” The Gold holding Baas tightened his grip, again as though it was supposed to be some kind of threat.

“No. Let him speak.” Magatha spoke.

“Mam?”

“I want to see how interesting we can make this. A genius young Leader directing a Far in how to use Near weapons. This might actually make it more fair, or at the very least, more fun.”

“Yes mam.”

Atsuma continued defending. It was an interesting strategy, only slightly different than when he had fought Dolg before. While he had never been big on defense, Dolg was now completely offensive. Atsuma could probably get in a good hit, but there was no room to do so. Though it wasn’t a good strategy to use in a team fight, it was certainly effective in one on one. And considering who Pandora’s and Koroko’s opponent’s were, he probably wouldn’t be getting that much help.

Koroko wanted to do what Dolg was doing. Charging in and attacking was exactly his style. But he remembered what happened on the roof, the instant change in fighting tactics. If that happened again, there was no way he could counter it. He stared at the Gold. His fighting style seemed like that of a normal long sword user. Why wasn’t he showing what he did before?

“What are you?” Koroko almost panicked.

Zordo was confused by the question. “I’m a human.”

“I mean, what kind of sword style are you.”

“Clearly I use a long sword.”

“Gah, I don’t mean that! I mean what kind of Person are you?”

\*Shing\*

Zordo attacked Koroko who successfully defended it.

“I’m a Gold. I feel as though these questions are not worth discussing.”

Koroko attacked back with a horizontal slice. Zordo jumped back. He wasn’t showing any of the signs he did when he suddenly went quickly.

Koroko grew frustration. “Forget it, I’m just gonna attack.” He rushed in for another horizontal. Zordo blocked again, but this time it was a simple deflect.

“You probably shouldn’t announce right before you attack.”

“Shield up!” Baas screamed out. Pandora listened and blocked the incoming down strike.

“Oh wow.” Magatha noted, jumping back after attacking. “Is that the same shield Zordo made? Indeed this does get interesting.”

“The key to a shield and short sword technique is to allow the opponent to get close enough with their attack, and then attack back.” Baas continued “It’s slightly deceptive”

“Should you really be screaming that, Baas?” Pandora asked. “Now she’ll be on the look out.”

“Eh... it’s basic short sword strategy. All Leaders know it.”

“I suggest you stop questioning Baas. From what I heard from our base, he’s a much better fighter than people believe. Isn’t that right, Zordo?”

“I don’t encourage rumors.”

“Since when has that been a part of your philosophy?”

“Since you started asking me about rumors, now you may want to concentrate on your opponent.”

Magatha turned forward. Pandora had begun to approach, but stopped immediately when attention was back on her.

“Don’t stop Miss Pandora! When you see an opportunity, take it. If it doesn’t work, that’s what the shield is for.”

The Far glanced in anger at her weapons in front of her.

“Stupid weapons. Why do they have to be so complicated?”

“Whoops.” Magatha faked.

\*shing\*

Before either Baas or Pandora had time to react, Magatha did a vertical swipe upwards. Pandora, whom had been distracted, fell back with her arms out. Pandora’s stomach wide open, Magatha delivered a kick to the Far’s mid section. And down she went to the ground.

“I was hoping this would be a bit more fun.” Magatha fake yawned as she spoke, hoping to entice annoyance. “Perhaps some better advice, Baas?”

“This is bad.” Pandora grunted. Suddenly, a foot appeared next to her. Atsuma had made his way over towards Pandora, his sword was now locked with Dolg’s.

“You’re telling me.” Atsuma said.

“Atsuma, take your fight somewhere else.”

“You heard the lady Dolg” Atsuma increased the strength in his arms “Back off!”

Dolg jumped back from the attack.

“Getting a little frustrated Atsuma?”

“Considering I have to smell your breath everytime you get close, yeah, a bit.” Atsuma then quickly spoke to Baas. “How’se that thought process coming along?”

“Eh...” was all Baas could say before Koroko appeared. His face was strained and his teeth were grinding with frustration.

“Wow Koroko, is he giving you that much trouble?” Atsuma teased.

“No.” Koroko said. “That’s the problem.” He turned his attention to Zordo who slowly walked next to Dolg. “When I fight him, it’s as if we’re on the same level, sometimes I’m even doing better than he is.”

Koroko pointed his sword at his opponent. “I know you can fight better than that, stop toying with me.”

“Interesting.” Zordo replied. “In a life or death fight, you actually believe that I would hold back, perhaps ensuring me and my friends’ death. Why would I possibly want to do that?”

Koroko stuttered to find the right words, but he couldn’t think of a reason.

“By that logic, that would mean that I would want my teammates, people whom I’ve spent my life protecting, to die. Does that add up to you?”

Koroko’s mind tried to work, but it was getting confused.

“Come on guys, lets end this.” Dolg said to his teammates with a sinister smile. He entered a preparation stance.

“You two finish your fights.” Magatha smirked. “I’m gonna have as much fun as I possibly can.” She too prepared her stance.

Zordo prepared himself as well.

“You two speak as though we don’t have threats in front of us. The way I see it, this fight could still last a while.”

“AAAAAAAAHHHHHH!”

The sound startled everyone. Gold... black band... no one had expected it. Suddenly, a Gold whom had been behind Dolg, Zordo and Magatha stepped forward. He struggled as he tried to walk. Sticking out of his back, was a spear. After a couple of more steps, the man fell. As soon as he did, a sudden chill and rush of anxiety was sent through the air. Charging toward the group, was a mass of Oranges all prepared for bloodshed. Leading the pack was none other than Eltin, Altea and Acol all riding Serho.

“Nice shot Acol.” Eltin said.

“I won’t let them lay a finger on my Atsuma!” Acol shouted.

The Golds were staggered. Some ran from fear, others froze from it. That didn’t stop the Oranges thou. Serho charged in, knocking over people as he came. Acol grabbed her spear as the horse entered the crowd. Baas saw his chance. While the Gold holding him was distracted, Baas forced his right elbow back into the man’s stomach. Immediately after, his head went forward and then backwards. With a hurt stomach and aching nose, the Gold fell back.

“Yes.” Baas said under his breath.

“Baas!” Atsuma cried. Among the scattered Golds and charging Oranges, Baas was able to follow the voice back to his friend. “Let’s go.”

Dodging people, Baas trailed behind the other three running black bands. They made it to the outskirts of the fighting hoping to just keep running from there.

“Think you’re getting away?” Dolg asked smirkly and loudly. He, Zordo and Magatha were all there, blocking the path between Atsuma’s team and freedom.

“Don’t you guys ever quit!?” Koroko whined.

“We tried that once.” Magatha joked. “Zordo got indigestion for a month.”

“Look around Dolg.” Atsuma yelled. “Are we really the main concern here?”

“No.” A voice that was not Dolg’s ran in. It was Eltin. He, Acol and Altea road in between the two fighting parties, jumping off as they did. Once his delivery was done, Serho circled back around.

“We are.”

“Back off.” Dolg screamed. “This has nothing to do with you.”

“You’ve got a team of Golds sitting in Orange territory right outside our base. This has everything to do with us.”

“No one hurts my Atsuma and gets away with it.” Acol added.

“The priorities and intelligence on this one are questionable.” Magatha noted.

“Altea.” Zordo said looking at his foe. “This should be interesting.”

Altea drew the string back on her nearshot, standing upright and yet ready for combat.

“Thanks guys.” Atsuma smirked. “Together we can...”

“You think we need help from black bands to take out this band of losers?” Eltin said forcefully.

“Eltin we...”

“Enough. Insulting Orange like that. You guys take Serho and get out of here. If you’re not gone by the time we’re done, I’ll finish you off my self.”

Atsuma was stunned for a moment. Then, he smirked.

“Alright, I got you.” He reached for Serho. He and the rest of the team got on top “You colored bands sure do take pride in your fighting don’t you.”

Eltin let a smirk come leave his lips. He turned to look up at Atsuma. “Not as much as we do in protecting our friends.”

Everyone on the horse grinned.

“Let’s go, Serho.” The horse neighed loud and took off. Atsuma directed it to make a wide route around the fighters in front of him.

Dolg watched as his prey, once again, escaped from him.

“Zordo!” He yelled. “They’re getting away.”

“I’m well aware of that Dolg,” Zordo did not take his eyes off his opponent as he spoke. “What do you want me to do about it?”

“Form a plan to stop them.”

“Not really in our best interest.” Zordo said. “Besides... we’ve got our hands full right here.”

Eltin, Acol and Altea all readied themselves to fight. Dolg, Magatha and Zordo did so as well.

Serho road along the sunset fast. Baas took note as the screams got farther and farther. Still he was also focused on holding on. There was barely enough room for the three in front of him and he was grabbing Koroko tightly to make sure he didn’t fall off. It was a little embarrassing, but that beat hitting the floor.

“I can’t believe he’s letting us ride him.” Baas screamed.

“Serho may be a stubborn horse, but he’s no idiot. Like his master, he knows when it’s time to stop playing around.”

“It’s too bad we had to leave them in the middle of a fight.” Pandora said.

“Aw Eltin can take care of himself.” Koroko smiled “And I know first hand how dangerous Altea can be.”

“Didn’t she always lose to you though?” Baas asked.

“Don’t worry guys.”Atsuma reassured. “They’re the best team Orange has.”

The team couldn’t help but look at their bands when he said that.

“Besides, we’ve got a job to do, remember?”

Baas knew Atsuma was right. He watched the sun to his right set down on the horizon. He was going to the nest of Discretes to save his Commander. Pandora had given him back his weapons. A great short sword, a perfect shield, he was even thankful for the hood he was still wearing. Pass or fail, he felt prepared to face the trial ahead, and was certain anything left behind was worth forgetting.

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The anger. The frustration. The worry… forget the worry, just the anger and frustration. They were all building up.

“He’s definitely left us.” Vatti growled with her fists bawled. “When I see him, that idiot is so dead.”

Chapter 100 End