Chapter 104:

“Isn’t this exciting?” Arttior smiled. “Team Vanessa reunited again! It’s just like old times!”

“Arty?” Atsuma spoke quietly. “Is that really you?”

“Arttior?” Pandora and Koroko said. They too couldn’t believe their eyes. Vanessa was the only one not looking. She had found out previously and now had to watch her teammates go through the same shock.

“Arttior!” Baas reacted. “Arttior. Arttior... I know I’ve heard that name before.”

“She was my wife Baas.”

“Your wife? Oh yeah, you’re the lady who fell down the cliff and died.”

There was a slight pause.

“OH MY GOODESS, YOU’RE ALIVE!”

Arttior raised an eyebrow. “Baas, Discretes are supposed to have superior intelligence. You are the first ever to make people doubt that.”

“Oh she’s definitely your wife.” Baas nodded. “Just met and she’s already insulting me.”

“Arty.” Atsuma spoke ignoring Baas. “How are you still breathing?”

“Oh Atsuma, now’s really not the time for a lesson in anatomy, but since you asked. The heart brings blood to the other parts of the body while the lungs...”

“YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!” Atsuma screamed. “I saw the arrow! I saw the blood! I saw you fall! You should be dead!”

Arttior kept the smile from her face, though her teeth disappeared.

“Oh sweetie. Arttior **did** die that day.”

She tilted her head and straightened her shoulders like a teacher about to tell a story. “You see Atsuma, when you began to do extraordinary abilities, well... for a non-Discrete that is, that was where my role came in.”

Atsuma stared into space. “The Discrete spy that infiltrated my life to see if I was a Discrete... That was you?”

This time, it was Arttior’s turn to look surprised. “Yes. I was the Discrete born before Baas. After my training, I was sent to Orange to begin my infiltration in your life. It was a slow process. I couldn’t even start in Orange’s first base. As expected, you had some skills as a human, but you’re nothing compared to a Discrete. Once I realized that, I had to leave and make sure no one would follow. Thus, when we were on the cliffs and you missed that Gold, I saw the perfect opportunity. You’d be surprised at how easy it is to make yourself look dead. The moment I saw your arrow, I **let** it hit me. Of course, I didn’t want to die so I made sure to hit a non vital area. Hard to tell from far away, isn’t it? Once I convinced you all that I was gone, I simply fell into the cliffs to make sure you couldn’t retrieve my body. Do you know how hard it is to catch the side of a cliff? In the dark? While you’ve slowed down your body’s system to reproduce death? AND there’s an arrow sticking out of you!? It hurt like crazy! But being me I did it. Even with my Discrete healing, it took a good amount of time to recover from that one. And thus, Arttior dies and I take my rightful place as Discrete A.”

Atsuma couldn’t believe what he was hearing, and yet Arttior was telling the story as though she was proud of what she had accomplished.

“Arty... you let me think that I had killed you.”

“Upset are we?” Arttior’s grin did not leave, rather it changed into a smirk. Suddenly, an arrow was tossed toward her. Who tossed it, no one saw, but now Arttior held it. “This is the exact arrow that pierced me that day. To think I used this to my own means. How dare I, a wife, keep such important secrets from her husband. How dare I not tell him I was just in his life to see if I should kill him or not. How dare I not tell him that I was planning to kidnap one of his loved ones.”

Arttior put her face in her hands, pretending to be upset. After some pretend crying, she slowly lifted her head.

“But then again, atleast I didn’t murder our child and keep that a secret.”

Atsuma swallowed hard as Arttior continued. “No, dear, that lie falls on you. And what’s even worse is that you’ve killed him not only once, but twice.”

Atsuma was confused about that part, but before he could ask, Arttior called out into the air.

“You can come out now. I’ve known you’ve been there all this time.”

The attention turned to the opposite side of the room. Emerging from a cave came another figure dressed in all black. However, he wore a mask with a white skull on the front.

“And, bring your little friends out too.” Arttior ordered.

Diablo notioned behind him with only his head. As he walked toward the inner room where Atsuma and the others were, he was followed by Vatti who had Henry by the arm. As the group headed toward the rest of the non-Discretes, Arttior finished talking.

“You know Atsuma, we Discretes are required to let our prey know why we’re about to kill them, but it seems you’ve already been infor...”

“Vatti!” Baas said excitedly, interrupting Arttior.

“Yes Baas, I am here.” Vatti said. She practically threw Henry away from her once she got close enough to the group. Baas opened his arm to embrace a hug. He knew his friend wasn’t going to give him one, but he didn’t expect violence... though in hindsight he probably should’ve. Vatti’s hand reached to slap Baas upside the head. Baas’ body remembered the feeling and ducked to avoid being injured, this time, however, Vatti was ready. As she tried to slap Baas, she also brought her fist up.

\*POW\*

Vatti uppercut her friend as he ducked to avoid her smack.

“Yes I’m here, no thanks to you! You left me back in Orange, you moron! And not only that, but as a prisoner!”

Vatti reached down and grabbed her friend by collar, lifting only his head from the ground while the rest of his body laid there. “How long was it before you even thought of me?”

Baas laughed nervously. “4 days.”

“And you went and got yourself black banded?! Is there no trouble you can’t get into without me?”

Baas grinned from ear to ear. “Vatti, you say that as though I don’t get into trouble when you’re around.”

Vatti breathed out through her nose. She let go of Baas who, forgetting she was the only thing holding him up, fell to the ground.

“Okay fine.” Vatti stood up and walked to the front of the group. “Hey lady!” She pointed the sword Diablo had given her towards Arttior. “You’re the one in charge, right? Now I’m gonna ask nicely once and only once, let us go.”

Arttior opened her mouth to speak, but before she could, Diablo spoke up.

“I do not believe she will oblige to your request. If you want to protect your friend, Vatti, I suggest you stay close to him and stay quiet.”

“Diablo, I may have said I’d follow you, but don’t think I’ll just do whatever you say whenever you say it.” Vatti snarled.

“Diablo?” Arttior repeated. “You’re the mysterious Diablo? Wow, I must say this is a shocker. The reports of Diablo are so vague and so little that we had honestly dismissed them as just rumor, superstition and fear. But, that was probably your plan, wasn’t it? We should’ve known...” Arttior chuckled. “We really should’ve known. I mean all this time... everything... it was you! Once again, you’ve proven exactly why you got the status that you did.”

Diablo remained quiet.

“Atsuma dear, I presume that this is the man who told you so much about us.”

Atsuma’s face showed he was amazed that she knew that.

“Oh come on Atsuma, it wasn’t hard to figure out. You knew someone had infiltrated your life. You know about our ranking system and that Discrete A is at the top. You even knew that Baas was a Discrete and that was the reason we condemned him. Obviously someone’s been feeding you information.”

Arttior began pacing back and forth.

“He revealed a lot to you, didn’t he? He might have even told you more than you’ve revealed here. But knowing him, and who he is, he didn’t tell you everything. Because it doesn’t matter who you are, this man never reveals everything to anyone.”

“What does she mean by that?” Atsuma asked almost accusingly. “How does she know you? Who are you?”

Arttior let out another chuckle.

“I see. So that’s what he’s left out. Atsuma, didn’t you ever wonder how... Diablo... knew so much about Discretes? How he knew so much about you and Baas? Even for a supposed black band, that’s information that not just anyone can obtain. Here, I’ll give you a hint. He wears all black and he never shows you his band. He’s faster and stronger than any other fighter you’ve seen in Wig-Or-Log. What group could he possibly belong to?”

After a moment, the realization came to Atsuma.

“Give the man a prize ladies and gentlemen.” Arrtior said before Atsuma could speak.” Diablo, as you know him by, went by another name long ago... Discrete D.”

“You’re a Discrete?” Koroko asked.

“That explains A LOT.” Vatti frowned.

“She said D.” Baas pointed out. “That’s above F. Diablo’s part of the elite Discretes.”

“Discrete D was even more special than that, Baas. For you see, even though he wasn’t born a particularly strong Discrete, he was still able to work his way to rank D. His hard work gained him attention from the previous Discrete A, and even though he was only a rank D, people listened to him as though he were a rank B. After the previous Discrete A was relieved, she and Discrete D here disappeared. There wasn’t anyone more loyal to the way of the Discretes than Discrete D. It’s quite surprising to see him now, running around as a supposed black band. What is even more interesting is that this whole ordeal is HIS FAULT.”

Everyone waited anxiously to hear the reason for that accusation. Diablo simply stood still, facing Arttior.

“Baas, just like every other child, your genes were tested to see if you were a Discrete. Oh, but you were special. Your parents were Discretes. We had to make sure. We had one of, no not one of, we had the absolute best Discrete in regards to gene analysis come and check your DNA, one who could easily tell if someone was a Discrete not only before the 2 years were up, but even after. He was the one who told us you were a normal human being... and how could we have doubted him? Had I known you had planned on going rogue, Discrete D, I would’ve been more suspicious of Baas. I’m honestly still shocked by it. Who knew you’d go against everything that you know is right?”

“I didn’t go against everything I know is right.” Diablo said abruptly. “The reason I left the Discretes is because I no longer believed what we were doing was right.”

“Oh please, have you really convinced yourself of that? You were EC and you know it. You only thought you were dedicated to the way of the Discretes, when really you left because your precious Discrete A lost her title to yours truly. The search for you two was thorough but brief. It was assumed that maybe you two committed suicide together. But if you’re here, than that must mean she’s out there somewhere as well. And you tried to assimilate Baas and Atsuma into your little group... trying to start an army, Discrete D?”

“That is the obvious conclusion to make, is it not?” Diablo said sternly.

“With you, nothing is obvious. These people called me heartless, but what you did was ten times worse.” Arttior’s voice began to display anger. “Baas could’ve had a chance to be a Discrete, safe, sound, even special above the rest of Wig-Or-Log. These people would’ve gone to live normal lives. But all that went out the window, Discrete D, as soon as you decided your plans for him were better. All of the lives that will end here today are your fault. Because you’re responsible for this...”

Arttior gestured the arrow as though she were pointing at Baas. Baas saw. He then brushed himself off and quickly stood up as though something were crawling on him.

“What!?! What is he responsible for!?! Get it off me!”

“You created this buffoon. This... Baas.”

“Hey, the proper term is ‘moron.’” Baas demanded.

“And now we have him instead of a proper Discrete. This is all your fault.”

“His fault?” Vanessa said angrily. “Who is the one commanding the Discretes Arttior? Who is the one telling them to kill us? From what you’ve told me, you could end Wig-Or-Log’s war right now, and yet you choose to keep the fighting going.”

Arttior brushed her hair to the side.

“This reaction is expected of normal humans. Obviously, you can’t see the bigger picture here.”

“Oh I may not have as big a brain as you Arttior, but I know the difference between casualties and sacrifices.”

Arttior shrugged. “Call it what you may, the results are the same. Humanity keeps living and remains blissfully unaware.”

“And yet humans keep dying.” Atsuma demanded. “I’ve killed my share of humans for the sake of war, but how can you justify this when it can be stopped? How can you justify our son’s death?”

“Atsuma, I know you’re trying so hard to put on a front... to act like you care about people, but remember this is me you’re talking to. I was there when you killed all those people… and I know you enjoyed every minute of it. Not because it was a part of war, or because you helped your country out, but because you were good at taking a life. Tell me of a time where you killed and didn’t have that little smirk on your face. Life’s not precious to you, it isn’t to any human. The only time you care about a life is when it’s close to your own. You can kill another’s friend with a smile on your face, enjoying every heart that stops, but as soon as one of your friends is in danger you claim you care about lives. The only reason you’re upset about any of this is because you learned you were being controlled. Oranges hate to have their free will taken. You, all of you, are the worst kind of humans. You enjoy killing but fool yourselves into thinking you care about others.”

There was a silence for a moment as the room absorbed what had just been told.

“And as for the matter of Sean...” Arttior eyes darted toward Baas.

“You there.” Arttior pointed her finger toward Baas. However, he was not the target, she was actually talking to the person behind him. Baas turned around to see Henry, who was scared out of his mind. So many Discretes, so little places to hide. Why did he agree to this? His chain had not stopped spinning since he entered the cave. He’d been told that Baas would be a threat to these people, so he thought hiding behind him might provide **some** protection. Panicked, the black band quickly pulled out the long sword Diablo had given him.

“Stay away from me.”

“Put that down before you hurt someone.” Arttior said. “Namely yourself.”

“Oh I d..d..don’t think s..so. Th..th..the moment I put this d..down one of you Discretes will come and...”

“Stop stuttering! Stand up straight! And if you’re going to hold a sword, do it right! Honestly, you’re worse than your father.”

“My father?” Henry said. He felt his fear fade and his anger rise. “Don’t talk about my father!” He suddenly yelled. He dashed forward though Diablo extended hand kept him from going anywhere. “My father was killed by you and your friends!”

“Really?” Arttior asked. A smirk appeared on her face, however, her eyes sort of softened when gazing upon Henry. “I suppose we killed your mother too. But then again, we’ve killed so many black bands. Do you know exactly what happened to your mother? ”

“Are you making fun of me?! My brother and I were born black bands. My parents distracted you Discretes while my brother rescued me. You were taking me to the Center to execute me, but my family made sure that didn’t happen. That’s when my mother died!”

Baas immediately turned his head upon hearing Henry’s story.

“And of course, the Discrete of the group catches on immediately.” Arttior said. “Care to explain, Baas, exactly where the hole lies in Henry’s story?”

“Hole?” Henry said. “That’s the truth!” Diablo’s hand continued to prevent Henry from doing anything foolish. “You killed my mother, and my father. You killed my entire family!”

“But Henry.” Baas said. “According to your story, your brother couldn’t have had a black band.”

Henry looked at Baas, somewhat disgusted and confused. Baas, knowing an explanation was required, continued.

“People’ aren’t born with bands on them. We only get them after we come here... to the Center. And according to your story, you and your brother never came here. It makes sense for you to have a black band because you were captured by Discretes, but your brother should be band free.”

Henry thought about his brother. Never had he seen him, or any human being, without a band on.

“You see, dear.” Arttior explained. “That story you just told me is only partially true. Your brother was indeed captured by us Discretes and sentenced to death, but he was the only one. In fact, he was an only child. On that evening, his mother sacrificed herself in order to save her one and only son... his father, on the other hand had his own little venture. When he went to rescue his son, I was there waiting for him. The man was foolish enough to think that he could outsmart Discretes, but thankfully for him I had use for him. I proposed that he keep you safe and well out of harm’s way. You see, your real father had done something very selfish. He had given you a keepsake. No child can have any memory of their parent for the war, and thus measures had to be taken. We needed to black band you. But to take the life of an infant... especially for something the father did... we couldn’t do it. Life is much too precious for something like that. So we kidnapped the son of the most notorious black band to make a deal. If he kept you safe during your childhood, we would ignore him and his actions. Of course, we killed his wife to make sure he knew his place but that’s just unimportant details.”

Arttior began to move closer towards Henry. Henry himself just stood, staring at her.

“So you see… Sean. Your real father, the man standing behind you, murdered you when you were just an infant. But your mother, the woman standing in front of you, found a way to keep you safe. Alas, your father has found yet another way to kill you. He brought you here, right back to your mother.”

The woman placed her hand and lifted the boy’s chin.

“You’re lying.” Henry said as tears came from his eyes.

“Oh.” Arttior said smirking. She analyzed the boys features. “You have your mother’s eyes. It’s too bad you got everything else from your father.”

Arttior turned her back on the group. Henry felt his anger boil and he made no attempt to control it. He took the sword Diablo had given him and threw it at the woman claiming to be his mother. Arttior tilted her head slightly allowing the blade to rush past her head and hit a wall.

“Anger is understandable and beyond expected. But don’t worry, I’m gonna give you something to smile about. I’m gonna give you all something to smile about.”

She turned back to face the group “Even you, Discrete D.”

“The rules of the Discretes. At this point in time, I’m suppose to kill you. But, you know, I don’t want to. In fact, if things work out, we can turn this whole situation into one of the greatest things Wig-Or-Log has seen.”

Chapter 104 End