**Chapter 105**

“You don’t want to kill us?” Vatti asked.

“No Discrete wants to kill their prey, girl.” Arttior assured. “Life is too precious.”

Arttior tone shifted slightly. “Please, hear my words. Wig-Or-Log needs this war to keep humanity from killing itself. If you can look pass your own desires and see the logic in that… then I won’t kill you.”

“You’d just let us go?” Koroko asked.

“Not exactly. You guys wouldn’t be killed, but I can’t have you not participating in the war.”

“You can’t possibly think we’d just go back to fighting for a cause that doesn’t exist.”

“I’ll replace that with something grand. Right now, you’re a rag tag team of Leaders, Fars, Nears, Discretes and Black Bands, but accept my offer, and I will make you all Discretes.”

“Really?!” Baas asked.

“Granted, I’d be breaking an extremely long tradition and none of you except Baas would probably rank up past Z. But you’re all good enough fighters that people would believe you to be Discretes and any nooks we can fix along the way.”

“This has got to be some sort of trick.”

“No, Koroko, it’s not. The Discretes have always been made up of people who can see the greater good. If it just so happens that you all are people who can see the logic in the war, despite what power you lack, then you meet the basic criteria of what it takes to be a Discrete.”

“But, the other Discretes...” Pandora started.

“They all know this is true. And even if they don’t, they are all at my command. Any Discrete will treat you as one of their own so long as I command it.”

The group became silent for a moment.

“If it will ease your mind, I can assure that she is telling the truth.” Diablo said. “Discrete A has no reason to deceive us at this point.”

Even still, there was silence.

“What is wrong with you all!?” Vatti confronted. “Maybe you guys have forgotten, but the days of the Center weren’t that long ago for me. I spent my whole life listening to them degrade me and condone me to their rules. I hated every moment, but I listened anyway because I didn’t believe there was any other way... but there is. We can fight, or escape or whatever, but there’s no way I’m going back to a life being run by these guys.”

Koroko and Pandora looked at Atsuma. Atsuma looked at Vanessa. Vanessa turned and looked at all three. Then, a smirk came on her face. That was all the three needed.

“Arttior.” Vanessa spoke. “If you think the threat of death is gonna stop us from fighting for what we believe in, then you learned nothing from your time with us. Team Vanessa doesn’t give up so easily.”

Arttior looked down in disappointment. Then, her gaze fixed upon Henry. He was still shaken up from the news of his birth parents, but it was time for him to choose.

“Think about it, Henry.” Arttior said, snapping the boy out of his daze. “No more running, no more stealing, no more hiding. You would be free. Not only that, but people will look up and respect you. You can be something spectacular.”

Arttior reached out for the boy.

“Come, my son. I know I’ve put you through some harsh times, but I only did it for your benefits... to make up for the mistakes this world brought about. Don’t make the same mistake your father did. Don’t abandon the only family you’ll have left. Don’t abandon your mother.”

Upon hearing that, Henry’s eyes widened, then they narrowed. As Arttiors hand came closer to Henry, he took a step backwards.

“My mother...” Henry said through chokes of tears. “Died saving my brother.

“Henry I told you...”

“I don’t care if you gave birth to me. That woman who gave her life for her family that night... that’s my mother. Her husband was my father. And her son was my brother. He’s still out there somewhere... and the first thing I’m gonna do when I get out of here is find him... and tell him I made the people who slaughtered our base pay.”

Arttior let out a sigh of annoyance. “That leaves one.” Suddenly, Baas found the attention on him.

“We told you that we’re not interested.” Vatti laughed.

“The last I checked, Vatti, Baas had mind of his own.”

“Check again. Baas hasn’t had a mind since he met me.”

“I also believes he has a mouth of his own. If he wishes to deny the offer, that is fine. But I must hear him say it.”

“Pfft. Go ahead, Baas.”

Vatti waited to hear her friend agree with her. However, after a couple of seconds of silence, she grew impatient.

“I said... go ahead, Baas.”

Baas’ hand was on his chin, signifying that he was thinking.

“What are you gonna do?” Baas turned to Diablo.

“Is that relevant?” The man answered. “Whether I choose to accept her offer or not, it will not make her spare you. Only you can choose to do what you believe is right. And I suggest you stick to the truth. She’ll be able to tell if you’re lying.”

“Wait, Baas! You’re not actually thinking about accepting her offer!?”

“I’m...”

“Wrong answer. Baas, she’s asking you to lie and deceive the entire world!”

“She’s asking me to do what’s right. Can I have a minute to think about it?”

“It only takes five seconds!”

“Vatti. It’s best to let Baas decide on his own.” Diablo spoke.

“Shut it, Diablo. Baas is my responsibility and...”

“And you want to make sure he makes the right decision. But what good is that decision if it is not his?”

Vatti glared at Diablo. Everything in her wanted to tell him that he was wrong, except the thought that he might be right. She slowly stepped away from Baas.

“Baas.” Arttior continued. “Show me that you have some Discrete in you. That you can grasp the concept of what I’m saying.”

Baas closed his eyes and continued to think. On the one hand, everything she was saying went against what he knew was right. On the other hand, her logic did make sense. If man had indeed been going at war for generations, someone needed to control the flow of war.

“And the pay offs would be tremendous. You’d be trained to learn fighting techniques you never dreamed of. You’d be one of the greatest fighters Wig-Or-Log has ever seen. There is no life you wouldn’t be able to take.”

Baas’ head turned sharply at Arttior. “No.”

He took a step back towards Vatti. “No, I... I don’t wanna kill for you. I don’t wanna kill for anybody.”

“And of course, you already know my answer.” Diablo stepped forward. “So there you go. Nobody here wants what you have to offer.”

Arttior let out a sigh. Suddenly, a smirk jumped on her face.

“I figured as much. I was merely making the offer to be fair,”

**Chapter 105 End**

**Chapter 106**

Vanessa and her team readied themselves. The offer was the only thing keeping them save. Now that they had declined, it was only a matter of time before the Discretes began attacking. Vatti and Baas stood next to each other, their bodies positions angling at forty-five degrees. Henry continually changed his position, pointing his sword at everything that moved.

“Okay Diablo.” Atsuma said grinding his teeth. “What’s the plan?”

“Plan?” Diablo repeated. He remained where he stood, the closest to Arttior.

“Yeah. How do we beat these guys?”

“There is no way to win here.”

“Fine! Escape! How do we get out of here?”

“Escaping would be near impossible with only three Discretes. We are surrounded by over 15 of them.”

“Well what do we do!?! What’s the plan!?!”

“Were you not listening to me when I told you where saving Vanessa would lead to? This is the end for us.”

“You’re bluffing!” Koroko shouted. “You wouldn’t come down here just to die.”

“I came down here to satisfy my conscious. An illogical and perhaps selfish decision, but I felt it was the right choice.”

“Wait.” Vatti said. “You led me and Henry down here, knowing we were gonna die?”

“Your actions would’ve gotten you killed anyway. I merely did it in a way where no one else would get hurt.”

“That doesn’t make a lick of sense.”

“I don’t really care about the frustration you feel towards me, nor the fact that you do not understand my logic. But you remember, I warned you that this exact moment would happen. You all will die. The only note I left out is that I will die with you.”

The group glared at Diablo. They felt a sensation of hatred towards him, as though somehow it was his fault. They also knew that he was correct.

“Well.” Atsuma spoke up. “I don’t know about you guys, but death is not on my schedule. I don’t think you guys realize what we have here. We’re the best team in Orange, Vatti, one of the youngest ever to become a Great One, two rogue Discretes, and a master escape artist. If there was ever a team destined to take down the Discretes, it’s us.”

The others realized that what Atsuma was saying was true. No one here was an average fighter.

“I say. We leave our fears at the door. Leave our doubt. Because I plan on leaving here alive, and taking every one of you with...”

\*swish\*

\*thump\*

Time seemed to slow immensely. No one had seen the object. It flew passed Atsuma’s head right into the group of people. Everyone turned and look at the object. An arrow... easily identifiable. It was the one that Arttior had been holding, only now she wasn’t. The last person to look at the arrow was Baas, though he was the first to react to it. When it zoomed it, the impact forced him to fly backwards and fall, hitting his head on the way down. The impact of his head slightly distracted his body from the pain in his chest, but only slightly. Now Baas was lying down staring at the arrow sticking out from his chest. Red flowed from the spot of the arrow, flushing out the white of his clothes.

“Baas!” Vatti screamed. She ran to him almost tripping over heself. “No. No. No! No!! No!!!”

Atsuma ran up to the wound. It hadn’t hit Baas’ heart. It was on his left side, but closer to his neck than his heart. Still, the wound was there and it was great.

Everyone else in the group surrounded Baas, though they didn’t get too close knowing he would need as much air as possible.

“Somebody do something!” Vatti cried. “Somebody help him!”

“We can’t.” Diablo said walking slowly towards the group. “Discrete A has not ordered the attack on us but she doesn’t want us to live. I assume she’ll allow you to say goodbye, but should any of us try medical assistance, we’ll be next.”

“Goodbye? No. No fix him! You’re a Discrete, fix him!”

“That is not possible.”

“You got to...”

“Vatti…” Baas said in a whisper.

“Baas. Don’t worry. We’ll get you some help. We’ll get you out of here. Just...”

“Shh...” Baas whispered. “Vatti... \*cough cough\*... I don’t care what anyone says... this... is the hardest part of war.”

As tears flowed from her eyes, Vatti couldn’t help but laugh. It wasn’t Baas’ best joke, but then again, they never were.

“Vaati...”

“Baas, please, don’t speak.”

“No... Vatti, I gotta say this... especially if it’s... the last time I’ll speak...”

“Don’t talk that way. Don’t talk at all. You’ll live we just gotta...”

“Vatti...”

“I said don’t speak, you need...”

“VATTI!”

That made Vatti stopped talking. She couldn’t remember a time where Baas yelled at her in anger. What made it even worse was that she knew how much energy he had just wasted to say her name. She closed her eyes and looked away from her friend until she felt a hand on her cheek. She opened her eyes to see Baas reaching up to her.

“Vatti… how many times have we fought?”

Another joke from Baas. Another laugh from Vatti.

“One million.”

“And how many times have you won?”

“One million and one.”

“Is it really... so hard... to let me win...? Just this once?”

The look on Baas. The feeling of the hand on Vatti’s cheek…

“Okay, Baas.” She said between chuckles and tears. “What’s so important that you’d risk the rest of your life to say it?”

Baas let out a grin. His hands grasped the sword and shield he hadn’t yet let go of. It hurt to move any part of his upper body, but he had to for this. As he opened his mouth to speak, the grin became a smile that spread.

“...happy birthday.”

Vatti began to feel tears form even more. Before she could sob though, Baas placed his sword and shield on her hand. The Blue dropped the sword Diablo had given her and picked up her friends gift.

“You’ve never been fond of my style \*cough cough\* but I have a feeling it’ll... grow on you.”

“Sound to me like you couldn’t get a proper gift, so you just gave me what you had.”

“Did you even remember... today was your birthday?”

“I don’t think you know. I think you’re just guessing and hoping you’re right.”

“No one \*cough\* knows me like you.”

Vatti’s smile got bigger. Baas’ stayed the same size. His eyes began to close. His breathing began to slow.

“You know? Surrounded by my friends... Maybe... maybe this isn’t such a bad way to go. And... your smile... it could use... some work... but as far as the last thing I see… there… are… worse…”

Baas’ eyes closed and his voice fell silent. His body became limp A moment of silence filled the cave. Then...

“NO!” Vatti grabbed Baas’ body and buried her face into it. “Dying isn’t hardest part of war, you moron! This is! You can’t leave me Baas!”

The cries of Vatti went into the ears of all. All of team Vanessa were shaking. They had all lost friends before. They had all felt the grief. But there was something different about Baas. Something that made them feel he didn’t deserve it. The wonder turned into anger.

Koroko was the first to act, but it wasn’t a second before the others followed him. Atsuma ran faster than he had ever before. Pandora came in for a close range attack, despite the weapon she carried. Vanessa grabbed the sword that Vatti had dropped and followed her team. All the once called Oranges charged in the same direction, towards their former friend Arttior. Arttior lifted her left hand, and with a smirk, snapped her fingers.

\*snap\*

Almost instantly, several Discretes put themselves between the group and Arttior. That was enough to make them stop from charging, but not to calm the anger that had been inflamed in each of them. Baas was gone, and the nearest Discrete was going to pay.

**Chapter 106 End**

**Chapter 107**

Atsuma swung his sword harder and faster with each swing. And with each swing his sword hit nothing. All of team Vanessa was fighting harder than they had before. Every few seconds, there seemed to be a new Discrete and they all seemed impossibly fast.

\*pow\*

One hit Atsuma chin with the side of her hand. Despite her fist not being bawled up, Atsuma had felt like a rock had just knocked into his chin.

“GAH!” Koroko sceamed. One of the Discretes had elbowed him in the back. The pain wasn’t as bad as his scream had made it, that was merely from surprise, but there was pain.

Similar situations were happening to Pandora and Vanessa. Neither could lay a hand on their adversary and each felt pain every couple of seconds.

Diablo watched from where Baas was still lying. The fight was pointless. One Discrete alone could take them on. But he knew how far deep the group was to being emotionally compromised. His words would not reach them. He would have no choice but to wait until the Discretes tired out their prey and then ended it. Such a thing did not amuse the former Discrete. He turned his attention to the young ones in front of him.

Henry and Vatti had not followed the others. Henry was gazing at Baas, not in sadness, but in fear. Perhaps the worst mistake had been including him at all. Diablo could have easily knocked the boy out and left him somewhere. He would’ve died eventually, yes, but not today. The boy wanted to know the truth, and to seek adventure in doing so, was allowing that to happen really right?

\*skirk\*

Footsteps. It looked like Diablo wouldn’t have to wait for Atsuma’s group to fail. The Discretes who weren’t busy defending Discrete A had lost their patience and were beginning to make their way towards those who hadn’t charged. Henry began spinning his chain wildly. He wanted to point a sword to defend himself, but he had thrown his. There had to be a way to escape this. Diablo knew better. He had checked all options before coming here. The only way to escape would be to have never come here at all.

As the footsteps grew closer, Diablo fixed his gaze on Vatti. For her, the decision was easy. This is where she would’ve wanted to be. The girl continued to cry into Baas’ stomach. How could she have let this happen? Baas was hers. He was hers and she had let him die. Whatever chaos that ensued around her was irrelevant.

Finally, Diablo gaze made its way to Baas. He had been avoiding it, but the boy’s death was coming soon. He had to see what he had caused. He had to see how his plans had failed. He had to see Baas’ death with his own eyes. Slowly, his gaze went from the top of Baas’ head, to his feet. The Discrete had seen enough dead bodies. The lifelessness wasn’t anything strange to him. Analysis. It’s what the Discretes had trained him to do best, and as his analysis of Baas’ condition came to an end, his eyes widened slightly. Baas wasn’t dead. The boy’s chest moved. His lungs were still functioning. His left bicep puttered slightly. His heart was beating. Whenever Vatti moved his body, it reacted in pain. Life had not completely left the young Discrete’s body. But just as fast as hope entered Diablo, it left. Baas wasn’t dead... yet. The pain of the arrow in his chest, combined with Baas hitting his head had made it difficult for him to stay conscious. Sleep was the best way Baas’ body could heal the damage that had been done. He may have still been alive, but blood was still pouring from his wound and that would be enough to end him.

The noise of the footsteps said death was getting closer. Diablo looked back towards Atsuma and his group. Pandora was on her knees screaming. Someone had attacked her knees. It had probably been Discrete T. He tended to aim low. Vanessa faced Discrete G, H and I. They had worked together to wear her down. Atsuma and Koroko were back to back trying to focus on Discretes circling them. What they didn’t realize was that it was six constantly switching in and out. Diablo turned back to Baas. The Discretes were playing with their food. It sickened him.

Vatti was squeezing Baas even harder, and her grip was continuing to increase.

“Baas! You moron! Why would you leave before I could tell you...”

The peace of sleep. When one is in between it and consciousness, one does not always have full understanding over one’s situation. This time, as Vatti squeezed, the pain in Baas’ chest registered to his brain. The sound of her calling his name came at the same time. Baas awoke.

It was subtle. He looked around. The chaos of his group. The Discretes approaching his body. Vatti didn’t notice he had awaken. She was crying into his shirt. No. Vatti was in danger. She was going to be killed. But Baas couldn’t move. He could barely breathe. But he could see and he could speak. The skull on Diablo’s mask faced him. His eyes were surely fixed on Baas. The young Discrete glanced down at Vatti one last time... then he looked back at Diablo. He pleaded with both his eyes and his mouth one phrase… the only phrase he had strength to say.

“Save her... please.”

The voice seemed to echo in Diablo’s mind.

\*tct\*

The Discretes were now in striking range. Diablo turned as the striker reached out to attack him and grabbed his hand. This move made the other Discretes stop in their tracks.

“What happened to waiting for your death?”

Diablo turned and looked the woman in the eyes.

“Changed my mind.”

Diablo took full control over the arm in his grasped and hurled the woman towards the entrance of the cave in a circular motion. This move took out the rest of the Discretes who had been coming from that direction.

“Wha...?” Henry started. But before he could react, Diablo was kneeling between him and Vatti.

“Quickly, follow me and move as fast as possible.”

Diablo reached for Vatti and pulled her shoulder.

“NO!” Vatti said struggling. Diablo was clearly stronger, but that didn’t stop Vatti from trying her best. “No! I won’t leave him! Let me go!”

This, Diablo didn’t need. The move would only knock the Discretes down for a moment. Already, they were rebounding and heading his way. He quickly reached into his belt and pulled out several small spheres. The pellets left his hand and slammed into the ground directly beneath him. Instantly, a fog emerged and surrounded the small area around Diablo. Immediately after, Diablo hand chopped the back of Vatti’s head. The blue fell over unconscious.

The Discretes did not hesitate. They rushed into the smoke screen, unafraid. Unexpectedly, their vision became blurry. This did not stop them from moving forward, but when they all met up in the same spot, the only thing left was Baas’ body. The Discretes began talking all at once.

“Where’d he go?”

“What happened?”

“How’d he escape?”

“He must’ve headed towards the exit.”

“What happened here?” The Discretes attention were all suddenly on two figures who had not been there a moment before. One had red hair while the other was blond. The red haired stood slightly higher than the blond. Both wore black outfits. Both wore sunglasses.

“Sirs.” The female whom Diablo had thrown approached the men. “Some enemies just escaped. They were with the untrained here.”

“Escaped?” The blond continued to speak. “You are Discretes, how did someone escape you?”

“My apologies, Discrete C. Among them was Discrete D.”

“So he was here. We were a moment too late.”

The red hair did not respond. He simply continued to scowl.

“That still doesn’t explain how he escaped.” Discrete C flared. “D’s weakness is legendary among us. You should’ve stopped him easy.”

“Yes sir. He used a smoke screen to get away.”

“Smoke screen?”

“Yes sir. We know our glasses should’ve protected us against such a thing, but for some reason our vision still blurred.”

“Ours is blurring as well” Discrete B said. He looked around as though observing the area. “That wasn’t smoke. It was mist.”

“He found a way to cloud the purge visors.” Discrete C noted. “Ten years out and he’s still got tricks up his sleeve.”

Both Discretes suddenly turned their heads away from the others.

“Discrete D is heading back towards the surface.” The female continued speaking. “We’ll head him off and...”

“You couldn’t see passed your own eyes, yet you think you can stop him?” Discrete C walked in a different direction. “Don’t worry. You all clean up here, B and I will take care of...”

“No.” Discrete B interrupted. Discrete C stopped walking and stared as the other Discrete walked toward and passed him. “You help out here. I’ll take care of D alone.”

“You’re foolish. He stands no chance against us together.”

“Are you saying I can’t take care of D alone?”

The blond Discrete grew quiet. Discrete B continued to walk.

“You wait here. I’ll be back with their bodies.”

**Chapter 107 End**