Chapter 90

“You then proceeded to exit the base. I assume you collapsed in the forest, however I had a difficult time tracking you after you defeated the Golds.”

Baas was speechless. He looked at Sheina. There was no need for words, his eyes asked the question for him.

“It’s true Baas. Well, at least the part we saw.”

“You were moving so fast it was hard to tell exactly what you were doing.” Keely said. “We weren’t sure we saw what we saw. But it reminded us exactly like what the Discretes do.”

“But... but I don’t remember any of that!”

“Understandable.” Diablo said.

“How is that understandable? Does the Discrete-Gene let people sleepwalk when they’re wide awake?” Koroko asked.

“The explanation is more simple than that. In times of great emotional stress, usually with grief or rage, a person temporarily loses consciousness in which the emotion takes control over their actions.”

“I thought you said it was less complicated! I don’t understand a word you just said!”

“He means Baas completely lost it.” Atsuma explained. “But I assume the Discrete-Gene made him lose it in a way ‘more advanced’ because when most people go full rage, they don’t make ingenious tactical decisions.”

“So it’s true.” Baas said. He starred down at the ground, walking as though in a daze. “I really am a Discrete.”

Baas was silent for a moment. It seemed the news was too much.

“Baas?” Sheina said.

Suddenly, Baas raised his hands high into the air.

“I’M GONNA GET SO MANY GIRLFRIENDS!”

\*POW\*

Faster than people knew to react, Vatti ran to Baas and punched him upside the head. The Orange grasped his head in pain.

“What was that for Vatti!?!”

“Can’t you take anything seriously!?! You just found out you’re one of the most powerful people in Wig-Or-Log and your first thought is dating!?!”

“You’re right Vatti. There are more serious matters.”

Baas turned to Diablo. “Does the Discrete-Gene give me a higher metabolism? It used to be I couldn’t finish my food, but now I can eat twice as much right?”

Vatti balled up her fist. Her target? The back of Baas’ head. Baas heard the grass under her feet move. His body remembered the pain it had just felt and did not want to relive it. As Vatti swung her hand, Baas squatted. Her fist missing Baas, Vatti lost balance and almost fell. However, Baas quickly stuck his left hand up from his squatting position. His hand pressed in the right spot on Vatti’s stomach to reestablish the balance her body needed.

When all was said and done, Baas let out a nervous chuckle. “Sorry Vatti.” He barely realized himself what had happened.

Vatti stood up straight, pretending not to be embarrassed. She faced away from the group so they couldn’t see her face.

“You’re just unbearable Baas.”

“Let me guess.” Atsuma said to Diablo. “That was the Discrete-Gene.”

“Indeed. Baas’ adaption is enhanced beyond that of normal humans. Once the first blow was made, his body remembered the details instantly and adjusted itself so that it wouldn’t happen again.”

“That means the longer he’s alive, the harder it is to fight him.”

“Assuming you believe what I’m telling you.”

Atsuma was silent for a moment.

“Okay, let’s say we believe you and everything you say. That means that Vee was taken just because Baas is what he is.”

“Well, that’s the partial truth.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“The Discrete method is to take a person who is so important to the untrained that they would drop everything else in their life to find that person. Do you really believe your Commander is someone like that to Baas?”

Atsuma thought about it for a moment. “No. Baas only knew Vee for a couple of weeks. In fact, the only reason he came to rescue Vee...”

“…is because he was following you.” Diablo finished. “As I said, you were also considered to be a Discrete. When the Discrete infiltrated your life, they concluded that you did not have the Discrete-Gene. However, the case was not closed. I said that you weren’t suspected of being a Discrete until after you left the Center, but that was after your birth. Prior to, it was highly expected that you would be a Discrete. You see, both of your parents were Discretes.”

“Say what?”

“Indeed. They were also highly recognized, even among the powerful warriors the Discretes are. When they had a child, though the numbers were still against you, it was in the back of the Discretes’ minds that you would also be a Discrete. When it was discovered that you only had the Leader-Gene, there was still some who believed it to be a possibility, that maybe they’d made a mistake. That is why you were pursued outside the Center when your other skills began to take notice. You still didn’t have it, of course, but something else was discovered while you were being analyzed. While you didn’t have the Discrete-Gene, because your parents were both powerful Discretes, you inherited some of their talents naturally. The Discretes saw you as a threat like they did untrained Discretes, but they couldn’t act on you because they had no justification. There was another way they could get you though. Baas. They’re using his situation to lure you in as well. The Discretes don’t only want Baas, they want you too.”

“Are you sure?” Baas asked.

“Yes. When you were dropped off by the Discretes Baas, you were not supposed to join the Oranges. You were dropped an hour’s walk from a river, which the Blues have control over. It was expected that a Blue ship would eventually find you. Once there, with Vatti’s ranking, it would be easy for her to secure you a spot on her team. Originally, she was the one who was supposed to be taken. You, however, headed in the opposite way the Discretes expected. Once in the Orange base, the Discretes took advantage of the situation and took who would make both you and Atsuma participate in the test.”

Baas put his hand to his head. This was so much. Atsuma did a similar gesture.

“Pretty big coincidence.” Koroko said. “Both Baas and Atsuma winding up in the same place and both being suspected of being Discretes.”

“Bigger than you know. Baas was also expected to be a Discrete before he was born. But that’s to be expected given your lineage to Atsuma.”

“What?” Both Baas and Atsuma said at the same time lifting their heads.

“Did you say... lineage?” Atsuma looked at Baas with one eyebrow up. “As in... related?”

“Indeed.”

Atsuma continued to stare at Baas for a while.

“Okay, I give up, how in the Wig are we possibly related?”

“You’re brothers.”

“Broth...” Atsuma started. “Come on man. I would’ve had an easier time believing he was my son, and Sean was three years younger than Baas. How can we possibly be brothers? We look NOTHING ALIKE! Not to mention he’s only sixteen while I’m... uh... older. There’s no way my parents could’ve had a child that long after I was born.”

“Having a child at an old age is not impossible, even less so when you’re talking about Discretes. The Discrete-Gene prolongs youth in an individual. It would be easy for a Discrete mother to remain fertile past the age of fifty. Particularly if she were a very strong Discrete like your mother. As far as your looks go, I can’t really say. I assume Atsuma that you get your looks from your mother, while Baas gets his from your father.”

Atsuma found his face once again in his hands.

“So, let’s go over this again. Discretes are hosting a fake war. Baas is a Discrete. He and I are brothers. And apparently the Discretes want both of us dead so they used my mentor to lure us to them.”

“That is correct.” Diablo answered.

“Why didn’t you tell us all this in the first place!?!” Atsumals voice was showing signs of frustration..

“Atsuma, calm down.” Pandora calmed. “But still, you’ve got a point.”

“If you had told us. We could’ve stopped all this before Vee got kidnapped.” Koroko added.

“Exactly.” Atsuma agreed. “Before you were trying to scare us into joining. If you had told us all of this, we would have been better prepared. We may not have believed you, but we would have at least been on the look out for the Discretes.”

“You didn’t earn it.” Diablo answered.

“Well I’m sorry.” Atsuma said sarcastically. “Next time I’ll remember to do extra push-ups.”

“Listen to me.” Diablo continued. “The people I am with have seen through the deception this war has placed. We don’t like it. Humanity should be free to live lives away from war, regardless of whether it kills itself or not. However, to defy the Discretes would be suicide with how we are now. We are trying to prepare ourselves for our confrontation with them. One of those ways is that we need more people. Thus, we send out scouts to examine possible good candidates. That was my mission. I was to find you guys and attempt to recruit you. However, we do not just accept anyone into the group. We need people who can actually help us. We knew that Baas was a Discrete and that Atsuma was a talented fighter, but we needed more than that. Therefore, I came before you with fear and uncertainty. Those worthy would seek the truth of the mystery I put in front of you. However, you all did not. And simply telling you everything wouldn’t have proved anything. If you could not prove your intelligence, than you have no value in our group.”

“Then why tell us now?”

“This involves yet again the Discrete-Gene. What do you usually call the Discretes individually?”

“Individually?” Atsuma asked. “Um... I remember calling them letters when we were in the Center. Right?”

“Yeah, we called them like Discrete F, Discrete Y and junk like that.” Koroko confirmed.

“I liked to think that the letters are short for their real names.” Baas said daydreaming. “Discrete T was Timothy. And Discrete H was Hiccup!”

“These are indeed how the Discretes identify each other. They also serve other purposes. Though the Discrete-Gene has the same effect, the strength of the gene varies. The better warrior a Discrete is, the higher their rank is. Discretes Z through G are common among them. Usually what determines these particular ranks is how much one of them practices. However, Discretes F through B are an entirely different story. If a Discrete wants this rank, they must be able to defeat someone of equal rank. To be one of these ranks is more rare than to be a Discrete. Usually these ranks are gained from having a very powerful Discrete-Gene. At the top of command is Discrete A. There is only and there can only be one Discrete A. All Discretes below rank follow the orders of a Discrete’s above rank, which means ultimately all Discretes follow the orders of Discrete A. Having this rank means that you are ultimately controlling all the Discretes and therefore, all of Wig-Or-Log.

Our group knew that Baas carried the Discrete-Gene in him, but even so we did not think that alone would warrant him worth. We were wrong. What Baas did in the Gold base was not something he should’ve been able to do, even for a Discrete. I believe that Baas has a very high level Discrete-Gene in him. Though he has not had proper training, the intense training you put him through, Atsuma, has already made him extremely powerful. What he demonstrated in the Gold base was a hint of what he could be capable of. The reason I’m telling you all this now is because your intellectual qualities are no longer important. Baas’s physical qualities more than make up for any other qualities this group is lacking.

So again I present to you the three choices. Forget everything I just told you and go on living your life. The Discretes do not know of my presence here. If you do not pursue them, they will never bother you again. You will be ignorant to all the dangers I have presented before you, but you will be happy. This is the choice of happiness.Come with me on my mission. Help us free this world from the Discretes. But I warn you, the battle will be long and hard. The possibility of seeing the end is not guaranteed. This is the choice of responsibility. Or... go and attempt to rescue your Commander from the Discretes, the most dangerous fighters in the world. This is the choice of foolishness. Now that you know the details and the risks, what do you choose?”

Atsuma thought to himself for a second. He looked back at the group, then back at Diablo.

“Where in your plan does Vee fit in?”

“She doesn’t.” Diablo said. “The Discretes will keep your Commander prisoner until Baas comes to them. If they find out he is with me, I don’t know what they’ll do to her. Most likely, she will be killed. The Discretes allow no one to know the truth.”

“Then our decision hasn’t changed.” Atsuma said.

“Your Commander will surely die if you attempt a rescue, the only difference will be that you will die as well.”

“I will not leave Vee to be prisoner. Even if the enemy is the Discretes.”

Atsuma began to walk away from Diablo. As far as he was concerned, the conversation was done. But Diablo had more to say. Quickly, he moved in front of the departing Orange.

“Atsuma, think about what you’re doing.”

“I thought it was my choice Diablo.”

“It is your choice, but be rational. You’re not going up against a Discrete, or even a group of Discretes. You’re enemy is the entire Discrete organization. You’ve seen the fightings of the lower Discretes. They alone have had the world fearing them for generations. The upper level Discretes do things that you can’t possibly imagine. They’re knowledge of the human mind will have you doubting yourself before you even begin fighting. They’re knowledge of the human body can fool you into thinking they’re dead when they’re well alive. And this isn’t even beginning to describe they’re fighting capabilities.”

“Well, that’s nice but I’ve...”

Diablo got close to Atsuma. He spoke low, and though his voice never seemed to lose its tension, for once he sounded more serious than usual.

“If you go, they will follow you.” Atsuma looked back at his group while Diablo spoke. “Half of the people here are kids. I realize that you can easily risk your life, but this is not risking, this is dying. This group wouldn’t last against one Discrete, let alone all of them. Can you really go knowing that your teammates life will end? Can you do that to your friends? Can you do it to your family?”

“Maybe we don’t have to.” Baas said.

“What?” Atsuma asked confused. “How did he...”

“Discrete’s senses eventually become very acute, including their hearing.”Diablo explained.

“We need to take out the Discretes, right? Well, the Discretes may have this conspiracy thing going on, but they still listen to one group of people.” Baas explained.

“The Officials!” Sheina finished.

“Right.” Baas said. “If we explained to the Officials what’s going on, they can make the Discretes stop! They’re normal people just like the rest of us. Well... the rest of you. I’m sure they won’t stand for random kidnappings.”

“Great idea Baas.” Pandora said. “We’d probably stand a better chance of finding them than we do taking on the Discretes.”

Everyone showed acknowledgement that they too thought it was an excellent idea.

“It looks like you missed a choice Dee.” Atsuma said.

Diablo let out a sigh. “They have you all fooled quite well.” He then walked out toward the center opening of the group. “I assumed that you would all be able to deduce this from the information I presented, but the Firsts’ plan has done its job in twisting your way of thinking.” Diablo fixed his gaze on Baas.

“There are no Officials.”

Baas was silent for a second, then his gaze grew serious.

“Yes there are.”

Atsuma quickly followed.

“Yeah, there are Officials.”

Sheina and Vatti too stepped in.

“Indeed there are.”

“Yeah, what she said.”

“The First would be proud.” Diablo said. He wasn’t talking to anyone in particular, but everyone heard him. This time, however, he spoke to everyone.

“How do you know?”

The question came at random. The Leaders weren’t sure how to answer.

“I’ll ask again, how... do... you... know?”

“That’s...uh...” Baas glanced at Sheina. “That’s none of your business!”

“We just do!” Vatti insisted.

“Okay then.” Diablo said. “Allow me to guess how you know. Everyone one of you who spoke up either know, or are, an Official in waiting.”

Everyone was too astounded to speak. Diablo hit the nail right on the head.

“How do I know this? Because it’s also part of the Firsts’ plan to maintain control. As I said, the Firsts needed people to continue their work but also needed a security that people would not rise up against their reign. While the Firsts planned to make future Discretes continue their war, they needed people to continue to have faith in the people in charge of them. Thus, they began spreading the rumor of how one becomes an Official: ordinary people being chosen at random to take over the rule of their country. If you believe that the person leading you does not believe themselves to be above you, then you will be more willing to follow them because you know that they’ll have people like you in their best interest. But rumors alone are not enough to keep the people’s confidence, especially when the source of said rumors is unknown. Thus, the Firsts expanded their plans. Kids of the Center were chosen at random to be heavily guarded by Discretes. When asked why, the kids would be told that they were destined to be Officials and that they couldn’t tell anyone. Eventually, the kids would find friends. Because of the life they lead, the child would find their friends more trusting than they should, and would thus tell them their deep dark secret. However, this is exactly what the Discretes want. No one would suspect that the child was lying.”

“That’s… that’s not true.” Sheina said shakily. Tears were forming in her eyes. “That can’t be true!”

“I take it you were one of the promised children.” Diablo said. “The Discretes told you that you would be aloud to live like a normal person, but they would one day call for you. The truth is, the First Officals were also the last. Since the Firsts took power, only those who held the title of ‘Discrete A’ have been making the rules. The kids that are promised are merely tools to be used. If an ordinary person tells people they trust that they will become an Official, the response is usually believed. Thus the ‘Official rumor’ is believed to be true, as evidence has now presented itself.”

Sheina couldn’t take it anymore. She burst into tears and fell to her knees. All this time, she thought she had suffered loneliness for a purpose, that she was destined to be great. But it was all a lie.

“The Discretes couldn’t keep this a secret!” Atsuma insisted. “If they never came for the child they promised...”

“…no one would think otherwise.” Diablo interrupted. “The child is not permitted to tell anyone that they are to be an Official. Growing up, the child may wind up telling a few select friends at most, but chances are those friends will be separated or killed in the war. The child is never told how long they must wait, only that they must, meaning they will vainly wait their entire life. The chances of anyone who is trained in the Center to grow old in this world of war is slim. Once the person dies, it’s too late to tell anyone anything. And if for some reason chance is with them and they make it to the age where they begin to suspect the truth and tell everyone around them, who would believe them? Would you believe anyone you didn’t completely trust that they were supposed to be an Official? The plan was concocted by Discretes, meaning it was well thought out and well executed, while ignoring how the emotions of the individual might be effected.”

The more Diablo spoke, the worst Sheina felt. His words were cruel and cut her like a knife. The worst part of it though, was that Sheina believed all of it. When nasty words are thrown at a person, they can do much damage if they’re true.

Atsuma stared at Sheina on the floor. He watched as Baas and Vatti tried to comfort her. He looked at Koroko and Pandora. They looked back at him, waiting to see the decision he would make.

“There’s got to be another way.” Atsuma pleaded to Diablo. “If I go back and tell the rest of Orange what’s happened...”

“How many will believe you.” Diablo once again finished. “When you left, you desperately wanted to find your Commander. You were even willing to be black banded for it. I predict that many of your people will see this as a desperate last attempt to find her. And besides that, the more people who know the truth of the Disccretes, the more lives you’ll be putting in danger. This knowledge is forbidden to anyone who did not find it out on their own. The Discretes will silence the problem, even if it means destroying your entire country.”

Atsuma turned back to Diablo.

“If you really care about the well being of my group, help us. You seem to know a lot about the Discretes. Help us defeat them and get our friend back.”

“I’m not going to give you a better way to commit suicide.” Diablo began to back away from Atsuma and the group, into the shadows of the nearby forest. “Rescuing your Commander is your decision to make, but it is the wrong decision. If you want my help, come with me and do it the right way.”

Atsuma turned and looked at the group. His brain battling back and forth on the decision to make. He cared for the people in this group, but he cared for Vanessa too.

“I’m sorry.” Atsuma said low. He then turned back to Diablo. “But I can’t leave Vee…”

The Orange stopped mid-sentence. Diablo was gone.

Chapter 90 End

Chapter 91

“Looks like the path of foolishness it is!” Koroko said loudly. He was expecting his friends to join in his jubilee, or at least some back sass from Pandora, but both she and Atsuma looked worse than he’d seen them in a while.

“What’s wrong with you guys? The chips have been down on us before.”

“Never like this Koroko.” Pandora said. “I can’t even think how we could possibly succeed.”

“Me either.” Atsuma said. “But I... I gotta try.”

“So do we.” Pandora said. “But... not all of us...”

The three turned toward the kids. Sheina was still on her knees. Her tears were less now, but you could still see the sorrow on her. Baas and Vatti were just sitting next to her. There was not much they could say to make the situation better, so they didn’t say anything. Henry and Keely were standing off to the side. Everything that just happened didn’t seemed to have involved them.

“Okay,” Atsuma said. “I know I’m going to have to do this, and I’m not going to try and stop Koroko and Pandora. But I can’t allow you guys to end you lives here.”

“You can’t be serious!” Baas said.

“More than I’ve ever been.”

“Keely.”

Upon hearing her name, the Grey stepped forward.

“You’re going home.”

“But Atsuma...”

“No buts!” Atsuma said raising his voice. “This mission is... it’s not even a mission. It’s nothing like we’ve ever seen before. You’ve got no experience in the battlefield and we can’t have you dragging us down!”

“Atsuma!” Pandora said.

Atsuma looked back angrily at Pandora. But when he saw the look she was giving him, he quickly looked back at Keely. The words he had just said, he now regretted.

“Look kid, I’m sorry.” The Orange put his arm on the Grey’s shoulder. “I didn’t mean to insult your fighting skills. I was just trying to find the right words to make you understand. Hey, listen to me.”

Keely held her head up.

“You’ve got a father and sister waiting for you back home. You’re needed there, and I can’t take that away from you. You understand?”

Keely nodded and looked back down.

“Okay, you know way home from here.”

“Henry!”

“Hey man, you don’t have to tell me.” Henry said. He ran over and grabbed Keely’s hand. I didn’t sign up for any of this. I’m perfectly happy being deceived by the Discretes. I’ll just... uh... escort the little lady back home.”

Henry winked at Atsuma. Atsuma couldn’t help but smirk back.

“Baas, Sheina.” Atsuma said. Baas stood up attentively. Sheina gathered herself together and stood next to Baas. Atsuma opened his mouth, about to speak. Then... he stopped.

“We’ll head back home and gather up weapons. Baas, say goodbye to your little friend.”

“Wait... what!?” Vatti said.

“You can’t come with us back to base, you’re a Blue.”

“So what!?!” Vatti stormed. “According to what that Diablo creep said, none of this war stuff matters anyway. If you’re going to fight those Discretes, I want in too!”

“Listen girl, I can’t allow...”

“Can’t allow? Who do you think I am? I’m not some whiteband you can order around. Like you said, I’m a Blue and I don’t have to take any orders from an Orange.”

“This is our problem.” Atsuma said starting to raise his voice. “What does it matter to you if our Commander is missing?”

“It doesn’t matter to me at all.” Vatti said. She then used one arm to grab Baas around the neck. “This little chucklehead is my property. If he’s going into a fight, there’s no way I’m not going with him.”

“So... what you’re saying is, where ever he goes, you’ll go.”

“Exactly.”

Atsuma paused for another moment.

“Alright then.”

“Uh... Atsuma, we’ve got a little problem.” Baas pointed out from under Vatti’s armpit. “How exactly are we gonna find the Discretes’ headquarters?”

“Baas has got a point.” Pandora pointed out. “No one has ever found them. Well, according to Diablo, no one who isn’t a Discrete.”

“Why don’t we ask the Discrete?” Koroko said. “Got any ideas Baas?”

Baas released his head from Vatti’s grip. Before he knew it, everyone’s attention was suddenly on him.

“Why is everybody looking at me?”

“Because you’re a Discrete dumb dumb.” Vatti replied calmly. “We’ve gotten past that, try to keep up.”

“Well, yeah, but that doesn’t mean I automatically know everything. Does the Discrete-Gene come with a locator?”

“According to Diablo, that Gene thing makes you the best out of all of us at solving problems.” Atsuma grunted. “This is a major problem, solve it.”

“I don’t even know where to begin.”

“Baas.” Vatti said. “The way to start is to do something I know you have trouble doing. We need you to think.”

Baas sat down and crossed his arms. He made a face to let everybody know that he was thinking intensely. He opened one eye. Everyone was staring at him. The pressure... he couldn’t concentrate.

“Gah! I don’t know!”

“Figures.” Vatti said. “Guess the Discrete-Gene isn’t all that great.”

“Maybe we’re asking the wrong question.” Sheina said. “Baas may be a Discrete, but even they can’t access information they don’t have.”

“What do you suggest Squirt?”

Vatti chuckled upon hearing that.

“Squirt?” she asked.

Sheina ignored Vatti and continued.

“Well, Diablo said that sometimes Discretes make mistake too. I think other untrained Discretes have done this same thing. But if they were like Baas, they wouldn’t know where to find the base either. So we have to think differently.”

“Okay then.” Vatti proposed. “Let’s say we weren’t looking for the Discrete base. Let’s say... we were looking for each other.”

“But we know where each other is.” Koroko said.

“Yes now.” Vatti explained. She realized she’d have to get on a more simpler level to explain herself. “But if I wasn’t here and you all wanted to find me, where would search?”

“The river!” Atsuma said. “You’re a Blue, you’re going to be somewhere near water.”

“I’d look for Baas.” Sheina said. “If you knew these two like I did in the Center, you’d know that Baas and Vatti are hardly ever separated.”

“I’d look for the fight.” Baas said, laughing to himself. “If there was a fight in the Center, chances are Vatti’s in the middle of it.”

“Chances are you started it Baas.” Vatti said sticking her tongue out.

Baas was about to return, but his understanding of Vatti’s idea seemed to be more important.

“So, in order to find the Discretes, we need to find out where they’d be!”

“This is the geniusness of the Discretes.” Vatti said sarcastically.

Baas stuck his tongue out at her.

“I guess we can rule out the Officials.” Koroko thought outloud.

“The Discretes are always watching over the children in the Center.” Pandora mentioned. “But then we run into the same problem as locating the Discretes themselves. Nobody knows where the Center is.”

“The only other place I can think that a Discrete would show up…” Atsuma began. He then began to smirk. “is wherever a black band would be.”

Everyone then turned their gaze to the back of the group, where the Grey and Black were still waiting. Henry didn’t like the look everyone was giving him.

“What are you guys looking at?”

“Didn’t you say you came from a whole hoard of Black Bands.”

“No.” Henry said firmly. He wasn’t so much as answering the question as he was answering the questions that he knew would follow.

“Kid, come on. You’ve got a whole heard of black bands we just need one to...”

“No!” Henry said. He began to back away from the group.

“We’re not asking **you** to do it.” Koroko said. “We just need one of your guys to...”

“Don’t even finish that sentence. You want me to ask one of my fellow black bands to get caught by the Discretes?! While you, what, watch?”

“Well... yeah.” Koroko said.

Henry looked at everyone around him in disgust.

“These are my people you’re talking about. My family. But I suppose you just see us as criminals, a bunch of black bands.”

“Henry’s right.” Atsuma said. “We can’t ask anyone else to get involved. These are the Discretes we’re talking about. And even if we did, no black band would ever agree to it. Everyone is scared of the Discretes.”

“But there is something else you can do.” Keely exclaimed. She then turned to Henry. “Savvi! He came straight from the Center.”

“That’s impossible.” Atsuma said.

“We’ve run into a lot of impossible things today.” Vatti pointed out. “Does Savvi know the way back to the Center.”

“No.” Keely said depressingly. “He said he doesn’t know Wig-Or-Log well enough to be able to locate it.”

“Well then that’s it then.” Atsuma said. “If we can get this Savvi guy to describe where he was, anyone here could tell which part of Wig that is, or atleast be able to eliminate a lot of other places. Henry, where is...”

“No way!” Henry said marching off. “I can’t believe I even thought about helping you guys. I save you from the Golds, and you tell me to sacrifice my own people and ask them to help you fight Discretes?”

“You’re still stuck on that? Look, kid we’re...”

“I don’t want to hear it. I’m done with you all, with this. I thought I could get some protection from the Discretes but you all just want to send me to them. No way, nuh uh no…”

Suddenly, Henry felt a sensation on his cheek. A soft, warm sensation. Before he finished his sentence, Keely puckered up and gave a soft kiss on the cheek.

“Well,” Vatti said smirking. “I certainly didn’t see that coming.”

Henry rubbed his cheek. The feeling... it was one of the best most fantastic feelings he had ever felt in his life. He let out a huge smile, turned around and began marching proudly.

“I guess I can help you guys out this once.” He wanted to turn around and smile proudly, but he could feel himself blushing really hard and didn’t want anyone else to notice.

Atsuma looked at Keely. “Well, I guess we can hold onto you for a little longer. Just until we get what we need from the black bands”

Keely grinned very wide. The thought of her being helpful was extremely valuable to her.

“Come on everyone.” Atsuma announced. “Lets go get Vee.”

As the eight fighters headed into the open field away from the forest, they did not see Diablo and another figure in a tree watching their every move.

“I can’t believe the great Diablo stuck his neck out to save one little girl.” The female spoke.

“That one little girl had this.” Diablo held out the knife.

“A dagger? You risked being exposed for... wait, is that...?”

“Yes it is.”

“You took it away from the base? And what’s worse, you let them have it?” At first the woman sounded surprised, but then the suspense in her voice lowered. Her smile returned. “Then again, the way the boy wielded both the knife and the shield... not to mention leading a team of four through uncertain odds... reminds me a lot of a certain event. Perhaps that’s what you were expecting to happen?”

“To predict that, I’d have to be even more intelligent than a Discrete A.”

“Or a believer in destiny. And considering your track record...”

Diablo grew silent.

“Fine then.” The female continued. “Atleast you got it back. That knife may work just like any other, but it’s an important part of history. Losing it would be unforgivable.” Another moment of silence. “So, they finally agreed to help us. It took you long enough, Dee. Your tactics at emotional persuasion are obviously slipping. Too much time in this sun I assume.”

“Ay.” Diablo spoke. “They didn’t agree.”

“What?”

“Nor did they choose to ignore the problem. They are going to rescue their Commander.”

“They’re walking into the Discrete’s trap? Did you tell them that...”

“Yes I did. They still insisted.”

“That’s... that’s just incredibly stupid.”

“I know.”

“And selfish.”

“I know.”

“And you’re just letting them go?”

“What do you propose I do?”

“Get down there and stop them!”

“I will do no such thing.”

“If you’re worried about killing them Dee, I’ll back you up so you don’t have to...”

“That’s not it Ay. We have the power to stop them, yes, to force them to come with us. But what we’re fighting for is the choice to live one’s life according to what one thinks is right. We’d be going against everything we sacrificed by forcing them to come.”

“Don’t give me any of that.” The woman said raising her tone. “If they were the Seconds, you’d knock one of them out before letting them make a decision like this. I’ve seen you force people in the right direction...”

“You’ve seen me push kids whom I had complete authority over. Baas is not my responsibility in that regards, nor is anyone in that group. I may have been watching over him, making plans for his life, but I do not have the right to treat him as though he was my son: to command him what to do and punish when he does wrong. He has chosen Atsuma as his leader and will follow his instructions. I will respect that.”

“This isn’t just about you Dee. Those two are crucial to the plan. How can you let such great fighters just...”

“Don’t insult me Ay. It may have been awhile since the old days, but I can still recognize an emotionally compromised person when I see one. You don’t care about Baas’ fighting skills. You just don’t want anything to happen to him, or any of the Oranges.”

The female was silent for a moment, embarrassed that Diablo even had the gall to say something like that. “If you won’t go down there and knock some sense into that boy, then I’ll do it myself.”

The female put herself in a ready position to jump down from the branch from which she was standing. However, before she could move, Diablo jumped in front of her.

“Do that, and I’ll fight you... to my last breath if need be.”

The female glared at Diablo.

“Who do you think you’re talking to? Do you honestly think you’d stand a chance against me? I think you’ve forgotten who’s in charge.”

“In charge? Last I checked, you and I were the same rank. I think you’ve forgotten Ay. I no longer take order from you, but from the Commanders. And even if I didn’t, I do my best to follow a path which I know is right. Forcing that team to join us will prove nothing but what hypocrites we are.”

The female looked away from Diablo, signaling that what he was saying had some truth.

“Besides, even if we did force them to come, do you honestly think the Commanders would approve of our methods? Do this, and everyone will turn against us. We’ll be just like the Discretes to them, forcing people to do what we like.”

The female let her guard down. Her tense muscles loosened. She knew what Diablo was saying was true but accepting it was another problem. She did her best to hold back her tears.

“I’ve been spending too much time with people...” the lady said with a smile. “getting sentimental over a boy...”

She stood up straight, loosing all signs of emotion that she had just displayed.

“You’re right Dee. The boy’s fate was his choice and we’ll respect that. But I suppose this is without a doubt your greatest failure. Come on, let’s report back. Without Baas to add to our arsenal, our preparation for fighting the Discretes seems even farther away now.”

“I’m not going.”

“Diablo, they’re minds are set. You know once Atsuma sets his mind, changing it with mere words is near impossible, no matter how much logic is behind it. Baas may be another story, but persuading him to leave the group he trusts is still a long shot. There’s nothing more you can do here.”

“I don’t plan on doing much Ay, but I’m going to stay.” Diablo paused for a moment. “I need you to do me a favor Ay.” Another pause. “Gather the Seconds and tell them to report back to base. Their missions are complete.”

“’Missions are...’ Dee, you’re not thinking...”

“I’m going to see this to the end Ay. All the way to the end.”

“That boy is walking to his death Dee. So will you if you follow him? Maybe you can hide your presence from most, but walking into the hive of the Discretes is pure suicide. Discrete A will kill you, without fail.”

“Indeed. And if not Discrete A, Discrete B or C will probably get the honors. Or probably just the sheer numbers of the lesser Discretes alone. This is why I need you to bring the kids back in. You’re the only other person they’ll listen to outside of the base.”

“They don’t need to listen to me, they can listen to you. I don’t get why you feel you need to do this. That boy may be a loss cause, but you are not!”

“What’s happening to Baas... to this group... is my fault. I set them up for this venture and I failed to deliver them to the proper path. While I can’t take the responsibility to bring Baas back in by force, I feel I must take the responsibility of seeing this through.”

“You... hypocrite. You just gave that speech about being led by emotions and now you yourself are compromised. First you’re saying we have no responsibility over Baas, now you’re saying we have enough to die for him?”

“I’m doing what I believe is right Ay. Call it what you will, but if you can’t convince me it’s wrong, I will stay on this path.”

“How can you even think of this? We’ve got a war to fight against the Discretes! We need you Dee!”

“You’re smarter, faster and stronger than me. The chances of winning still... ”

“Don’t even try to sell yourself short! The Commanders and even I know that the fate of this war rests with you. Your presence alone inspires the Seconds and others. Do you honestly think they’ll keep fighting rationally once they find out about your death?”

“They will have to.” Diablo said with force. “I’ve trained them well enough to accept death. Don’t think this is an easy decision, Ay. It isn’t. I know the consequences of my actions. As with everything I do, I’ve thought this out completely. But I cannot justify to myself leaving that boy. I’ve been with him this far, I’ll finish the journey. This matter may be complicated, but I wouldn’t expect to have to explain it to the Seconds without them understanding, nor you for that matter.”

“Nothing else matters to you, does it? Not the Seconds, not the people who believe in you, not even me. The only thing that matters to you is your precious honor. You’re being selfish Dee, pure and simple.”

With those last words, the female jumped further into the forest, clearly showing her frustration of the situation.

Diablo let out a sigh through his nose.

“What I’m doing is simple huh? I guess there really is a first time for everything.”

Chapter 91 End