**Chapter 98**

“Something’s not right.” Baas said, leant up against the wall. His arms were folded and his finger was repeatedly tapping against his band.

“You’re dog-on right something’s not right.” Vatti said angrily. “I’m in a freaking cell! Again!”

She and Henry were in the same room as Baas. However, Baas was closer to the lantern on the wall, the same side as the exit. There was also a table and a chair next to him, but he wasn’t using them. Bars separated him from the other two. They were very old bars, but they were certainly strong enough to keep the two non-Oranges inside. The door to the cell, which was also made of bars, was the only way to escape.

“Relax, it’s only temporary.” Baas did not look up from the ground as he spoke to Vatti.

“Easy for you to say. You’re not the one locked up. How do you guys live like this anyway? Caves are so barbaric.”

“I thought the Center was nothing but caves.”Henry noted. He too did not look at Vatti when he spoke to her. He was lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling and spinning his chain back and forth around his finger. “Didn’t you live there for 16 years?”

“Actually it was 13 years. And yes, but once you get to a base you step up. Golds sleep in those fancy stone buildings and we Blues have wooden structures, much more intricate than this. I’m going to go crazy with how bland it is in here!”

“Calm down, Vatti. We just need you locked in there in case an Orange comes in asking questions. If we really need to get you out, the key is right here on the table. The wrong thing I’m talking about is Atsuma. I think he’s not telling us something.”

“What makes you say that?” Henry asked, still not looking away from the ceiling.

“I’m not sure. It was just the way his body looked. It wasn’t acting like it normally did. Kind of hard to explain.”

“Baas, are you thinking again?” Vatti asked. “Because I’ve warned you about doing that. There are certain side effects to using a muscle that hasn’t been worked out in a long time.”

“I’m a Discrete now, Vatti, I have to think.” There was no laugh nor smart response. That was unlike Baas. Vatti was about to say something, but Henry had another idea.

“Well if you’re so concerned about it, why don’t you just go talk to him. Beats standing here whining about it.”

Baas thought to himself for a second before a smile came across his face. “Great idea.”The Orange headed towards the exit.

“Wait what!?!” Vatti almost screamed.

“Be back in a minute.”

“Baas, don’t you dare leave us here!” Vatti hollered, but it was too late. The Orange had departed out the exit and raced down the corridor. It lead to a larger room about the size of a training room, but it was empty. The Oranges really did abandon their prison methods. Baas ignored the emptiness and headed out towards the open air. The hustle and bustle of Orange. So many people going in random directions. Baas was sure the months away from the base had dimmed his memory of the place, and even if it hadn’t, he’d only spent a couple of weeks here. His knowledge on the location of things wasn’t too thorough. Where would Atsuma be? He said he’d go get weapons, but where? Well, standing around wouldn’t get him anywhere. Baas’ legs moved. He didn’t know where they were taking him, but they were moving. His eyes searched around for Atsuma. Lots of faces, some caramel colored, some with a curved sword, but they weren’t Atsuma’s. Baas’ legs lead him up one of the trails along the mountains. He passed several more people who weren’t Atsuma. Finally, his legs stopped. This wasn’t getting him too far. Even if he ran through the whole base, if Atsuma was in one of the buildings, he’d pass him up easily.

“Baas.” A voice called out. Baas turned to see a young man. His outfit was similar to something Sheina would wear, but his shirt was green. He was walking up to Baas with a weapon.

“I was hoping I’d find you before I had to go back.”

Baas looked at the stranger. No, he wasn’t a stranger. Baas had seen him before. He began to search his memory for where, but before he could finish the boy continued to speak.

“From the look on your face, I can tell you’ve forgotten about me. It’s me, Jaloer. From the second base?”

Again, Baas began to search his memory. Again, his thoughts were interrupted.

“I was the one who gave Sheina the twin swords.”

“Ooh.” Baas let out with a smile.

“After our conversation, I began thinking about what you said. I talked to Altea. You know who she is right? We began working on my greatest project ever. This!”

Jaloer held up the weapon he was talking about. It was a short sword. Atleast, that’s what normal eyes would see. However, Baas’ eyes began to analyze the details of the sword. The part with edges were slim, but made of a different darker metal. The inner parts were lighter. The handle was made from the same material as the edges.

“Wow.” Baas said reaching for the sword. “This... this is amazing.”

“Yeah.” Jaloer spoke. “It is. If there is such thing as a perfect short sword, I’m sure this is it.”

“I can’t believe you made something this awesome in such a short time.”

“Well, after the practice with those twin swords, I already knew how to get through most of the hard parts. The only thing is though, I don’t have a shield good enough to go with it yet.”

That reminded Baas of something.

“Check this out.” He took the shield strap from around his shoulders and handed it to Jaloer. The young man’s eyes began widening with excitement. This shield... it was perfect. The edges sharp, the center smooth. The weight was in all the perfect places.

“Baas, where did you get this?” His voice was soft as though he didn’t want to damage the shield with it.

“I know, right?” Baas took the shield back. “I got it from a Gold. I couldn’t believe how awesome it was.”

“Hard to believe something like that came from a Gold territory. If you’re looking for beautiful weapons, you check the Blues. If you’re looking for the most effective, you check the Oranges. If I were looking for a good weapon, I wouldn’t check Gold.”

“Yeah, I...” Baas stopped talking. That was it! It was just like Vatti had said. He didn’t have to know where Atsuma was, he just had to know where he’d eventually be.

Suddenly, the Orange Leader took off running.

“Gotta go, thanks Jaloer!”

“What...?” Jaloer stuttered. “Baas!” He called out. Then his voice got low and sad. “You still have my sword.”

Baas continued to dash through the Orange territory. He didn’t have to check the entire base. No matter what Atsuma was doing, Baas knew that he would eventually head toward the cliffs. The entrance Base came through was to the South, but if he had to guess, he was sure there was another to the North. Baas remembered the map he had seen in Black Base. The word “Home” was pointed Northwest of Orange’s first base. No matter what Atsuma was doing, he’d take the Northern exit out.

The Leader kept running, but he wasn’t sure how far he had to travel to actually get to the exit, all he knew was to keep going until there weren’t mountains anymore. He ran all along the base toward what he thought was North. There! In the distance! Baas saw Atsuma, Koroko and Pandora. They had their weapons. Only their weapons. And they were leaving... without him. Baas knew it! They were trying to leave him. But he wasn’t too late. He continued along the path on the mountain side until it lead to ground level. He just needed to keep his legs going and he would...

“Whoa!” A hand suddenly appeared in front of Baas. Startled, Baas’ feet stumbled until they stopped in their tracks.

It was the guy whom had asked to see Atsuma. Eltin is what Atsuma called him.

“What’s the hurry?”

“Excuse me Eltin.” Baas said really quickly. “Atsuma’s about to leave without me.”

Baas attempted to push Eltin’s hand aside, but it came back.

“I realize that, but that’s no reason for you to be dashing after him.”

“You don’t understand, we’re supposed to go on a mission together, and they’re leaving me.”

“Whoa whoa, calm down, I can see that. Atsuma and his team are fit for mission duty. You, on the other hand, are not. Last I checked, Cham grounded you and Sheina here in the base.”

“Yeah, but this is different...”

“You bet it is.” Eltin said. His face got serious. Baas noticed the change. Analysis, it’s what they taught him best to do in the Center. Eltin knew something. Something he wasn’t telling Baas. This wasn’t just him trying to keep Baas in the base. There was something else.

Baas’ eyebrows came down.

“Atsuma told you to keep me here, didn’t he?”

“Now look, this can be easy or hard. I don’t wanna hurt you kid, but I’m not about to let you chase after Ats.”

The heat of anger began to build up in Baas’ head.

“Let me go.”

“You wanna get to Atsuma, you’ll have to get passed me.”

Baas grasped the shield and sword that he hadn’t let go of since he had began running and put himself in a fighting stance.

“Really kid?” Eltin pulled out his long sword from his side. “Atsuma tells me you’re pretty talented, but do you honestly think you can take on someone with years more experience than you?”

Analysis. Baas noted every detail on Eltin’s body that could be useful in using against him. His height, his estimated weight, everything. He seemed healthy. Not many weak spots to be taken advantage of. Then, his eyes went towards the man’s calves. With that, Baas let out a smirk. He put both his shield and sword away.

“Smart move kid.” Eltin said. He put his sword back too. However, Baas wasn’t done. The young Orange folded his arms, and sat down onto the floor. He closed his eyes and lost his smirk.

“Really?” Eltin said. “You’re going to be that childish?” Baas didn’t answer.

“Alright.” Eltin said. He walked over and stood a couple of meters in front of Baas. “If you think you can outlast me you’re wrong. I’m a Commander now so I can’t afford to stay here forever and wait for you to move. But I don’t have to. From this point on, it’s only a ten minute walk to the edge of the base. All I have to do is wait and you won’t be able to follow Atsuma.”

A couple of minutes passed. Nothing happened. Five minutes. Nothing happened. Seven minutes. Nothing happened. Finally, at about nine minutes, Baas opened his eyes. Eltin took notice. Baas put his hands on the ground and slowly got to his feet.

“Giving up?” Eltin grinned. When he did, Baas stopped moving. Baas had made it half way to standing up straight. His hands were still on the ground, his behind in the air with his feet behind him on his toes.

“It’s okay.” Eltin said. “There’s really nothing you could do to get past me...”

Suddenly, without warning, Baas pushed his hands off the ground and came forward. His body moved. Using all of Baas’ will, it propelled itself forward. Eltin, didn’t react, or rather, he couldn’t react. The body came so fast. Baas ran passed Eltin and towards the exit of Orange’s first base. Eltin began to pursue Baas, but he soon discovered it was no use. The 16 year old was not only moving fast, but almost an unrecognizable speed. Soon, all Eltin could see was a trail of dust as Baas disappeared into the narrow passage way. Baas smiled as he pushed his legs to go faster. He didn’t need some complicated plan to get what he wanted. The fact was, he was faster than Eltin. Much faster.

Ending the chapter here

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“Goodbye mountain cliffs. Goodbye rocks. Goodbye dirt trail.”

“And the mouth of Koroko just keeps on going.” Pandora said while rolling her eyes.

“Well I couldn’t say goodbye to all my friends, I need something to say goodbye to don’t I?”

Atsuma simply shook his head. The antics of Koroko didn’t annoy him as much as they did Pandora, but he nevertheless knew they were silly. The Orange looked up as more light began to shine on his face. The group had reached the edge of Orange base. In front of them was grassland with more dirt than grass. Atsuma let out a sigh. He raised his foot to take his last step... his last step as...

\*WHOOSH!\*

Wind blew past Atsuma. Well, that was what he felt. Actually, a figure ran past him and it did it fast. Baas immediately stopped as he noticed he passed the person he was trying to reach.

“Atsuma!” he said with a smile. And immediately, his head dropped and his hands went to his knees.

“Baas!?!” Atsuma asked.

Baas wanted to make a joke, but his lungs wouldn’t let him. He had ran through that passage in less than a minute. It was the fastest he had ever ran and his body was letting him know that.

“Figures.” Koroko said. “Eltin had one job!”

“Don’t...” Baas said between breaths. “Don’t blame Eltin... He... he did his best...”

“How did you get past him?” Atsuma asked. “You didn’t kill him did you?”

“Geeze... I may be a Discrete... but I’m not that heartless.” Baas said. “I just... outran him... is all...”

“Well good,” Atsuma said sitting down. “Then we’ll just wait right here until he catches up.”

“Atsuma!” Baas whined before taking another gasp of precious air.

“Don’t care, I’m not taking you with me.”

“But...”

“No. I’m not getting a kid killed. I don’t care if you were their original target, the Discretes won’t kill you as long as you as long as you don’t go to them.”

Baas stood up. His lungs were working better now. He was contemplating his next move. Atsuma was a stubborn type. Baas could argue with him all he wanted, but they would just wind up stalling until Eltin got there. Even with his speed, if Eltin brought more people, Baas could be forced back into the base. Any Orange had to listen to the Commander of Orange. Any... Orange...

“Alright then. If that’s how you want to play it.” Baas let out a smirk toward Atsuma. “From this day forward, I renounce myself from the Orange country.”

Baas looked down at his band. It faded from orange to black.

“What!” Atsuma yelled. He got up from his spot and walked over to Baas. “What are you doing?” He then began to speak to Baas’ band as though it were alive. “No, he takes it back! Turn Orange! TURN ORANGE!”

“Hey Atsuma, look, yours turned black too! Now we match!”

It wasn’t Baas’ best joke, but then again they never were. And Atsuma certainly wasn’t laughing at this one.

“Kid, what have you done?!? If the Discretes catch you like this, they’ll kill you for sure!”

“I know.” Baas said. His tone got serious. “I’m not the bravest idiot in the world, but this is all happening because of me. I can’t be left out of it, that wouldn’t be right. If anything, I should be going alone and you should be staying. I know I can’t stop you from following me, so I’ll just have to take you with me. If you’re willing to go through this much trouble to go and yet keep me here, then I’m willing to go even further to prevent you from doing so. Once Eltin comes through there, he’ll have no choice but to kill me. Unless...” Baas let out a huge smile. “we get going right now so that he can’t follow us.”

Atsuma lowered his head. It was pointless. Baas was no longer listening to him. He was no longer listening to reason.

“If the Disceretes don’t kill me, you’re idiocy certainly will.” Atsuma then lifted his head up high. If he had any upset feelings, they weren’t showing.

“I guess we got one more with us.”

Koroko and Pandora let out smiles. They stepped out of the orange base and let their bands turn black. All four started traveling diagonally away from the setting sun. That was where Vanessa would be.

“And thus, the Awesome Team Baas Black Brigade set out!”

“We are not calling ourselves that!” Koroko demanded. “The Incredible Group Koroko Black Collection has a ring to it though.”

“You guys might want to keep it down.” Pandora insisted. “The back entrance to Orange has Fars patrolling it all the time. If they see black bands, this close, they won’t hesitate to fire.”

“Really?” Baas asked. He turned up and looked at the rocky terrain. “I don’t see any.”

Pandora turned around. “That’s strange.”

“They’re probably rearranging things around because of the missing Commander thing.” Koroko said.

“No, that wouldn’t be a good reason to take down scouts.” Atsuma said.

“Somethings’s up.” Baas said.

“Huh?” Atsuma asked.

“I don’t know, but I feel something’s up!” Without warning, Baas hurried up the side of the mountain.

“Baas!” Atsuma called. But before he could say anything, the 16 year old was already scaling the mountain. “Ah geeze.”

Quickly, Baas scaled the side of the mountain. There was no trail this time, so doing so wasn’t as easy as he’d hoped. Not to mention, it didn’t feel pleasant.

“Should’ve grabbed some shoes before I turned black band.”

Finally, Baas made it to a part of the mountain where there was a visible trail. This must’ve been the route Fars used to patrol the outer perimeter. He quietly walked along the wall of the trail. Up ahead he could hear voices. If there were Fars, taking a quick peak couldn’t hurt.

Baas let his eyes go around the corner, what he saw made them grow wide.

Scattered across the floor, were Orange corpses. Fars... all of them dead. Baas kept himself from screaming. Across the way, he could hear the voices. He quickly hid back behind the wall he was peaking from so that he couldn’t be seen.

“Really, you’ve been so sloppy lately.” A female voice came out. It sounded extremely familiar. Soft, with a hint of teasing in it. “The whole point of me staying behind was supposed to be a ‘just-in-case’ factor. I shouldn’t have had to kill all of your share.”

“I never asked you to interfere.” A deep male voice came. “You decided to act on your own and shoot.”

It took Baas a second to recognize the female’s voice, but the male’s voice was instantly recognized. It sent an even bigger chill down his spine than ever before.

“What did you expect me to do? I only interfered because you seem to refused to exact the killing blow. I mean, they’re Fars, Zordo. When you see one, you swing your sword. Not much they can do about that.”

“Not to sound petty, Magatha, but didn’t you lose to a Far recently?”

“That’s sounds very petty.”

“Indeed it does. Yet, I don’t regret saying it.”

“You haven’t been the same since the fight with Atsuma’s team.”

“None of us have. Ever since then, Dolg has been more reckless than ever. This plan of his is complete suicide. Sneaking into Orange’s base simply to take out one team? It doesn’t take a Leader to understand how horrible the odds are.”

“Well, thus far it’s going exactly how he planned. The base isn’t even alerted to our presence yet. And here we have a group of dead Far scouts. That is all of them, isn’t it?”

“As far as I can tell. Dolg insisted on taking the other side for himself.”

“The back-up should be here in a few moments. I doubt many of them will survive, but the purpose of them is to be a distraction.”

“Again, simply for the sake of pride. It almost disgusts me.”

“Oh, that’s a word you don’t use often. And as far as I know, the thing you hate most is...”

“Stupidity. Though others may call it ignorance combined with arrogance.”

Baas had heard enough. This was news! Even if he was no longer one of them, he couldn’t just sit back and let Oranges be killed by Golds. He also knew he couldn’t take on these guys, especially Zordo. But he could go back down and tell someone. The teenager began to back away from his hiding spot, keeping his eyes forward in case the other two decided to head his way. Once he was safe from hearing distance, he would go down and tell...

\*thud\*

Baas body hit something as he was backing up. Something that wasn’t there when he first arrived.

“Well what do we have here?” A voice came outloud. Baas already knew who it was, but before he could react, the man grabbed him by his collar and the back of his shirt and forced him forward. Once in viewing distance of Magatha and Zordo, Baas was thrown onto the ground.

“Way to go you two.” Dolg’s voice rang out. “While you were so busy chatting, this guy was about to warn the base.”

“Baas. Of course.” Zordo stated.

“This is irony if I ever saw it.” Magatha said with her favorite sinister grin.

Baas’ eyes began noticing the details... forget that, his lungs started working faster. He quickly tried to turn around and run, but Dolg thrust him back down. Baas looked up at Dolg. The site of him was horrific. Blood was splattered all over his once neat outfit. But his eyes. There was a look in them. Baas had seen a similar look back when he was in the grey territory. There was a mixture of anger and desperation. Only this time, the anger was overabundant. The Dolg he was looking at seemed mad.

**Chapter 98 End**

**Stubbornness**