Chapter 15

Zordo had ordered everyone to leave their creations, grab the excess pieces they hadn’t used and clear the room. Class had technically been dismissed, but there was no way anyone was going to miss a challenge. While the rest were gathering their leftover supplies, everyone else grouped up at the window in the hall.

“What is a challenge, anyway?”Savvi asked Chrysanthamum. The two were standing against the wall in the back of the crowd.

“You know the story of how Vatti tricked Zordo into letting her fight on the front lines, correct?”

“Yeah, I was there when it happened; all the Seconds were. Vatti was trying to prove to D she could fight Discretes but D didn’t. Zordo offered to personally train her if she could pass a test. He said she had to get his gun into her possession. We all laughed considering even we couldn’t get take Zordo’s gun away from him, even if we ganged up on him. It was really shocking when Vatti stopped trying, went into Zordo’s room and came back with one of his guns. It was even more shocking when Zordo said she passed.”

“I asked you a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question and you respond with a novel.”

Savvi chuckled. “Sorry, habit of mine.”

“Well, you could call Vatti’s test the first ever challenge. Zordo issues a demand to the student. If they meet the demand, he will promote them immediately to general.”

“General!?!” Savvi was shocked at first, but the more he thought about it, the more it made sense. “Well, Zordo is the best… everything in Green. If someone can best him, they deserve to be general.”

“It’s not so much as a search for a general, as it is an eye opener.” Another voice said

Chrysanthamum and Savvi turned to see Magatha approaching. She leaned against the wall next to Chrysanthamum and continued speaking.

“Zordo was a stubborn child. According to him, the only way Discrete D could ever teach him anything was to constantly remind him why he was the student. Isn’t that right, Savvi.”

“Actually, I wouldn’t know. I mean, I did see them go at it a couple of times, but my training with D was a lot different than everyone else’s. A lot of times, I had to stay put while the others were fighting or exercising.”

“That’s… not relevant at all. Apparently, whenever Zordo acted out, Discrete D would challenge him to combat… and win every time. Zordo is a true Discrete D junior. Whenever his students strongly believe something he feels could hinder their progress, he shows them why they are wrong. Apparently Vatti was the only person to ever prove to him she already knew what he wanted her to know.”

“Either the thought of being general is really appeasing to them, or Zordo’s been really nice. There’s no way I’d ever believe I had a chance of winning against him.”

“The promise of general is part of it yes, but I don’t think that is the sole reason the students participate. In one instance, he challenged Coor of team 2 who refused, believing he stood no chance of winning. Zordo gave a speech to all the students that made even Coor rethink his decision.”

“I was there when he said it.” Chrysanthamum said. “I’ll never forget it either. The words seemed like they were carefully chosen.

‘If you have doubts, if you have fears, there is nothing wrong with that. You’re facing an opponent with years more experience on every level. I won’t make you accept the challenge, but know this. When you leave this place and fight the Discretes, you will be in a worse position. There will be no way to win, and your enemy will be better than you in everyway. You can back out now, but when that time comes, you will have to face your opponent, because if you turn your back, you will stop breathing. I will not hurt you. I will not kill you. Whatever fears you have of me are not life threatening. As hard as saying yes to me is, saying yes to fighting a Discrete is even harder. If you can’t say yes here, you won’t out there.”

“So he guilt tripped them.” Savvi summed up.

“Yes and no.” Magatha answered. “His intentions were to reveal a truth about psychology; I suspect many of them took it as guilt, however. It worked regardless. Coor changed his mind and no student has ever backed down from Zordo’s challenges.”

Inside the training room, the last of the excess supplies had been removed by the last of the excess student. The weapons lay in a line, left there by their creators. The only ones missing were the antigravitational disk and the Distractor which he had taken, and the automatic that team 6 had created which Savvi had confiscated earlier. Zordo took note of all of this.

“I am ready, general. What task shall I perform.”

Zordo walked up Gia and handed her the anti-gravitational disk.

“Of the weapons created by you and your fellow cadets, do you believe yours to be the most technologically advanced?”

Gia was sure there was some trick to the question, but she refused to back down from her belief.

“Yes.”

“As I figured. This shall be your weapon then. I’ve modified it so that the shields released are comprised of level four energy.”

Zordo walked back to the other side of the room.

“Your task is a duel against me. You will fight me as though you are fighting a Discrete.”

“To the death.” Gia said. “That’s why you modified my invention. You wanted to make sure you don’t actually die from getting hit by it.”

“I modified your invention because I don’t want you to hold back. I don’t actually believe you are going to hit me.”

Gia shook herself. The general, like her, could be very blunt at times. She would be lying to say she believed she stood a chance as well.

Zordo continued speaking.

“Your requirements are that you must use your invention, the weapon you claim is the most advanced. I shall be using this.”

Zordo picked up the end to the Deceptor he had reassembled. Gia could already see where this lesson was going.

“If you are able to defeat me, you win the challenge.”

Gia understood. Zordo wanted her to fight her best. She felt a strange sense of fear and confidence. She didn’t know what the General had planned, but she hadn’t fully shown off the true strength of her weapon during the demonstration. With the protector disabled, she could hurl disks into the air. Her weapon was both offensive and defensive.

“We begin in 3… 2… 1… begin!”

As fast as she could muster, Gia shot her arm forward. The disk shaped sync energy came hurling towards Zordo. He ducked out of the way as the energy whizzed by his head. Gia knew better than to let up against Zordo. She continuously slung her arm out, sending disk after disk. With each release, she spun her body to keep momentum. Everyone could see that her attacks were not random.

Outside, the rest of the Greens watched with anxiety building up.

“Excitement!” Celphae screamed. “Who knew Gia could be so cool.”

“Oh come, Phae. You’re just as cool as she is.” Kyousk said.

“Three times as cool, even.” Capri agreed.

“Did you guys know the shield could be shot out like that?” Ryan asked the Techs who weren’t fighting.

“No.” Cynthia answered. “Well, it’s not that we didn’t know. We just weren’t focused on every possible detail. The creation of the shield itself opened up so many possibilities.”

“Gia knew.” Samantha said in a low voice. “Gia always plans ahead.”

“I doubt she thought farther than the general did.” Coor said with his arms folded.

Back inside the training room, Gia released more and more disks toward Zordo who seemed only interested in dodging. It was true, Gia hadn’t hit a single shot, but she had planned that. Zordo was always training, always a mystery, especially with the cadets. The disks she tossed had not been done so in vain. The Green now felt she had a good understanding of his limits. How far and fast he was willing to move. She was setting him up for the moment where he couldn’t make a move without making a mistake. The Distractor had certainly limited his movement and Gia wanted to take advantage of that. He kept his left hand close to the floor, simply to make sure the Distractor stayed connected. There! An opportunity! Gia sent a disk flying straight towards Zordo. It wasn’t a guaranteed hit, but it would throw him off his routine dodging. Gia would see how the general reacted respond.

Zordo couldn’t help but feel a sense of pride. Gia had faired extremely well. She continued to fight all the while analyzing her opponent and was able to exploit a weakness. Against another foe, she stood a good chance of winning. But she wasn’t up against another foe. She was up against him. And for as good as her strategy was, he knew it was coming. With a flick of his wrist, Zordo whipped the Distractor against the floor. The individual pieces bounced up. In that moment, Zordo charged forward towards Gia. Gia panicked. She had expected the general to change his tactics, but not so violently. She hurried and tried to shoot off more disks, but her effort was in vain. The scattered pieces in the air made it impossible to aim properly.

Zordo was now within grabbing distance of his prey. He reached for the wrist that controlled the anti-gravitational disk. Gia struggled, but Zordo was stronger and faster. Out of instinct she, the Green tried to close her hand to form a disk, but the increased pressure on her wrist told her that was a painful idea. Taking the arm with him, Zordo made his way behind Gia. He held her arm there for a couple of seconds and then… he let go.

Gia caught her balance as she fell forward away from her teacher. She turned to face him, but he was no longer in a fighting position. He stood upright, as poised as he usually did.

“The challenge is over.” Zordo said “I’ve won.”

Outside, the hall had gone quiet. As it slowly became known exactly what had happened, noise began to stir.

“Wait.” Geol said. “How can it be over? It was supposed to be a mock-death match. General Zordo never made the finishing blow.”

“Did you see how Zordo pressed her hand against her back?” Magatha explained. “All he had to do was push the button to have a shield form inside her torso. A level four wouldn’t have killed Gia, but I imagine Zordo would like to spare her the slight pain she would’ve received.”

“Gia.” Zordo spoke. “I’ve beaten you. Despite the fact that you had “superior” technology, I was able to land a final blow.”

“But sir, you have more training than I did. You’re stronger… you’re faster…”

“So is a Discrete.”

Gia found herself speechless after that.

“Certainly, we use technology to make our jobs easier, but the job itself is what’s important. You should never feel that technology is what gives you a chance against Discretes, or any endeavor you may face. Technology is nothing special, Gia. You are. And in turn, you make technology better.”

Gia nodded. She understood perfectly.

Chapter 15 end