Chapter 2 Redone

“You ever know you need to start something, but not know exactly how to start it? That’s where I am with this right now.” As he spoke, Savvi flung his finger up continuously on his Display. He was looking over the information that appeared on the screen of the small rectangle. After a couple more scans, he almost threw the Display on the table.

“Gah, whatever. I’ll just wait until Zordo gets here.”

That made Decson twitch.

“Well that’s just rude. Savvi, you have three people who also know about technology and you just want to wait for Zordo?”

Savvi placed rested his chin on his hands.

“Meh, you guys just aren’t as good as Zordo.”

“That doesn’t mean you can just write us off, we’re Seconds too. Not to mention, you have a Discrete sitting right here, and you want to wait for Zordo?”

Savvi glanced across Decson to the person sitting next to her. Discrete D sat, as he always did at the beginning of every meeting, with his arms crossed and his head down. His mask covered his entire face, making it impossible to tell if his eyes were open. Savvi deduced there could be only one reason he did that… D was asleep. The Green found himself laughing at that thought, though he was sure it wasn’t true.

“Don’t laugh at me, you little pipsqueak. You honestly think we’re that inferior to you and Zordo when it comes to technology?”

“I don’t see why you’re getting so upset.” A third voice chimed in. It was Eve, sitting across the table from Decson. There was an empty chair on both sides of her, the places where Vatti and Zordo would sit. She stretched her hands up behind her head, grinning as she spoke. “Savvi’s right, Zordo’s better than us in every way.”

“But that doesn’t mean we’re worthless.” Decson insisted.

“No, just not as good. Honestly, if I could get Zordo’s advice on anything I’d talk to him before I talked to you, Decson. Well, except maybe love.”

Decson got angry, but she decided to stop reacting. Savvi may have meant what he was saying but Eve was just trying to get under her skin.

“Well, if you only want to ask Zordo, Savvi, then by all means.”

But Savvi was no longer listening. He had picked up his Display and was now typing on the screen vigorously. Decson knew what that meant. He was having one of his many epiphanies. Literally anything could set one off when it came to him, even nothing in itself.

Decson let out a sigh. “Sometimes I feel like I’m the only normal one around here.”

“That depends on your definition of the word.” Discrete D said without looking up. “Comparitively speaking, you’re more likely to react in a statistical manner compared to your brothers and sisters, but I don’t think any of you could be classified as “normal” to most people. Not since I got a hold of you.”

At that moment, Zordo and Vatti stepped into the room. Decson immediately rose and dashed straight for Vatti, jumping over the table to do so. Vatti almost screamed. She had trained herself to prepare for surprise attacks from Discretes, but she was never ready for one of Decson’s inspections.

“I rest my case.” D said.

“Your case for what?” Zordo asked. He took his usual seat to D’s left.

“Just explaining to Decson how ‘normal’ is a relative term.”

“Aren’t all words that are based on perspective?”

“I’d like to say yes, but absolutes make me uncomfortable.”

“I thought it was the opposite. Seems to me you’d be happy dealing with one-hundred percent statistics.”

“Only if they’re one-hundred percent true.”

As Discrete D and Zordo continued their conversation, Vatti found herself in more pain than when she had entered the room. Decson was the best medical examiner in all of Green, well second best if you counted Zordo. Normally, she was gentle with her patients, but Vatti had built up a reputation of not checking in when she was supposed to which made Decson a bit more hostile.

“Decson, seriously I’m fine.”

“Vatti, your definition of fine is breathing, if even that. A lot can happen to your body that you don’t know about, especially in a fight. After you encounter a Discrete you need to see a medical examiner within… is this glass in your hair?”

“If I say ‘no,’ can I sit down?”

Decson let out a sigh and stepped away from Vatti. “You’re really banged up, but nothing too serious as long as you take care of yourself. Please, after this meeting head straight for some place where you can get some rest.”

Vatti didn’t respond to that. She didn’t want to lie and say she would, but she also didn’t need another lecture about taking care of herself. She huffed over and took her seat between Eve and Savvi.

Decson retook her postion between Discrete D and Savvi.

“Sorry to treat you like a baby, Vatti, but you worry us when you don’t take care of yourself.”

“You see what you did, Zordo? You got Decson all worried.”

“All I see is the assurance that a fellow general is safe. You’re welcome, by the way.”

The others chuckled at that, even Vatti found it somewhat amusing. The only ones not laughing were the Discrete and Zordo, despite being the one who made the joke. They both sat waiting for the others to settle so the meeting could start. Vatti couldn’t believe how similar those two appeared sitting next to each other. From their build, right down to their tone of voice. If Zordo wore a black mask, it would be near impossible. She wondered if the Discrete had short, black hair and light skin as well. If so, it’d just be another thing they shared in common. It wasn’t hard to spot their similarity either. The Discrete and his clone were always right next to each other whenever they were in the same room. But while they may have looked the same, there were differences to them. Zordo, though he never seemed to laugh, never missed a moment to tell a joke. Vatti really liked that about him, it reminded her of what Baas might’ve been like had he been a bit more serious. The difference that mattered the most, though, was the most glaring. D was a Discrete, Zordo was not.

As the room settled down, Discrete D leaned forward towards the center of the table. The room the Greens sat in was not well lit. It consisted of one light which only managed to place the tale in view. It was dangerous to fully light any room in certain buildings.

“Now that all you’re all here, we can begin.” Discrete D said.

Vatti let her body sink in her chair. This was, without a doubt, the worst part of being a general in Green. The meetings. Every six months, the five generals of Green came together with Discrete D to discuss Green’s situation. Each general took time to thoroughly explain everything that was going right and wrong with their designated sector. Rather than going around the table, like normal people would, Vatti learned the Seconds had a specific way of doing things. Everytime they did anything one by one, they did it from the Discrete’s favorite student to his least favorite. When Decson explained it to her, she said it was more of a rank order, but Vatti knew the truth. And with the Discrete favorites on the line, there was obviously one person who would go first.

“Normally, we’d start with Zordo and his department.” D said. “However, today Zordo will be going last. Decson, you may proceed.”

“Oh.” Decson said. She took out her Display and began scrolling through it semi-frantically. It wasn’t that her report wasn’t ready, but she was surprised from not being second.

“A moment of weakness.” Vatti said. Decson semi-chuckled as a response. It was an inside joke, something Vatti used to tell Decson years ago.

“Everyone has moments of weakness, the trick is never to let anyone else see them.”

Of course, that was back when Vatti was a captain and Decson was her first mate. Vatti hadn’t known Decson was one of D’s secretly trained agents, the Seconds. Back then, she didn’t even know what the Seconds were. She did know, however, that there was something special about Decson. Though hadn’t even showed the surface half of what she was capable, Vatti noticed back then that Decson had a focus no one else could match.

“Here we go.” Decson said. She typed on her Display’s screen a couple of times. Vatti notice the Display on her hip lit up. She had just received the document Decson sent. Vatti had no interest in participating in the meeting, but she knew she’d hear it from Zordo later if she didn’t atleast pretend like she cared. So, like everyone else, the Green typed in her password on her Display and opened the files she received.

The files contained reports dealing with injury counts, death counts, supplies needed Decson was the general of the Department of Medicine. Of all the Greens, she was the best at medicine… well, except for Zordo. Of all the Seconds, she was also the most likeable. And depending on who you asked, she was the most beautiful. When they were on the surface, Vatti would notice how the sun shined off her black long hair more than anyone else’s, and how her skin was always kept. No one took better care of themselves and others like Decson did.

“And as you can see, we’re at an all time low with injuries.” Decson said. She had been speaking while Vatti was daydreaming. “Thanks to the lack of attacks from Discretes, our medical look to hold out for years. However, I don’t want to lead anyone into a false sense of security. We’re ahead now because the Discretes stopped advancing. If whatever’s causing their silence suddenly ceases, we’ll easily be behind once again. This is why I propose the Department of Scavenging send their parties to medical facilities to…”

“This again?” Eve sighed. When Decson said the Department of Scavenging, she was of course referring to Eve who was the general of that area. For the past three meetings, Decson had been proposing Eve send some of her people to specifically scavenge medical facilities. For the past three meetings, Eve has declined her.

“Need I really explain for the hundred and seventh time why I won’t do that?” Eve rested her chin on her hand, as though she were mocking Decson.

“It wouldn’t take a lot of people or a lot of time Eve.”

“Actually, with a team of fifty of my fastest men working for 20 hours aday for as long as it would take to acquire the materials you need until you reached an acceptable level would take six months at minimum.” Eve pulled out her display and pressed the screen a couple of times. Immediately after, Decson’s Display lit up.

“There’s the math. I kind of figured you’d ask that ludicrous request again so maybe this time you’ll believe my work instead of my mouth.”

That was Eve for you, always planning ahead. Vatti liked Decson most out of all the Discretes, but Eve’s personality was certainly a refreshing one. She took no prisoners when it came to speaking her mind, and what’s worse was that she was usually right. Every one of the Seconds was a genius in their own right, noticing details most wouldn’t. It wasn’t because they were born that way, but because the Discrete had trained them to be no less. While Decson could treat almost any injury, Eve was a master at calculating scheduling. Given data patterns, she could predict things before they happened: from how a plan would go to what a person would say. She claimed that half her technique came from math and the other from pure instinct. Vatti didn’t know exactly how, but that didn’t matter. In a fight, there was no one better in Green when it came to making the right move… except for Zordo.

As though playing opposite to Decson, Eve cared little for her own looks. Her wavy blonde hair was usually unkept and sticking out all over the place, never shining like Decson’s did. It grew just passed her shoulders, only stopping because eventually someone would force Eve to cut her hair every once in a while. Even still, Vatti could hear the whispers of the soldiers talking in admiration. Her hair was nothing like Decson’s, but her body was. The Discrete had trained all the seconds to be in top physical condition.

“Does that satisfy you, Decson?” Eve said smirking.

Decson looked over the information she had just received. Her eyes scanning back and forth, until the finally closed.

“Yes, I agree with your conclusion.”

“Good, now can we move on to my report?”

“Hold on, Eve. Decson, what is our food situation?”

“What? Oh right. We’re in the same situation with food as we are with supplies. Gricul and Carni are producing food uninterrupted.”

“Understood. Okay, Eve you may proceed.”

Decson took her seat while Eve stood up. Just like Decson, she pressed her Display screen a few times and just like Decson each other Display lit up from receiving the documents.

Vatti opened the documents. A map and some informational files appeared, as they always did for Eve. The Department of Scavenging was responsible for gathering materials, as its name implied. The Greens figured they’d need technology to fight the Discretes, but they didn’t have enough people to mass produce weapons. Thankfully, when the Discretes abandoned the Source, they left all their technology behind. That’s where Eve came in. She and her troops gathered as much materials as they could find.

“This is the updated map of buildings we’ve successfully scavenged. As you can see, not much change. As per usual, even at our fastest pace, these Discrete buildings prove extremely immense to scavenge. Considering my troops must be cautious as not to attract any Discrete attention, we won’t be able to even think about finishing for quite some time. The good news can be found in the informational documents. We’ve found weaponry and technology to last us for longer than we’d ever hope. Even if the Discretes begin attacking again, we won’t run short for a while. Our medical supplies also seemed to be at a low. Despite their need to kill in the passed, the Discretes ironically did not have many clinics.”

“Probably thought they were invincible.” Vatti said, rolling her eyes.

And with that, Eve was done. Vatti was thankthat there was atleast one Second who could keep things short. Unlike the next Person. Every stared at Savvi, waiting for him to begin his presentation. Savvi, himself, was typing on his Display vigorously. Everyone knew what that meant. His mind was gone. He was caught up in whatever technology he was trying to invent, or re-invent, or make better. Decson and Eve grinned, snickering quietly. Zordo’s expression changed as well. Though he still wasn’t smiling, anyone who knew him could tell he was enjoying the moment of embarrassment. Even D wasn’t addressing the issue. He simply sat there, waiting. The other Seconds and the Discrete were used to Savvi’s behavior. It was almost a game to them: waiting to see how long until he realized the attention was completely on him. These people had spent years training with each other and practically treated each other like family, so to them it was funny. To Vatti it was a waste of time.

“Savvi.” She practically screamed to him. Savvi looked up from his Display at Vatti. “I would like to finish this meeting sometime today, can you please get on with our report.”

“Oh.” Savvi said. He began pressing a bunch of buttons on his Display. Whatever he had been working on, it hadn’t been for the report. After a couple of minutes of button pressing, everyone else’s Displays finally lit up. Vatti opened the files sent to her… there were a lot. Diagrams of inventions, Sync-energy theories, his personal thoughts…

“As you can see, lots of exciting activities are about to make an appearance in our bold Discrete venture….”

Vatti put her face in her hand. Savvi was, without a doubt, the most annoying of the Seconds. He was the youngest of the four, and clearly showed it. Though he was almost a decade older than her, Savvi had this face that just reminded Vatti of a child.

“…and with it, we’ll have enough technology at our disposal…”

He also seemed to have the energy of a child. Savvi always got excited when it came to technology. So excited, that he lost all concentration with everyone else. Decson told Vatti that when the Discrete had trained them, he made Savvi specifically focus on making himself smarter. With that, the youngest of the seconds lead the Department of Weaponry and Technology. They were responsible for reinventing all the old technology the Discretes of old used to have. No one in Green was as good at programming or tinkering than Savvi… other than Zordo.

“…and we’ll most likely be seeing results with that in the next couple of months. For the next one...”

“I have come to a decision.” Eve said. “Savvi, you’re never aloud to speak again.”

Vatti knew what Eve was trying to say, but it wasn’t clear enough for her liking. She stood up, clearly demonstrating her frustration. “It’s bad enough that we have to sit through these meeting, but do you really have to make them last three times as long?”

Before Savvi could respod, Zordo added to the conversation.

“You’re doing it again.”

Nothing else needed to be said. Savvi’s job required him to focus on the smallest of details and understand every complexity. Sadly, not everyone’s mind worked the way his did… and his teammates loved letting him know.

“Right.” Savvi said nervously. He had done his best to condense his thoughts, and now had to struggle to condense them even more. “Well, we have a lot of promising new inventions we’re working on, and thanks to Eve’s department we have plenty of materials to work with. Thanks to the Silence, we won’t run out any time soon.”

Vatti did her best to hold back a groan. There it was again, the Silence, and everyone always referred to it as if it were good. A year and a half ago, a good couple of months after she first left the surface and joined the Greens, the Discretes brought continuous assaults on the Greens. As Discrete D had predicted, it was only a matter of time before the enemy re-gathered the technology they needed to stage a real war. The battles were intense and last for 6 months. Then, for unknown reasons, the Discretes just stopped attacking. They still occupy the western part of the Source, and from time to time send out scouts like the Discrete who attacked Vatti, but they seemed to have put their full on war on hault. Discrete D convinced everyone it was for the better, that while the Discretes were doing who knows what, Green could continue to gather resources and train. The sudden lack of attacks became known as The Silence, and no one knows when it will end.

“Well, if that’s all mister science has to say, I guess it’s my turn.”

Vatti was usually last to present. She was the general of the Department of Defense. Everyone under her had one job, killing Discretes. Vatti had no interest in freeing humanity, but she knew it’d be incredibly difficult by herself. If she had to play general and give a couple of reports, it was worth it to make sure every Discrete stopped breathing.

Vatti realized long ago the highly unlikely position she was in. She was the only general who wasn’t a Second, the only general who had not been Personally trained by Discrete D. She also realized that being so young as well as being considered an outsider, people would doubt her ability to be a lead and fight. She didn’t care.

“I’ve sent you all the total death counts reported since the last meeting. There haven’t been any. We have, however, killed two Discretes since then bringing the total down to seventy, or seventy-two if you count the rogues. Personally, I think that number is way too high.”

And that was that. Vatti sat down, hoping no one wanted to know anything else because she certainly didn’t feel like sharing anything else. Two Discretes in four months was much too low of a number.

“Now then.” D said, looking at Zordo. “You may proceed.”

In the midst of not wanting to be there, Vatti had forgotten Zordo volunteered to go last. He usually went first at these meetings. In fact, Zordo was usually first to do anything. Of the Seconds, Zordo was clearly in charge and because the Discrete and the Seconds were running Green that made Zordo the second in command of the entire country. It was never outright stated, but if Zordo gave a command, people took it to heart. Vatti didn’t always like what he had to say, but she couldn’t help but respect the Clone. He was a better medic than Decson, a better strategist than Eve, a better technician than Savvi and even a better fighter than her. The other Seconds often joked about how he was perfect, but Zordo did have one flaw. He didn’t always have the best people skills. For some reason, of all the departments Zordo could’ve been over, D decided to make him general of the Department of Education. All the future soldiers were his to command. When the Discrete first made the news, Vatti hadn’t been as shocked as everyone else. But like everyone else, she began to realize the benefits. Zordo had taught her how to fight, and she’d much rather see kids learning from him than from D.

“As you all should be aware of, in eight months the Department of Education will be finished educating the first round of trainees sent to us.”

“Hard to believe you can train a couple of kids to kill Discretes so quickly.” Vatti said, doubting.

“It’s not my first time.”

Vatti could hear snickering coming from the others. Her personal training with Zordo had lasted a year. It had barely been six months before she killed her first Discrete. Doubting Zordo’s ability to teach meant doubting her own skills.

When they ascend from recruits to full soldiers, each team will leave my Department and head to another.” Zordo pressed some buttons on his Display. “I’m sending you all their information.”

“I’m sorry.” Eve interrupted. “Did you say… team? As in, you’re grouping them up before sending them out?”

“Yes. There are twenty-four youths currently in the program, they were divided into groups of three and identified by their designated team number and name.”

Decson looked over some of the files.

“The Sticks? The Jokers? What kind of team names are these?”

“The recruits chose their own names for their groups. I ask that you all look over this information over the next six months. I also ask that each of you pay a visit to the Department of Education so you may assess the students personally.”

“Wait, what? Why?” Savvi asked.

“As I said, once the recruits ascend, they will be sent to another department. I will be making the final decision as to which they will go to, but as their heads, your opinions will be greatly appreciated. Who better to determine whether a person is good or not for the Department, than the generals of those Departments?”

“Wait, I’m confused, Zordo. I thought you were training these kids to be a part of the army. They’re supposed to come out of your program Discrete killers. Wouldn’t that automatically mean Vatti’s Department is where they need to be?”

“By that logic, Savvi, as one of Greens most prominent fighters, you should be in the Department of Defense as well. These recruits have more to offer than just their fighting skills which could be an asset to Green and the war. Placing them all under Vatti’s command would be a grave mistake.”

“Ooh, that sounded like an insult to me.” Eve grinned.

Vatti rolled her eyes. “I have enough people to babysit as it is.”

“But do we really have to go all the way to your place? Ive got tons of projects and it’s going to take me a good while…”

“Then I suggest Savvi, you leave for the Department of Education from here, and travel back to your Department from there.” Discrete D spoke.

That shut Savvi up. The Discrete’s voice was enough to make almost anyone cease complaining, especially the four he’d brought up.

“This group will be the first Green amongst our soldiers who are trained from the ground up.” D continued. “We must proceed carefully and accurately with their upbringing and education. Zordo, is there anything else you wish to add?”

“No, sir.”

“What is the situation with Magatha? As second in command of your department, is she fairing well?”

“Magatha has somehow manage to uphold her duties and increase herself as a warrior. Her mental and physical capabilities are equal to that of a general. She probably knows the history of the Source and the war better than I do.”

“And how do the faculty react to her presence?”

“They respect her authority, sir.”

“Very well, than it is time we press further into our opporation. Zordo, inform Magtha of this when you return. On the day the recruits become soldiers, she will be promoted to General.”

That news surprised everyone. Even Vatti found herself more focused after hearing that. Zordo’s face was the only one to remain calm.

“Yes sir.” He said calmly.

“She will attend the next meeting. Savvi, have a jacket waiting for her.”

“I’ve got tons of spare ones just sitting around doing nothing since you only let generals wear them.”

“I have a question.” Decson said. “Wasn’t the whole point of giving us each a different Department to avoid confusion? How does that work with the Education Department having two?”

“Zordo will no longer be a part of the Department of Education. I’m opening a new Department in which he will lead.” D faced Zordo. “You will be working in the central building where you will report to me.”

“Does this new Department have…”

“Whoa. Wait. Time out.” Vatti said, interrupting Zordo. “You’re separating Magatha and Zordo?”

“Yes.” D answered. “Do you see a problem with my decision.”

“You’re dawg gone right I see a problem!” Vatti said angrily.

Decson, Eve and Savvi all sighed simultaneously.

“Does it have to be EVERY meeting?” Eve groaned. “Maybe, you could skip your issues with D’s orders this one time.”

Vatti ignored her fellow generals and proceeded to yell at the Discrete.

“Why are you separating them?”

If D was angry, he did not show it. He answered Vatti’s question in the same manner he always spoke. “Zordo is the only person qualified for leading the new department. Magatha is his best replacement in teaching the next generation of soldiers. If you know someone who could replace either of them, I will take your recommendations into consideration.”

“It’s not about consideration or what’s best! You’re separating them! You know full well they don’t want to be separated and yet you’re doing it anyway! Try to stop being so heartless for once and think about how other people feel!”

“Vatti.” Zordo voice vame.

Vatti suddenly felt his hand on her shoulder. In her anger, she failed to notice he had worked her way over to her.

“Outside.” The Green said.

A year ago, Vatti would’ve argued with ZordoA year ago, she hadn’t had the respect for her companion that she does now. That was a year ago. She knew if she argued, he’d find some way to manipulate her into going, if not for anything else, to atleast hear what he had to say.

The two made their way into the ally. Zordo closed the door behind him but before he could start speaking, Vatti made her thoughts known.

“No. No. No. You cannot defend him this time. He’s not even taking your feelings into consideration!”

“Vatti, before you say anything else, start from the beginning. Why are you upset?”

“I’m upset because the Discrete thinks he owns us.”

“You know what I mean, Vatti. What made you upset about this situation?”

“He’s not even trying, Clone. You and Magatha love each other and he’s not even pretending to take that into consideration.”

“Vatti, why are you upset?”

“I’m upset because... because it’s not fair to you and Magatha. You have to be separated because of his orders.”

“Then of all people, shouldn’t I be the one whose upset about this? It’s me he’s separating from someone.”

“You’re not going to get upset, Clone. No matter what he does, you NEVER get upset at it.”

“Then why should you? You’re angry because he ordered something that will upset me. But I’m not upset. Therefore, there’s no point in you getting upset.”

“I bet Magatha won’t react so calmly once she hears the news.”

“Magatha will handle her own emotions. You must deal with yours.”

“You just... you don’t get it. He’s going to keep doing these things. All he cares about are his goals. He doesn’t care how he does them or who gets hurt.”

“Maybe you’re right. But I’ve told you before, you’ll never get anywhere going off on him like that. You’re a general of Green. If you want to discuss issues, this is the time to do it, but we do so properly. Hey, look at me.”

Zordo put his hand on her chin and lifted her head until her eyes met his.

“You’re better than this.”

Vatti yanked her chin from his grasp, breaking her gaze. He didn’t get it. None of them did and they probably never would. The Discrete had raised them and they weren’t going to go against that. Still, the Clone was right about one thing. She no longer saw the point in getting mad for him. If Zordo wasn’t going to stick up for himself, then she wasn’t going to waste her energy either.

“Okay, fine, if you want the Discrete to make you leave the one good thing you got out of going to the surface, be my guest. Just hurry up and get inside so we can end this stupid meeting.”

The two made their way back inside and to their respective seats.

“Are there anymore questions or concerns, General Vatti?” D asked.

“Oh no no!” Vatti said sarcastically. She sank down into her chair and stayed slumped over. “Please, continue oh mighty dictator.”

“What is the purpose of the new Department?” Zordo asked.

“The Department of Intelligence. You will be gathering intel on our enemy.”

“So, we’re finally preparing for our offensive then?”

“Slightly. We are still years away from open combat with the Discretes, but with the first unit of soldiers trained, we can now begin to understand how and where to attack.”

“Intelligence gathering?” Decson pondered outloud. “Hard to believe we’ve lasted this long fighting blind.”

“We haven’t. I’ve initiated a current method for gathering detail on our enemy, however it not only produces minimum results, the information gathered is almost as unreliable as guessing. With Zordo, we will have a much better method.” D turned to Zordo. “Between now and the next meeting, I’ll need to prepare you with intel I’ve already gathered.”

“Yes sir.”

“And with that, are there anymore issues that need to be addressed?”

The room remained silent.

“Then this meeting is closed.”

Vatti stood up as fast as she could, anxious to get back to patrolling for Discretes. As soon as she stood up, however, her body force her back down. She had forgotton that it wasn’t too long ago that a Discrete pushed her body to a painful state.

“Come here you.” Decson said, grabbing Vatti’s arm and wrapping it around her neck.

“Decson I’m fine. I don’t need…”

“What’s that? You said escort you to the nearest Green security to have you looked at? I’m glad you asked.”

Vatti sucked her teeth. If only she had played it off better. There was no way she was getting out the building without Decson hounding her. So, giving in, she leaned her weight on her companion and allowed herself to be escorted. She would never admit it outloud, but it did indeed feel much better than painfully standing on her own. Once the two reached the outside of the building, Vatti spoke softly.

“No wonder you didn’t protest about Zordo leaving. That means he’ll be away from Magatha and all yours for the taking.”

Vatti was only teasing, and Decson knew this, but she answered seriously anyway.

“Zordo made his choice and a little distance isn’t going to change that. Zordo sees me as a sister, he’s always seen us as his siblings. Magatha has the edge on me in that department.”

“That… and the thirteen years the Discrete split you guys apart, Magatha spent getting closer to him.”

“Yeah…” Decson said. “…and there’s that.”

“I’ll be waiting for you outside.” Savvi said to Zordo. “Since I have to go to your Department anyway, I’ll go ahead and do that now.”

“It would be faster if you departed without me.”

“Oh no, you’ve been sitting on your bum teaching kids. I bet even I could beat you in a race.”

“Savvi, you’re going to be traveling for two weeks to get to my department, and then another four to get back to yours. Do you really want to waist energy racing?”

“You hear that? That is the sound of excuses.”

Zordo let out a heavy breath through his nose.

“Very well, I’ll be there shortly.”

Savvi headed out the door, leaving Zordo and D alone.

“So…” D said. “How exactly do you feel about your new position?”

“Pardon?”

“Vatti’s is right, I am indeed separating you and Magatha all the while ignoring how you feel about each other.”

“Vatti is right about a lot of things, but she’s wrong about a lot of them too. And you… you keep trying to explain yourself to her. If you act like her complaints are valid, she’s going to keep questioning you.”

“I keep enough secrets. I won’t tell just anybody anything, but my generals should be able to understand what is happening. There’s a time when questions need not be asked, but these meetings are for those questions.”

“Doesn’t mean you have to be so nice about it. Whenever I talked to you like that, you let it be known which one of us was the better fighter.”

“You weren’t a general. You were some kid who thought he knew everything.”

“Those terms are not mutually exclusive.”

“You never answered my question. How do you feel about your new assignment?”

“Do you really have to ask?”

“No, I would just like to know.”

Zordo grew quiet for a moment pondering his thoughts together.

“I don’t like discussing my emotions, so I won’t go into me and Magatha. But I can say I’m pleased to see plans for the war moving forward. I feel whatever you have in store for me, will help us get closer to defeating the Discretes. And I don’t think there’s anyone more qualified to replace me than Magatha. All in all, I approve of the actions.”

“Always trying to avoid being EC.”

“Can’t really blame me, my teacher engraved it in me.”

Zordo and Discrete D stood up simultaneously. Once they left the building, they would have to head in separate directions, but Discrete D had one more thing to ask.

“How is he?”

“There are many he’s in the world, D.”

“Indeed. But there’s only one who I’d ask you about.”

Chapter 2 End

**Everything below this, ignore**

“As you all know,” Zordo said, standing from his seat, “my students will be released from my care in roughly half a year. At that time, they will all be sent into one of your departments. I’m sending you files on each team made of the twenty-four individuals. Please look over them as I summarize.”

“Wait…” Savvi interrupted. “Into ONE of ours? I thought the point of having you train the kids, Zordo, was so they could become Discrete killers, better at doing so than the rest of Green. Wouldn’t they be the most useful in Vatti’s Department?”

“And why is this pertinent to us?” Decson added. “After spending months with these kids, no one knows them better than you?”

“As far as I recall, the best Discrete killers in all of Green are sitting at this table, yet only one of us is in the Department of Defense. These kids are fighters, yes, but they are also thinkers, inventors, strategists and… unfortunately… comics. Assuming they’d all be most beneficial as fighters would be a misjudgment on our part. They need to be placed where they can do the most good. This is where you all come in. I may know my students, but you all are experts on your own departments. You know what you want and what your department can’t handle.”

Eve’s head perked up. “Zordo, are you saying you’ll actually listen to us?”

“The final decision will be mine, but I will certainly take what you all say into consideration.”

“We’ll have to take what we can get.” Decson said, mocking her teammate.

“If that is all, please turn your attention to the student information. At the beginning of their training session, the students were divided into teams. When they leave for your divisions, I expect them to remain in their teams for another year.”

The tone of Zordo’s voice showed this was not a guess at all, he was ordering the others to make sure the teams stayed teams.

Vatti scrolled down the list looking at the teams. The team names caught her eyes.

“Forefront. Family. Weirdos. Zordo, who came up with these names?”

“The students. When the teams were first established, we officially gave them numbers. However, certain students felt that to be to close to a ranking system and before long each team had chosen their own names. Team one: Geol, Malla and Straw, the Gens.”

“I assume that’s short for ‘Generals?’” Decson asked.

“It’s short for “Generics.” Team one, of all the teams, stand out the least. They prefer to be unseen, to be thought of as un-special.”

“And you encouraged that!?!”

“When I asked them the purpose of their name choice, they told me it wasn’t their idea. Someone else came up with it, and everyone else was just using it. They did not care but they agreed it was a fitting name.”

“That still doesn’t justify that, Zordo. To believe yourself to be lacking in something unique is just terrible.”

“I do not believe Team 1 believes themselves to be lacking in something unique. In fact, I believe they see the name as fitting because it is unique.”

“Well that’s confusing.” Vatti said.

“D, you speak metaphors and vague clues. Care to explain what Zordo means?” Eve batted her eyelashes, pretending they’d have some effect.

“In a world where everyone stands out, the one who doesn’t is the special case.”

“Team 1 is the most steady psychologically. They do not easily get depressed, nor are they easily excited. They are contempt. Team 2: Ritch, Cord and Extre. The Sticks.”

“I take it they’re skinny.” Vatti said.

“The members of Team 2 are known for their cautious nature. They also had their names chosen by other students, coming from an old term “stick in the mud.”

“What in the Wig does that mean?” Vatti asked.

“Someone who is unable to adapt. Team 2 thrives on things going to plan. Team 3 consists of Carol, Napp and Tsudo. They call themselves the Forefront. They thrive on competition, usually the first to attempt something. Team 4 is the Family: Terra, Terri and Torri. These three are siblings.”

“They must have really good teamwork.” Decson smiled.

“Team 5 is the Weirdos: Capri, Celphae and Kyousk. They are curious to say the least. Team 6 are the Stars: Henry, Portia and Ryan.”

“Gee, I wonder who came up with that name.” Savvi joked. “Henry has got to get over himself.”

“Actually, Henry came up with most of the team names. Team 6 is the most diverse among the teams, each member specializing in a completely different skill-set. Team 7 is the Techs: Cynthia, Gia and Samantha.”

“Well with a name like that, is there even reason to ask what their specialties are?” Savvi grinned.

“All three have a love for technology and programming. Finally, Team 8:Ralph, Thomas and Zayle. Also known as The Clowns.”

“Do these kids even know what a clown is?” Decson asked.

“It’s a goofball, isn’t it?” Vatti said.

“Yes, but originally it was an occupation. A clown was someone who made profit by making others laugh. Of course, once the war started that along with many other jobs, died out.”

“Team 8 has no shame in their name. They love attention and laughter even moreso.”

“Not a Leader in the lot. I’m guessing they don’t use their brains much.” Vatti said. “Reminds me of someone.”

“Please review these teams for the next couple of months. During said time, I ask that each of you pay a visit to the Department of Education to observe the teams for yourselves. At the next meeting, I will ask that you give me your final suggestions.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me, Zordo!” Savvi complained. “My department is on the opposite side of the Source from yours.”

“Then I suggest you head to my department immediately, that way you won’t waste time.”

This was not a request, this was an order and defying Zordo’s orders were unheard of.