Chapter 34

The air outside of the training center felt like a long lost friend to Tsudo. It brought back memories she wanted to dwell on, as well as memories she didn’t. It was difficult to believe she had been locked up in that building for two years. She remembered how it was before then. How these tall buildings sent a slight hint of fear down her spine. Tsudo kicked off the build she was standing on a little extra hard. That fear was gone now. With the magniboots and her training, these buildings were now her playground. She would never admit it to anyone, but the Green was amazed at how well she could jump across from building to building. Even though she had trained her team intensely to make sure they had no difficulty doing it, this was still their first time trying. She expected some difficulty, but the act wasn’t too much different from playing Sync-Ball when the gravity was changed.

The Captain turned to make sure Napp and Carol weren’t far behind. They too seemed to be traveling at ease. That brought a smirk to her face. They had trained themselves harder than anyone just for this, and now here they were, the only team trained by Zordo to make it into the Department of Defense. Vatti herself was guiding them their next destination. Tsudo couldn’t imagine a better situation.

The group ran up the next building they came across until they reached the top. They had expected to see their general jumping towards the next building, but Vatti had stopped. She was staring over the end at the next building.

“We’re here.” She said simply. The three looked over at the building. It was very similar to the one they had departed from. As with most buildings in the Source, it’s external lights were on, but it showed no signs of life.

“Is that it?” Napp asked. His voice showed a hint of complaint. “I thought we’d be running for days before we reached the actual Department.”

“I never thought I’d see the day you complained about something being to easy.” Carol said.

“I’m not complaining about now, I’m complaining about the past. What was the point of doing all that exercise if the Department was only a few minutes away?”

“Not all the Departments of Defense doesn’t have a singular location.” Vatti said. “It’s a series of locations made so that anyone could be protect at a moment’s notice. The Discrete and the Clone wanted to make sure there was one close to you guys.”

Vatti put her foot on the edge of the building.

“That window there is our target. You three think you can make that jump?”

The Forefront peered over. It wasn’t a difficult jump at all, in fact they had made more difficult jumps on the way to it, but something else pondered their minds.

“A singular open window.” Carol said outloud.

“Undamanged, yet surrounded by several shattered ones.” Tsudo continued.

“That’s a little obvious of an entrance, don’t you think?” Napp said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if a Discrete found it.”

“Oh no.” Vatti groaned. “He really did make mini versions of himself. Only the clone overanalyzes details like that.”

With that, Vatti jumped off the building. She spun herself to slow her decent, positioned herself so her feet would hit the side of the building, and braced her ankles for impact. Unsubtly, she landed on the cement that separated the windows. Before she had time to act, the three teenagers landed on other parts of the building.

Vatti, was slightly shocked. It was slightly dangerous to jump immediately after her, but seeing as how they hadn’t hit her, she proceeded inside the building.

The Greens all entered through the open window. Inside was nothing but rubble and a door that lead further in. Tsudo wasn’t surprised. Just like in the strategy they used to exit the Department of Education, it made sense that all the rooms near windows showed as little signs of activity as possible.

“Well, finally glad that’s over.” Vatti said, proceeding towards the door. “Welcome. Make yourselves at home. Yadda yadda yadda. If you need me I’ll be in the…”

“Vatti, come in. Over”

The voice had starteled everyone. Vatti, hesitantly raised her hand and pressed the button inside her collar.

“What do you want, clone?”

Everyone understood now. These were the fabled communication jackets the generals were said to wear.

“By my caluclations, you should be at the closest Department checkpoint. Over.” The collar spoke again.

“How can you possibly calculate that?”

“It’s not as complicated as you think.” A female voice came through.

“Please don’t explain it, Eve.” Vatti said.

“Vatti.” Came Zordo’s voice. “I trust that as the respected general I expect you to be, you are explaining thoroughly the new responsibilities to your new soldiers.”

Vatti let out a hefty sigh through her nose. She turned around and opened her mouth to speak.

“And Tsudo.” Zordo’s said. “Keep a report on your experience in the Department of Defense. When we meet again, I want to know everything you been through.”

And with that, the room went silent. A low growl could be heard from Vatti’s mouth.

“This…” she started, “This is the Department of Defense. Our job is to protect the rest of the Greens from the Discretes. Are there any questions?”

The Forefront couldn’t help but feel nervous. Though they had done nothing to upset her, Vatti had no one else to direct her obvious anger to.

Tsudo forced herself to speak. As uncomfortable as she was, she couldn’t let this stop her from improving.

“Could you go over the specifics?”

Vatti gave an intense look. Tsudo wasn’t sure if she was giving it to her or just to the air in general. Still, Vatti decided to answer her question.

“Scattered throughout the Source, are bases for the Department of Defense. Our job is to patrol the Source, going from base to base. We kill any Discretes we see and answer distress calls.”

“That makes sense.” Tsudo said. “With soldiers constantly on the move, it’d be difficult for the Discretes to pin down exactly where to attack. This also keeps the soldiers active and ready to respond.”

“Yeah, active.” Vatti laughed. “No more questions? Good. I’ll see you guys out there.”

Vatti hurried to the door and let it slam behind her. The three were left standing in silence.

“I don’t think she likes us.” Napp said.

“Well this is a horrible start.” Carol said. “Our first day, and the general hates us.”

“It’s only natural.” Tsudo said confidently. “Imagine it from her point of view. We’re just a bunch of rookie kids and she has to take time out of her busy schedule to show us the basics. We’ve done even less than the people here who’ve done nothing.”

“It feels like you’re leading to a ‘we need to work hard’ conclusion.” Napp complained.

“Well, I don’t have to say it now since you did.”

“Why can’t you ever come to the conclusion that we should take it easy? We just spent the last two years working hard.”

“And we got exactly what we wanted out of it.” Tsudo grinned. “Now that we’re here, we need to prove our worth just like we did then.”

“Whatever you say, Captain.” Napp sighed.

Carol was practically shaking from excitement.

“What do we do first!? Should we go in there and challenge their best fighters?”

“Because that’s how you get liked.” Napp said sarcastically. “Forget Vatti hating us, the whole Department will have issues.”

“I could care less about being liked.” Tsudo said. “But Napp’s got a point. We won’t get anywhere just by being jerks.”

“Hasn’t stopped us before.” Napp said.

“Do you always have to say something?” Carol complained.

“Only when I’m awake.”

“So that would be a ‘hardly ever.’”

Tsudo put out her hands, signaling her teammates to settle down.

“If we want to earn Vatti’s respect, we need to understand what that means. That might not necessarily be fighting. For now, we’ll just analyze them. In the meantime, find out more information on Department.“

Tsudo took a step forward