**Chapter 43**

Zordo pressed a couple of buttons on his personal display resulting in the bigger screen on the wall cooperated with the buttons he was pressing. Good, the two displays were synced. He took a quick glance at the room. The table was placed directly in the center, as he wanted. The four chairs were set across the table from him. Though the room was compact, there was plenty of space for people to walk around from their seat if they need to.

“What do you think?”

The Green was talking to Stirky, who sat in the corner across from the door. Stirky looked at Zordo and let out a yawn.

“As if your opinion is of any quality. Now all we need are…”

“I’m just saying, we would’ve killed a Discrete by now if we were with Vatti.”

“All you’ve done since we’ve gotten here is whine about the Department of Defense. I didn’t get into what I wanted either, yet you don’t see me crying about it.”

“Guys, lets discuss this later. Henry, try to keep your attitude in check.”

The Stars were here. Good. Zordo watched as the door opened, bringing in much more light into the room than he had made available. Ryan, Portia and Henry all walked in. Immediately, the three jumped back.

“WHAT IS THAT!?” Henry shouted.

Stirky lifted his head in curiosity.

“That is Stirky.”

“General.” Portia said, hiding behind Ryan. “Are you aware there is a stirkfur in here? Is this part of our training?”

“Yes then No.” Zordo walked over and pet the animal. “Stirky is a member of Green just as you are.”

“A trained stirkfur.” Henry said. “It might’ve been good to mention that in the announcement for the meeting.”

He slowly walked up to the creature and put his hand out. The beast looked at him with curiosity. Ryan slowly moved closer until his hand made contact with the beast hair.

“Ow!” Ryan said. The sudden exclamation made Henry and Portia jump back.

“Did he bite you!?!” Henry shouted.

“No.” Ryan put his hand in his mouth. “His fur is sharp!”

“Of course.” Zordo explained. “He’s a stirkfur. Their main method of attacks are their claws and teeth, but their fur helps prevent other animals from attack their blind spots.”

Ryan reached down once again to pet the creature.

“Only pet head to tail.” Zordo said.

Ryan did so, this time without feeling any pain. The creature let out a breath of air, remaining calm through all that had happened.

“Why is he here?” Henry asked. He sat down in the chair farthest from the creature. Zordo felt a sense of unease. That was meant to be his seat.  
  
“He’s going to be going with us on missions. Stirkfurs have heightened senses. Stirky’s is even better than that. He’ll make scouting a lot easier for us.”

Portia moved close to Ryan, being sure to keep him between her and Stirky. She was curious about the creature, as it appeared nice, but she’d been constantly taught to be weary of them. Eventually, she made her way to the seat by Henry.

Ryan found great comfort in petting the stirkfur. He experimented in different ways in which he was able to do it, scratch behind it’s ears and under its chin. It was a bit difficult since he had to move his fingers away whenever moving them back towards the head. Eventually, he made his way to the end seat, leaving a space between him and Portia.

Now that they were all seated, Zordo could begin the meeting.

“Sync up your displays to this one.”

The three did as they were told, pushing buttons on their displays. After that, Zordo pressed a few more on his own. A map appeared on everyone’s display, including the one on the wall.

“This is our target.” Zordo said. The map zoomed in on a specific building. “The Discretes’ now use it as a base, but it was once a food management resource. We need to disconnect the power to a very specific room. Portia…”

Portia became more attentive.

“What do you recommend?”

The question had surprised Portia. She thought she would just be listening. As she stared at the map, she could feel her heart beating faster. What was she supposed to say? What were the answers? How was she supposed to know?

“Port.” Ryan chuckled as he spoke. “You nervous?”

“It’s Port.” Henry said. “When is she not nervous?”

“Well, let me take a crack at it.” Ryan pushed some buttons on his Display. The map slowly shifted to show more colorful lines on it. “This is the power grid right, if we disconnect that room from the source, we can easily accomplish the mission.”

“That won’t work.” Portia insisted.

“Why not?”

“Oh my goodness, look at the map, Ryan. It says it right there.”

Portia picked up her display and zoomed in on a section.

“This building is connected to the overall Source grid, but it has its own backup generator. The only way we could cut it off is to do it from both the inside and the outside, and I don’t think we want to get inside of the building.”

“Some of us do.” Henry said.

Ryan ignored Henry and kept talking.

“Well, if we can’t get cut the power by disconnecting it from the grid, how are we supposed to do anything?”

“You two are so simple minded.” Portia said. “There’s more than one way to stop power flow. For example, you can overload it.”

“Overload it?” Zordo said.

His voice almost stunned Portia. She had forgotten for a moment that he was in the room.

“Y..yes. Overload it. Maybe. I mean, I guess that’s the right answer.”

“So, we just turn the power up a lot!” Ryan said.

Portia slapped her palm to her face.

“Remember what Official D said. We don’t want to turn the power off to the whole building. Just that specific room. We’d have to access one of the power panels on the outside of the building.”

Zordo was tempted to speak again, but decided against it and let Portia finished.

“There are components in the power panels that make sure rooms get regulated amounts of sync energy. Every building has them.”

Portia fiddled with her display. The map on the screens zoomed in to one side of the building.

“These panels here. There’d be a component for every room. If you were to break the one belonging to the target room, then the power would be out.”

“But we can’t get close.” Ryan said.

“We don’t have to.” Portia said. “The panels measure sync energy. They only measure Sync 2 though. Almost any type of sync 0 near their general area would completely destroy them.”

“A grenade?” Henry asked.

Portia let out a loud sigh. She did not care how repetitive she seemed, she wanted her teammates to see her frustration.

“A grenade would make all them go off. I repeat. We. Don’t. Want. That. We need a weapon with precision, that would be capable of targeting precisely one of the small components.”

“A sniper.” Zordo said. He zoomed out of the map allowing it to display nearby buildings. “Those boxes are in clear sight of these buildings. If we set up sniper in one of these locations, we could easily take out the component and still safely watch the reaction.”

“We should take the ones in the south.” Ryan said. “They give us much better vision.”

“That’s dumb.” Henry said. “The one on the left has a longer building. It’d give us a much better escape route.”

“But what if we have to fight?” Portia said. “In all that confusion, it’d be difficult.”

“No, Henry’s right.” Ryan said. “Our missions is to get in, observe and get out. Better escape than to fight Discretes we’re not supposed to.”

“Wait, no.” Henry said. “Maybe we should take the other route. Fighting might be worth it if we can see what’s happening.”

“No, you were right the first time, Henry.” Zordo said. “Fighting is not our priority here.”

Henry folded his arms in frustration. His words had been used to get exactly what he didn’t want.

“Okay team six. We will locate ourselves on the third floor of this building and take the shot from there. Once the component is destroyed, we will observe their reaction. Portia, can you pinpoint the exact location of the component if I give you a detailed schematic.”

“Y-yes. Of course.”

“Okay then, if you need anything else, be sure to check storage for it. We’ll take off tomorrow morning. Meeting adjourned.”

The three nodded and began to depart. Henry left immediately, walking quickly past Portia and Ryan. Ryan was about to follow, when he felt a tug on his arm.

“Wait.” Portia said. Her eyes weren’t looking at Ryan, but at stirky. “I want to pet him.”

Ryan looked at Stirky. For a second, it confused him as to why Portia wanted him to stay, but then he realized what she wanted. It was like making a new friend. She wanted Ryan to introduce her.

Ryan went towards Stirky and once again reached for his head, this time more quickly.

“Remember, head to tail.” He said as he petted.

Portia, even slower than Ryan had before, reached her hand towards the creature. Stirky, upon seeing her hand, lifted his head.

The sudden movement made Portia jump back.

“He senses your fear.” Zordo said.

“Does that mean he’ll attack me!?” Portia asked.

“On the contrary.” Zordo said. “He wants you to stop being scared. He sees you as an ally. That’s why he lifted his head. He wanted to help you.”

Upon hearing that, Portia once again reached her hand towards Stirky. Rather than pet him, she let her hand dangle in front of his nose.

The animal sniffed it for a few seconds, and then began licking the hand.

Portia smiled as he continued.

“That means he likes you.” Zordo said.

**Chapter 43 End**