

Prologue



"Thank you, Njabulo. You have my gratitude". I turned around and saw Zarzar, leaning on the wall behind me. Wearing sweat pants and a plain white vest.

"Oh, hey Zarzar, should you be out of the medical room so soon?" Her cuts and bruises were treated and her left shoulder was bandaged up with her left arm in a sling.

"I'll be fine thanks, now move over a bit, so I can sit". We sat in silence for a while, just looking up at the stars. We were sitting on a window sill, on one of the windows of the domain, which was a large living area, hidden inside a large mountain, a few miles outside of town.

"So, Gwailur told me-well asked me about what you guys talked about...do you think I should?".

"That's up to you, Njabulo. I can only offer you my advice".

"Well, if I say yes, then my whole life will change, I'm not sure I'm ready to let go of everything I know and love-on the other hand, it would be an awesome experience".

"And if you were to say no?"

"Then I'd just go back to my ordinary, boring life and I'd probably wake up one day and ask myself...'what would it have been like'".

"Well then, as they say on my planet, the answer out, is found within".

"Yeah, but it still doesn't make the answer clear. Do you think I could do it? Do you think I'd be any good?"

"I know something that might help".

"What?"

"Write it down, this entire experience, so you can properly evaluate it yourself".

"You mean like a journal?"

"Exactly, like that".

"Well...ok yeah sure".

Chapter 1 the bank job

"Man I can't believe this, going to the bank on a Saturday was so not a part of my plans, I mean I've been waiting all weekend for this, man, why can't this line hurry up already, darn it...oh well so much for chilling in my room and playing video games, sigh. 'Samurai council: the tale of the lost katana' I will be back to finish you and find the true path of the Samurai, it is my DESTINY!...oh darn it, not again, I gotta stop making facial expressions when I'm thinking to myself, it's getting weird, but it shouldn't be all that difficult for me to camouflage myself what with my jacket being the same shade

of yellow as the walls, which totally sucks, at least my cargo shorts don't match with the interior designing".

I thought to myself as I noticed people looking at me like I'm crazy.

"Final errand and I can go home and do nothing".

It was a simple, everyday bank. Not too small, not too big, it was like a kwiki-store of a bank. Not to mention very boring.

"Man, can't this line go any faster, I'm bored to death". And that's when it happened-hehe, pretty funny now that I think about it-,the bank doors were blown open in a split second and before I even realised it, I was cowering (for the sake of the intruders of course, I didn't wanna hurt them) on the floor, regretting I ever even thought of that what I did. the guards rushed boldly to the 'knock on the door' in their brown uniform, which I guess is exactly what they are paid to do, there was about four of them (it wasn't a very big bank), two stood at the ready, in front of the door, while the other two were besides the door crouching with a fiercely serious look in their faces and there' guns held to the ready. I was extremely impressed by their technique and courage, I wanted to cheer for them, but then I was stunned like someone in front of a speeding car, when one masked man ran inside, threw to the ground some sort of stun grenade that blinded the guards and charged with the fury of a bull to the two in front of the door, stretched his arms out to his sides and knocked the wind out of them, but as the first two guards fell, another masked man walked in, carrying two firearms that looked sci-fi futuristic and he shot down the other two guards, as they fell, so did all of my hope, they then seemingly signalled their three buddies to enter. They then gave us the usual bank-robber speech. "Everybody down on the floor, now! Give us all the money you have".

Cliche if you ask me. Well either way, they got all the money from the tellers but as they were about to make their grand escape, I heard a motorbike engine getting louder and louder until, boom, some extremely brave or very drunk guy (what I thought back then) busted through a window on his bike, really with all that was happening, my heart was racing and my mind was so beyond confused, I couldn't tell up from down. So the guy gets off his bike, he was dressed like a ninja in all black, some weapons and throwing stars in his belt, the usual ninja dress code.

He starred down the robbers, I could feel the thick intense, tension in the air, as I noticed muscles tensing to the extreme (I'm sure even their eyes were tensed!) and in a split second, he charged at the robbers and the two holding the bags of money tried to runaway but the ninja's throwing stars stopped them. The other two robbers engaged the ninja in some awesome, no holding back, undescrivable cool hand to hand combat and luckily for us, the ninja beat them. He then went for the biggest guy, who seemed to be the boss or leader. The ninja went for a left jab but the big guy evaded it and gave him a killer uppercut. He got back up quickly and did some leg work, but the big guy wouldn't go down and it seemed like the ninja was winning again, then the crowd was cheering, I was hoping someone would start selling popcorn but oh well, but then the big guy gave him another uppercut, followed by a barrage of fists and in his vulnerable state, the big guy grabbed the ninjas kunai and used it on him, right in the gut. He then to my horror yet luck and fate, tossed him a few inches from me. The big guy then carried his two knocked out friends and they made their exist, with the loot and everything.

As I stared at the ninja laying on the ground, I felt great fear, traumatized, confused yet very entertained at the same time, he then started crawling to my direction, in pure agony no doubt.

"Yo ninja dude, what are you doing?! You can't try and take them on again, you're badly injured", I whispered.

I always had a big mouth, but I have no idea why I even said a thing in such a situation. "I know, that's why you're gonna take them on kid". I almost bursted out in laughter, but the situation wouldn't let me.

"Ok, ok funny guy, where's the camera hugh, did Steve set you up to this?" I asked.

"No you idiot, you have to believe me...".

"Pssht, jah good one, do I even look like the brawling type to you, I can't even do half a push up, so enough with the prank, just give it up already, I'm a nerd, not a nitwit".

"Just take this bracelet you nerd-wit, the rest will come to you, accept it, allow it and believe". He said, as he took off his bracelet and stretched it out to me-which made me wander, since when were blue bracelets of all things, an essential ninja accessory.

"Come on! Take it quickly!" He said with a mouth dripping with blood. And I'm still not sure what happened at that moment but, my instincts suddenly kicked in and I took his word and put on the blue bracelet(which kind of matched with the blue shirt I was wearing) after which, I felt a great surge of energy all through my body. I felt faster, stronger and a strange tingling sensation in my brain. The ninja fell unconscious before I could ask him some stuff. I then decided to run in the direction the robbers excited and listening to my gut, hoping to finally put my ninja skills into action, which I learned from endless hours of video gaming, but hey, how hard can it be. When I got outside-I believe it or not, even with all that happened today I still had enough room to have the shock of my life when I saw the robbers with their masks off.

"How much can one teenagers reality can be bent and broken in one afternoon?!" I thought to myself as I stood frozen, in complete confusion with my mouth open. A BMW quickly swunged by and they entered hastily, carrying their K.O-ed friends on their shoulders. Me, left standing there, like the disappointment and failure I was. I looked down in regret and suddenly heard the loud noise of a motor bike approaching the area, but this time, instead of it flying through windows, it stopped in front of the banks parking lot where the BMW came to fetch the robbers. There was a lady on the bike this time and she was also dressed like a ninja. She got off, but didn't remove her helmet. She ran towards me.

"Ok, where's that idiot before I kill him. Have you seen a black guy in a ninja costume"? She asked as she approached me. Her voice was soft and sweet. She sounded like a kind person, even though her tone was of annoyance and anger, at the moment.

"Jah, but somebody already beat you to it, and beat him to", I said comedically. "He's in there". I pointed back to the bank.

"Let me see your hand for a second". She said as she saw the bracelet on my wrist.

"He gave me it before he blacked out, I swear, I mean-".

"Ssshhh". As she grabbed my hand, she touched the bracelet and it started glowing brightly and vividly. "Damn it, I told that idiot not to rush off without me". She said under her voice with a clenched fist. "Listen, Njabulo, I'm gonna need to ask two things from you, first is that you trust me, I promise, I'll protect you and secondly is that you keep an open mind". She said leaning forward, her arms on her knees, so we were at the same level.

"Wait, how'd you know my-".

"I'll explain later". She said still wearing the helmet. "Please, I'm going to need your help".

Because I can't say no to women, plus I really wanted answers to everything, especially how she could know my name.

"One condition, you teach me some really cool ninja moves".

"You got it, just give me a sec to fetch my friend".

Chapter 2: The domain

The wind was cruel to my face and eyes as I rode with the ninja chick sitting behind her on her bike with the knocked out guy sleeping on her lap, so not safe if you ask me. As we went off road through a beaten path just on the outskirts of the town in the veld, there was only one thing going through my mind- why is her hair not flowing in my face? Not that I'm one of those type of people or anything but I just figured it should but I then assumed she must have short hair.

We reached where we were going, which was a mountain, the same one that made the sun set sooner than it really should, cause the sun would set behind it. We stopped at the foot of the mountain, she stretched out her right hand and then an opening big enough for a truck appeared and the bike rushed in to an inclined path leading up rotating around a pillar and the opening closed.

A few seconds later, we entered a large courtyard with buildings straight ahead and to the left and right, light bursting through the windows in the walls and ceiling, into the empty courtyard. Three people in white cloaks mouth-masks came rushing in with a stretcher and grabbed the injured ninja dude.

As we got off the bike, she, introduced herself. "My name is Zarzar, come let me go introduce you to Gwailur, I think you'll like him".

"Who's Gwailur" I asked.

"Follow me". As she began walking forward to the opposite end of the cave or dome or whatever! To what looked to me as a row of rooms edged in the wall. A muscular-looking man, walked out of one of them, wearing martial arts clothes, completely black, and he looked like any other normal guy.

"Why is your hologram still activated?" Zarzar asked him. "What hologram". I wandered.

"Oh, just trying to get used to it". He touched his chest and his regular-everyday-Joe looks faded, and left behind them...A half-human half-hippo. His body structure was buff and muscly, as well as human, but he had the head of a hippo and his skin was a pale pink. For the first time ever in my life (even though I should've, at the bank) I fainted.

"Hey, wake up". I heard Zarzars' sweet, gentle voice say.

"5 more hours mom". I remember saying drowsily.

"Come on, black looks good on pink, or was it just my breath?" Gwailur asked. I finally opened up my eyes to see Zarzar, now with her bike helmet off, and Gwailur on the opposite side, kneeling. I quickly sat up, to find myself laying on a blue mat, in a room with red carpeting and 2 windows to my right. I took a look at Zarzar, with shocked, confused eyes. She had purple eyes, green skin with big dark blue spots on both her cheeks and instead of the long flowing hair I was expecting on the bike

ride, she had purple crystals sticking out of her head, and I hit the ground again. I was woken by a splash of water to the face. The room had a few weapons and Buddha figures I think. It was light brown, just like the rest of the place.

"No you're not dreaming and if you stop falling asleep". Zarzar said, standing in front of me with a cup in her hands, "we could start explaining everything to you".

"Ninjas I can believe, but aliens, now that's gonna need a lot of explaining, especially the ones at the bank". I said drowsily.

"Zarzar, I'll take it from here". Said Gwailur with his deep yet calming voice.

"You see young Njabulo, We come from a planet called Rangshu, a lot similar to yours, because we also have politics and presidents, in most countries anyway. We are, what you would call galactic police. As you've probably seen at the bank, there is...trouble brewing".

"Wait a minute, they travelled light years just for our money, why?!" I asked. "It's not like we share the same currency now do we, or are they just here for the gambling."

"Oh, your money has no worth on our planet." Gwailur said.

"But then why?"

"Because they have been studying your planet, and they know that money is power."

"So they want to control the country? But what about the police, won't they stop them?"

"We have superior technology, how do you think we got here, discreetly?! No, they have bigger plans than that, what they want, is to control your world. Think about it, if they were to steal all the money in the world and you were unable to stop them, then what do you think that would mean?"

"Either no more taxes or they... or they would hold all the cards...we'd be there slaves for the money, wouldn't we?" I said with wide shocked eyes.

"They have studied your planet, like I said, so we will need your assistance in this battle, because we are one man short".

"So, how exactly am I supposed to help fight aliens, when my only fighting skills come from movies and videogames?" I asked Zarzar, as Gwailur left the room for tea. The human race is at stake and all he can think about is tea! I guess he was trying to get a handle on things.

"Well, Njabulo, Linda didn't give you that bracelet just so you can look good fighting". Zarzar said jokingly.

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot about it, but it does match my brown eyes though, so why did he give me this then?"

"Because, the bracelet is like...a storage drive, for lack of a better word. Wait, no it does not match with your eyes".

"Ok fine it doesn't, I just always wanted to say that, and I don't understand what you're trying to say. Which makes me wonder how the heck you know English".

"I'll explain that in a second. So anyways, Linda has stored his skills in that bracelet, just in case this ever happened. So you contain all of his moves, techniques and possibly some of his memories".

"So does this mean that I can do all those awesome kick-ass moves he did back in the bank?" I asked with a big grin on my face.

"Yes, but first off you need to tap into the bracelet".

"Am I gonna need a screw driver for this, cause I-".

"No, that's not what I...Just listen, you have to relax, let the energy from the bracelet flow into you and trust in yourself".

"How will I know if I'm done?"

"Oh, I think you'll be able to tell".

"Will I feel heavier, lighter, smarter, faster or what?"

"Possibly dumber, hehehe, just kidding. Have faith in yourself, Njabulo, you'll know". She said gently, the last two words. "I'm gonna go check on Linda now, good luck". She then stood up and walked towards the door. "Meditate, it helps and I'll be right back".

"By the way, how long was I out?"

"I'm not sure, maybe, 5, 6 or 7-". She said standing at the door.

"Hours, days, weeks, months?"

"Minutes". She said with a mischievous smile, looking back at me as she left.

Chapter 3: my classmate

I began doing what she said, but my head kept buzzing with excitement, confusion, but most of all, what really wouldn't wanna leave my head was the thought of the possibility of not going to school, the excitement and joy of it lasted for a couple of minutes, but vanished completely when I realised.

"My mom is going to kill me". Unfortunately for me, I've seen a lot of movies where teenagers go out and save the world or do something big like an unsupervised road trip...but they were white, I mean I can't remember when last I saw movie where black teens' parents let them do something like that and that's cause they know that black parents never, do that, and I highly doubt that my parents are the exception..."Maybe I'll sort it out with her later".

I went back to what I was doing, and was starting to feel it working (I think), when I heard a big boom! the room was shaking and I heard rocks falling, I quickly uncrossed my legs, got to my left hand and knees then looked up to check if it was the roof I was under that was falling. It wasn't, then a feeling of relief overcame me. The door a few feet in front of me opened and it was Stacey from class, also dressed like a ninja, but her mouth-mask thing was down, and her outfit was purple. Her hair was in a ponytail and the light coming from behind her, made her blonde hair glow, which emphasized her green eyes.

"Njabulo!?!"

"Stacey!?!" We both said in shock and surprise. We both stood there, mouths wide open as if we were trying to eat a large burger, for at least a minute.

"What are you doing here!?" We said in unison. "What am I doing here, stop copying me!"

"Ok, ok, ok. There's no time to argue right now, Njabulo. Just put this on real quick". She said as she threw something at me.

I caught it and it was a dark green ninja outfit. "Hey, this is my favourite colour".

"Ok whatever just put it on, like yesterday, dude". She said as she closed the door from outside. I quickly wore it and told her to come in. "Ok, I'm done changing".

"Cool, and don't stress about your clothes, just leave them in here". She said.

"What do you mean, I'm wearing my clothes underneath this ninja get up. I mean, aren't you?"

She smacked her forehead with an open hand, which I guessed I goofed up....

"We don't have time for you to change right now, so let's just go, now". She said impatiently, waving for me to come.

We ran out the door and I saw half of the roof open and on the floor, there was a rectangular spaceship just above the roof. Zarzar and Gwailur were fighting off a ton of other aliens who looked similar to Zarzar but some of them had different coloured dots. They were dressed in blue spandex. They were fighting near the entrance to our far left. To our right were more buildings engraved from the mountain and ahead of us was a door with no windows near it. Stacy grabbed my hand and we ran to that door, which was a 3rd length of a rugby field. Halfway to the door and I was halfway to passing out, yet Stacy didn't seem the least bit tired. I fell to my knees gasping for air.

"C'mon dude, we gotta go. We're almost there". She said, pulling me up.

"Go on without me, Stacy, live the rest of your life happy, have kids and name one after me, but hey, we'll always have grade 9.H (Our class)". I said dramatically panting.

"I am not leaving you here ok, or naming my kid after you, but what I am doing is this". She said with an open hand in the air.

"Ouch, what was that for?" I said rubbing my cheek.

"I think you know". She said, digging into her pocket. "Here's an energy bar". Just as she was extending her hand a kunai knife passed in between the small distance between my face and her hand. I then decided to get up and...Stretch my legs, although Stacey seemed to think I was cowardly running away screaming like a little girl (even though I was merely clearing my throat) but I wasn't. She caught up to me and we rushed into the door as the noise of the weapons clashing and rocks falling began to fade. We slammed it closed the second we busted in room. I took a huge breathe as I sighed in relief and sat down. Stacey leaned against the wall in front of me. We were in a small, blue room with an opening on the floor to my right. The walls, floor and roof were metal.

"So, Stacey, now what. Do we wait until their done or what? Oh we can play I-spy".

"No. Actually, we're gonna help them, that's why I dragged you with me, that and cause we need you alive".

"Why do I not like the sound of that last part, you know what with me being surrounded by aliens and someone who could've possibly had their brains sucked out and then some unspeakable, who knows-".

"Enough with your ramblings dude, I'm fine and my brain is where it should be, now come on". She said as she walked to the opening on the ground and starting climbing down. "We got some video games to play".

I followed her down. "Not that I don't love videogames or anything, I mean I'm a gamer, but shouldn't we be helping like you said?" I said as we got to the bottom of the ladder and got off.

"Ahhh boys, such simple minds, I still wonder how we managed to make it this far without you guys blowing us all up". She said as she walked briskly to several big screen TVs.

I walked after her. "Hey, I resent that...well what about Einstein".

"I was only kidding, it helps me relax and untense, here, take this and fire. X is for lasers, O for bombs so don't even think about it. This is for the camera, this is for the targeting. Now, if it's dressed in blue, I want it covered in red". We started shooting at the hundreds of aliens that were attacking Zarzar and Gwailur, even though, Zarzar and Gwailur, were doing a pretty good job knocking them down, but they did seem to be growing tired.

"Wow, who knew aliens were into videogames". I said.

"This is earth tech".

"Oh, either way, you mind clearing up a few things for me, cause I am completely lost here. Aliens, ninjas, you. What the heck is going on?"

"Hhhmmm, where can I start?!"

"How about what you're doing here and why, you, my friend have been lying to me".

"It's not like that, Njabulo, I was just afraid that people would think I'm crazy, I mean would you believe all this if I just walked up and told you?"

"Ok fine, but now that I do, what in the name of all I used to believe in, is happening?"

"Ok, I'm a normal 15 year old, just like you and most other teenagers, except...long ago when we were still new to technology, before the first world war, these other aliens, who were ambassadors for their planet, came to earth to 'build a relationship' between the two races. They went to the presidents of different countries and for the first time ever, all the presidents of the world met together with the aliens, in secrete of course, it was decided then that us humans were not yet ready to live side by side with aliens from another planet, cause we couldn't even live side by side with one another, so the UN-as they were to be later known-, started a task-force, or order, in every country. That task-force would make sure our visitors were to be treated, cared and hidden away from the rest of the human race. My dad, is a part of that unite, here in Mpumalanga, a part of his job is to explore and gather information about the current state of the world-and meet with the other task-force groups around the world. I usually help him with that part, and to get all that info to the aliens, we carry any object like a necklace or a bracelet or whatever where our-".

"Where your memories and stuff gets stored..."

"Oh, I see they've already explained that to you and how it's all about energy. Anyway, they see the world, know what we know, like language, society, life and other stuff and that's my side of the story.

"But wait, that doesn't explain these aliens, and you, being ninjas, what's up with that?"

"Well unfortunately, not all aliens are nice or want to live in peace with us. Some are just afraid of us and others would rather enslave us or destroy us and take our planet, so the UN, which is actually short for 'the universe', created this intergalactic police, they named it, 'Project: Alien Shinobi'. I'll tell you more about it later".

"Wow, now that's a story and a half".

Hey look we got 'em all". She said pointing to the two big screens.

"By the way, why does your dad have to travel around, can't he just watch the news?".

"Haha, oh yeah I almost forgot, you guys actually believe the news. Yo, something's are falsified or hidden, so my Dad goes straight to the horse's mouth".

"Well, goes to show, you think you know a person, to find out they're a ninja".

"Hehe, yeah yeah, come on let's get back up to help clean up".

"Hey, since when where ninjas, janitors, I'd like to see my contract".

We got back out into the training yard, which is what Stacey told me it was, and were walking back to Zarzar and Gwailur, as they sat down, tired and slightly bruised. "Thanks for the help guys". Zarzar said as we walked up to them.

"I don't know about you, but I had to dodge some of their fire". Gwailur said then laughed. "I wasn't even sure whose side I was on anymore, haha-". Then lasers rained down around us, from the spaceship we forgot was there.

"DISPERSE!!" Zarzar yelled out and we all ran in different directions.

"You've got to be kidding me!" I said running as the spaceship (which looked like a bus, only more alien-ship like), came after ME, of all people, I mean, come on. "Am I ever gonna get a break today?!".

I looked back to see the canons, aiming at me, and charging up (I gathered from them making a noise and lighting brighter and brighter) and about to fire. I jumped to the right and rolled painfully when I hit the ground. When I stopped, I got to my elbows to see the ship right in front of me seconds away from removing me from existence.

I was paralysed in fear and almost (emphasis on the almost) wet my pants when at that exact moment I saw a throwing star hit him in the neck. He fell, the ship fell, I fell, and LONDON BRIDGE fell. I guess the gravity of the situation got to us all. I was so relieved, I could die (but that would defeat the entire reason of my joy, so I tried not to) and was reluctant to move the tiniest of muscles, I just wanted to do nothing. Who would have thought that a near-evaporation-experience, could make you feel so relaxed?

"You alright?" I heard Stacey's soft voice say as she walked up to me.

"If alright means, I lost track of my heartbeat rate the way it was yo-yoing, then yeah, I'm good thanks. You?"

"Hehe, come on, at least you got some exercise". She said leaning over me.

"Why do you think I'm not moving?!"

"Come on, dude, enough with the drama-queen act".

"I wish I was acting".

"Yes you are, you're a pretty good runner you know, got a lot of speed in ya".

"Well I guess I was on a roll back there, get it?!" I said getting back up.

"Jah, jah Mr comedian guy. Let's go interrogate you're gym instructor". She said laughing.

"What, but I don't even go to the gym".

"I'm talking, about the guy who tried to turn you into Swiss cheese".

"Oh...I knew that, I was just...testing you". I said with a big smirk.

We tied him up and took him to the room I was meditating in before they attacked. "How about you cooperate and we won't break your legs". Zarzar said with great fury which (even though I had only known her for such a short time), I've never seen from her before.

"Zarzar, please, calm yourself, Linda was also hasty and look where that got him". Gwailur said.

"He didn't even stop to think, Master, I don't know why he even thought he could take on Zarcaz alone, that idiot". Zarzar said, still infuriated.

"Please, Zarzar, we'll take care of the interrogation, you go check on Linda and take young Njabulo with you". Gwailur said.

"Yes master". She said bowing her head slightly. "Let's go Njabulo". She said as she began walking to the door, I stood up and followed her.

"Zarzar, we will get him, you just wait". Stacey said as Zarzar was at the door.

"I know, but...thanks, I guess we will". We got out and starting walking to our left, I wondered why Zarzar was so dead set on catching whoever it was they were talking about back there, if I didn't know any better I'd say she had a deep, fowl burning vendetta against someone, I didn't know any better, so that is what I thought.

"I'm sorry about what you saw back there, I hope you don't now see me as an angry, threatening person, it's just complicated". Zarzar said.

"Ooh, no problem, we all lose our cool once in a while". I said as we got into the building. It was one big room that looked like a hospital. Linda was in a bed in the middle of the room, with a couple of machines around him, but they were off.

"I had a feeling you guys were coming". Linda said relaxing in the bed, wearing his ninja outfit, without the top.

"Feeling any better?" Zarzar asked him.

"Well besides having done something risky and dumb, which led to me stupidly giving them a map to our hideout and ambushing us with me being left useless, here, no I'm not feeling any better, I haven't eaten any pizza yet...". He said with a clever smile.

"Hehe, well I guess you are feeling better than and no pizza till you're fully recovered". She said now cheerfully.

"Hold the interstellar phone!!" I exclaimed. "You led them here?"

"By accident, when they stabbed me, I didn't think they'd put a tracking device on me...no wonder he didn't kill me".

"Hey we all made mistakes ok, I should've checked if you had one on you".

"Why did you rush to the bank alone anyway?" I asked Linda.

"Well, let's just say, I had a score to settle".

"Speaking of settling score, I have to ask, who are you trying to hunt down, Zarzar?"

"....."

"It's a sensitive matter, Njabulo-".

"I'll tell you some other time".

"Zarzar, you don't have to". Said Linda.

"I'm sure he'll find out soon about my brother anyway". They carried on the conversation without me. I couldn't even hear them over the sound of my own thoughts anyway. Your greatest enemy being your brother, I've heard of sibling rivalries, but this was just a whole other level. I'm an only child so I don't know much about it, I do have a cousin my age that I'm pretty tight with though, I'm sure that counts...possibly.

I then heard the door bust open. "We got a few answers from him". Stacey said outside the door, I noticed that she wasn't wearing that hair-band-thing to make a pony tail like she always does. Her blonde hair was now let down and free to flow.

"Good work, what you got to tell us". Asked Linda.

"Well it turns out that they weren't supposed to attack us for 48 more hours, they were just sent to monitor us and report info every couple of hours. Luckily for us, they were impatient and thought they could take us out on their own".

"Leave it to one of my brothers henchmen to be impatient, huh. So what's our next move" Asked Zarzar.

"We can make them think that we're doing nothing, while we go about our business". Replied Linda.

"And blam, we sneak attack them, good thinking" Said Stacey.

"Wait, how do you guys know he's speaking the truth?" I asked.

"Well, mostly because I never said he spoke. I used my hair band, which is my special item, like Linda's bracelet, to soak up his memories and thoughts. It was hard, but it worked like a charm". Answered Stacey.

"So what's our plan of action, in the mean time?" Asked Linda.

"Well, we first off have to go talk to the president, you know, tell him what's happening now" Said Stacey.

"Speaking of permission, have you told your parents about any of this yet?" Asked Linda and I started shaking in my boots.

Chapter 4: Mother dearest

"Hey mum, sorry I-"

"I heard the news about the bank robbery, are you ok honey!?" She said hugging me in the living room. She was watching the news, I guess that's how she found out. "Are you sure you're ok, no bruises, scars or traumas?" My Mom is a bit an average mom, worries a lot, is old school yet tries to be hip constantly, your basic mom you know, what can I say. She is healthy and quiet fit though.

"I'm ok Mom thanks, not a scratch on me, ughm Mom, I'd like to introduce some friends of mine".

"Oh ok, where are they?"

"Their outside the front door". I said as I lead her outside. Our house was a normal suburban house, with a small front yard, and front gate, plank fences. The walls were white and the roof green. There was a backyard with a small vegetable garden. The ideal, normal house for a quiet suburban neighbourhood. The guys were outside standing on the porch wearing disguises. Zarzar was wearing a hologram device Gwailur was wearing when I first met him. Her hologram was a long white pair of pants and a blue T-shirt. She also wore a cap; she had short brown hair that only reached to her neck with brown eyes. Stacy was wearing a purple skirt with a black T-shirt as well. I had taken off my ninja suit and was wearing my short blue jeans, a blue T-shirt and my yellow hoodie.

"Mom you know Stacey right?" I said because both our moms go to yoga together plus mom has seen Stacey here and there.

"Hi, Stacey dear, everything going alright at school?"

"Sup Mrs Mnisi, jah everything's fresh". I know what you're thinking, pie is fresh, in fact pie would be nice right about now, everybody loves pie right?!, anyways Stacey isn't your average, likes fashion, models and other basic teenage girly stuff that I'm glad I don't know, 15 year old girl. She's different, not the kind of weird different but the kind of cool different. She knows karate(which makes sense now that I know she's a ninja), is a great gamer, but not as good as me of course, and a lot of other stuff, she's just all round cool but still got a bit of girly-ness in her.

"And this is Zarzar Mom".

"Well what a...distinct yet peculiar name. Nice to meet you". Mom always uses big words when she's forcing herself to be kind, it's her way of laughing and dissing someone conspicuously. She gave Zarzar a suspicious looking smile, I guess she must have thought something else, like all moms would.

"Likewise, Mrs Mnisi, right".

"By the way, not to be rude or anything but, aren't you a little too old to be friends with my son?"

"Well Mom, that's kind of why I brought them here, to tell you why we're friends". Then my Mom shot me that scary 'you'd better have a good explanation' look, that all moms have in their wide arsenal of weapons, which that one would have to be next to 'did you just eat the last cupcake' look, similar, but only the highly skilled can tell the difference.

We walked to the living room and sat down. The living room was orange, just like the rest of the house inside. The couches matched the interior design. The TV was to my left, sitting neatly on its

stand, as I sat next to Zarzar and Stacey. Mom sat on the couch facing towards us, with the glass coffee table between the two couches.

"So Mom, how's work?"

"It's fine, now tell me about Zarzar".

"Oh jah Mom, I kinda met Zarzar at the bank".

"And you become friends at such a short space of time?"

"Hehe, well Mom, the thing is..." I then told her the whole story (making sound effects to make it more vivid and awesome) of the robbery, meeting Zarzar, the invaders' plans, getting attacked and playing video games. I left out the part where I almost got vaporised, because I knew she'd freak... "And so, Mom, I was kinda hoping you'd let me help them save the world, my homework and chores are done so I'm free anyways, please mom, please".

She looked at Zarzar, then back to me. "She doesn't look like an alien to me". Mom said.

"Oh right". Zarzar said as she deactivated her disguise. I was expecting mom to faint, but instead she merely flinched, I was kinda surprised.

"Oh, well...welcome to earth".

"Thank you, Mrs Mnisi". Zarzar said.

"So can I please help her save the world, please Mom?" It took a lot of convincing, but in the end she agreed.

"Ok ok, I guess enslavement by aliens is worse than you missing your curfew or school. Fine you can go but just be careful alright".

"Yes, Mom, I promise". I said feeling embarrassed cause she still treats me like a kid.

"And go grab a jacket or something".

"Ughm, mom, I'm already wearing one." I said pointing to the yellow hoodie I was already wearing.

"Will it be enough?"

"Yes, Mom It'll be enough, no need to worry". I said as we stood up to leave. "By the way, is dad still at work?"

"Yes why?"

"No, just curious".

"Bye honey". She said as we came out the door.

"Bye Mom". I fetched my toothbrush, facecloth and other necessities and climbed Zarzar's car. Which was a blue mini cooper.

"Love you mommy, hugs and kisses, mcwah, mcwah, mcwah, mcwah". Stacey said making fun of me.

"It's not funny Stacey, it's not funny!" I said furiously.

"Hahaha, yes it so is funny. A 15 year old Momma's boy, haha, that's rich". She said as we hopped into the dark blue Mini copper that belonged to Zarzar, apparently the government gave it to her.

"That's where you're wrong, I'm not a momma's boy, I'm a good boy...wait never mind".

"Lol, your killing me here"

"Zarzar, tell her I'm not a good boy"

"...". For some reason she was quiet and distant.

"Zarzar?" Stacey said.

"Hugh, oh were you guys saying something?"

"Everything ok Zarzar, you seemed like you were thinking of something important?" Stacey asked.

"Yes, I was just...It was nothing".

"Was it your brother?" Stacey asked.

"No".

"Was it your sandwich?" I asked.

"What, why a sandwich of all things, dude, like really now?" Stacey asked.

"Well that's how I get when I'm trying to think of what to put in my sandwich".

"I'm not even gonna say anything. Ughm Zarzar, the light is green now, we have to go and rendezvous with Gwailur and Linda back at the domain?"

"Argh right sorry, I was thinking about something". Zarzar said as she started the car and we left.

"What is it Zarzar?" Stacey asked.

"Nothing much, just a tiny matter really". I and Stacey then locked eyes, both of us with confused looks on our faces, wandering what was on Zarzars mind that could be so troubling.

Chapter 5: The plan

"So I take it she was ok with, Njabulo, assisting us in this mission?" Asked Gwailur. We were back at the domain, we met Gwailur in the middle of the court yard. He was practicing his martial arts when we got back, it must have been a short meeting between him and the president. The roof was being repaired by the medical guys who healed Linda (a full moon was peeking through the new, yet temporary skylight) I guess they are people of many talents. Zarzar told me that they were the task-team, they are more or less like maids who take care of stuff, like cleaning, healing and organising stuff.

"Yeah, his mom is pretty cool". Said Stacey. "How'd the report to the president go?"

"Eh, it went well, nothing much to tell, he said we can go ahead".

"So, now what is our plan of action, Master?" Asked Zarzar

"Well, I think all that's left to do now is to prepare to take them down. Gather your weapons and bravery men...I mean women and teenage boy, were going EET hunting". Gwailur said.

"EET?" I asked.

"Jah, evil extra-terrestrials".

"Ok, so wait, like now?" I asked in fear, cause I hadn't tapped into my power yet. I was afraid of letting them down and holding them back since I couldn't fight, yet.

"No, that's too short notice. Tomorrow, we need to get them before they strike anymore banks".
Said Gwailur.

"Jah but I mean-".

"The longer we let this go on, the harder it's going to be to fix it". For the first time, I heard a seriousness in his voice, usually he has a chilled, non-serious voice.

"Well, no that's not it, it's just..." I tried to think of something quick, an excuse to cover up the fact that I haven't unlocked the skills from the bracelet yet.

"Yes, it's just?"

"Maybe-it's-cause-he-Doesn't-fully understand." Stacey said pronouncing each word one by one, cause she was clearly making it up as she went along. I didn't know why she helped me make an excuse though. "It's...a whole new world for him, he still needs time to adjust, you see". Ending off her performance with a big 'I-hope-you're-buying-this' smile. Don't you just love it when someone finishes off your excuse and you get to rest your brain?

"Mhhmmm, well I guess the more we practice the better. Fine then, after tomorrow, we attack, at 7am sharp".

"In that case, I'll go begin practice, Master Gwailur".

"And I'll go through the plans to make sure nothing goes wrong, Zarzar. Oh speaking of which, Stacey, will you please train and prepare him for the mission. Good luck guys". Gwailur said, then walked away in a relaxed fashion.

"I'm gonna go start-off with mind training. Njabulo, you might wanna get down to using Linda's skills". Zarzar said also walking away.

"Ughm, mind training?" I asked Stacey, puzzled.

"Oh, it's when you meditate, only that you imagine yourself fighting multiple opponents, or just one who is a bit stronger than you, it keeps your senses sharp and more aware of things".

"Ok, cool, but, why did you help me by making up an excuse for me?"

"Because, I know that you need more time to tap into that bracelet, plus I thought you might want me to explain some stuff to you".

"Well, shoot".

"No, let's go to those benches over there and sit down". We left the centre of the courtyard and walked to the benches near the windows, at the west side of the place.

"Ok, are you going to tell me, now that we've sat down and all?"

"Our task, is to destroy their ship. That's our main objective".

"That's it? That's the entire plan?"

"Not really, we'll discuss the entire plan later with the others".

"Why can't the government just bomb the ship you know, an air strike?"

"Because, the reason why we were sent in is to make sure this doesn't go public, bombing the ship will be like begging reporters to come and snoop around, and other countries might grow suspicious and think we're planning for war. Our way on the other hand, is quiet and stealthy".

"So there's no other option...fine I can live with that, provided I do live after this mission. So, how are they planning on ruling the world from South Africa?"

"They have strategic bases, all over the world".

"Wait what? They're everywhere?"

"Ah duh!! It's a world-takeover plan, doing it one country at a time would take them forever, they are stationed almost everywhere in the world, we just gotta take care of the ones here".

"Why only here? What about the rest of the world?"

"We aren't the only ninja's in the world you know, I told you that".

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, so no prisoners?"

"Maybe a couple but it's not top priority".

"And, why would they even put a self-destruct, I mean, how does it help them with anything?"

"I don't know, I'm no Ickbieran Architect".

"....?".

"Ickbieran is Zarzars race, you know, like human race, ickbieran race".

"Yeah...by the way, what you said back there, it's true".

"What is?"

"That this is a whole new world to me, and that I don't fully understand. Friend tell me, why did I never know about this, I know you said the government hides it from us for fear of war or xenophobia, but I mean, why hasn't it been on the news or some internet site, like twitter or something?"

"Because, why do you think the president has so many scandals and shenanigans? To distract you guys, well that and he generally likes being in the spotlight. I mean, do you know why there's no aliens on the news? Because there are more stories about the government than there are about aliens, it's a distraction technique made to let you know, what they want you to know, cause I mean, besides the weather report, what is relevant on the news?"

"Oh, you're actually right about that, mostly".

"Yeah, which is why I just check the web if there's anything I wanna know".

"What about newspapers?"

"People would either become sceptical or the journalist would lose all credibility and called a nut-case. There were a few articles on it, but each one when not proven, usually killed or damaged the careers of those journalists".

"Ok, makes fair sense. That is a little bit too much to take in".

"Well, you get used to it".

"But hey, can ask you something?"

"Yeah shoot".

"Do you ever wish you had a normal life? Like, does it ever get frustrating?" I asked her, hoping she'd say no and that being a ninja was the best thing in the world, that there's never a dull moment when you have bad alien butt to kick.

"...Yeah, at times". She was looking down with a low tone. I had a feeling it was about to get all mushy and dramatic. I wasn't too keen on hearing her reasons, I was afraid she'd be talking all night, but I decided to ask anyway.

"Why? This life seems pretty awesome to me. Travelling, meeting new people and kicking butt hard". I gave a cheering smile, hoping she'd smile to, but instead, she looked up at the moon and stars, through the hole in the roof as if hoping to find her words there.

"There's a downside to everything". She said still with a low, sad tone. "It's not like I was given much an option, I was just born into it, and it's a family business I guess. Yes, I get to be unique and this 'being different' creates a strong sense of identity, but, I'd just once in a while like to do something normal, like watch movies with friends or go shopping or something, I guess it's just in our nature to want to belong, just once in a while".

"Hugh, I never thought about it that way. I kinda figured you enjoyed the travelling and fighting".

"Yeah, but everything gets old after a while".

"Well on the bright side, you have me".

"Haha yeah sure. Anyway, we should start training".

Chapter 6: final preparations

"Come on, Njabulo, that can't be all you've got?! Bring it".

"I think I'd rather keep it, I can't breathe". I said panting, sweat all over me like I was getting marinated or something.

"Dude, it's only been a couple of hours and that's including meditating. You need to improve your combat skills soon".

"I thought all I needed to do was to unlock the powers of this bracelet thingy".

"Well this is part of it, first you meditate, and then you try out your moves so you can get used to it".

"But I'm not sure if I even did the meditating right, I mean, shouldn't I be like able to break your hand just by looking at it, after all that meditating?"

"Trust me, just because you can't suddenly do all karate, taekwondo and other various forms of martial arts moves, doesn't mean you don't know them, besides, an old saying goes, "easy come, easy go", it's gonna take some practice to get it all down".

"I'm just about ready to give up, and that saying should get with the times".

"Just believe in yourself dude, have faith in your skills and capabilities".

"My capabilities are twenty push ups, at least you did fifty with ease".

"Hey, it's not about how many you can do with ease, it's about how many you can do when the ease is gone. You did four sets of ten didn't you?"

"Yeah, so?"

"You didn't give up did you, you did twice your limit, you know why?"

"Because I was trying to look strong and capable".

"No, well yeah, but besides that, you believed in yourself didn't you? You told yourself you were gonna do more than five, and you did, you know what you have?"

"Besides a possibly dislocated shoulder, ouch".

"You have heart, that's what you have. That's the greatest weapon a warrior can have".

"Yeah, the way it beats so fast, I can just pull it out and use it as a gun hahahah".

"Your such an idiot, hahaha, no you won't give up, cause some fights aren't won by making the other person lose, they're won by persevering".

"Well, I guess in a way you make sense, but still...I wish I was stronger for the mission".

"It's understandable, but, life isn't black and white you know, strength isn't necessarily everything".

"Yeah well, you're just saying that because you have a lot of it..."

"In time, you'll see what I'm talking about, for now though, just trust me when I say, you'll do good".

"I'm just gonna say yes".

"Hugh, it'll sink in...Eventually".

"(Yawns) what time is it anyways?"

"(checks her watch) about 11pm, we should probably get to bed now, we could use the rest for tomorrow". We went to bed and the next day we woke up bright and early.

We trained the whole day, it was a lot of work and extremely exhausting, we covered the basics of karate, kung Fu, taekwondo and other martial arts, she also trained me in the use of basic ninja tools such as throwing stars, a staff and other weapons. It was kind of fun learning about it all, I was amazed by how much she knew about weapons, she told me that a weapon is like an extension of me, that I shouldn't completely depend on my weapon and a lot of other stuff. Quite frankly, I just wanted to learn how to use a sword and my fists, but she told me that I had to learn to use different weapons for different situations, I was reluctant at first, but she didn't give me much of a choice.

We did a lot of weight lifting to get my muscles working and in between exercises, we meditated. It was weird, I usually don't exercise, maybe once in a blue moon but, thinking about how the future of the world depended on me, how it was all down to us and this upcoming battle. A lot of pressure was on me, which I guess is why I was pushing myself to my limits, I felt that I needed to get stronger. At night we all came together and discussed the plan in detail, summarised, the plan was,

we use the spaceship (that attacked us and then we captured), to sneak into the base, Zarzar will wear a disguise, since the guys who attacked us, were the same race as her, and find the main engine and the control room and leave tracking beacons for us to find our way there. Most of the ship crew will be asleep since we will sneak in early in the morning, making sneaking in a lot easier for us. I and Stacey will plant explosive on the main engines, while Zarzar and Gwailur activate the self-destruct sequence of the ship, and off we ride into the sunset, simple right.

We went to bed prepared for the plan tomorrow, Linda had to stay behind because his wounds weren't fully healed yet. I ran the plan over and over again in my head, as I tried to sleep, because I couldn't help but fear for the worst, I knew I needed to rest for tomorrow, but I just couldn't stop thinking, about how I got mixed up in all this, about how the government lies to our faces and keeps big secrets such as these from us, but most importantly how I wish I had some pie to eat or something, I was just craving it. I thought about waking up someone and asking if there was any pie in the kitchen, we slept in the same room, but then I figured Zarzar was probably having sweet dreams of killing her brother, so best I not redirect that fury towards me, Stacey would just ninja-chop me for asking something stupid like that and I just didn't want to disturb Gwailur, so instead I just kept thinking about a lot of stuff until I fell asleep.

Chapter 7: Entering the starquest

"Wake up already". I heard Stacey say as she shook me.

"Ahh! I'm up, I'm up, where's the car?"

"Euw morning breath, hahaha, come on. Go brush your teeth, get dressed and let's go". I didn't understand why we had to go so early in the morning, maybe they figured, the earliest bird gets the alien worm, oh well, the earlier we beat them, the better I guess. I could taste my breath, I had morning breath and it tasted sour like acid. I grabbed my toothbrush and face cloth and headed for the bathroom. While I was in the shower, I kept thinking about the plan and mission, I realised that super spies and ninjas were the same thing.

We had breakfast and had changed from our pyjamas to our ninja-yori (ninja clothes, which consisted of light armour, pants, a shirt and a hood and mask covering everything but our eyes), I wore the green one they gave me in the beginning, I tied a black pouch to my right hip, (we each had a pouch), cause I'm right-handed, it was full of shuriken, kunai knives and smoke pellets, those things ninjas throw on the ground to make a smoke screen for escape or distraction, I also tied a staff on my back.

Zarzar, wore light-blue spandex (that covered her entire body, except her hands, head and feet but she wore boots) the same ones worn by the aliens who attacked us at the base, she also had a kakute and Neko-te, she had to carry small unnoticeable weapons because they'd attack her right away if she was carrying something big like a Naginata or something. Stacey's ninja-yori was purple, she had the Chigiriki, the fukiya and darts and the Kusari-gama, apparently she's fond of chains. Gwailur's outfit was black, he carried Nunchucks, the Ono (which complimented his size), the ninja sword, and we each had several kunai knives. We all came out of our rooms, geared up and fired up, walking in sync, like one of those cool action movies, where the heroes come together for the big final throw down between them and the villains. I choose to remember us walking in slow motion to make the memory even cooler.

We boarded the alien craft and were off to beat the wizard of E.T. Zarzar was the one piloting the space craft, apparently the mother ship was somewhere in Kimberley, hiding in a big mine. Inside the ship were computers, used to monitor us and to communicate with the mother ship, the scouter (which is what they told me it was), was about the size of a bus. It was awesome traveling in the scouter, it flew smoothly and fast, the sky was beautifully clear and peaceful, only a few clouds were sailing calmly and gently through the big blue sky, it was a relaxing sight, so much so that I felt like sleeping. I looked at the rest of the team, curious to see if I was the only one enjoying this view, and I was, all of them, Zarzar, Gwailur and Stacey had a serious look on their face, they were very tense too, I figured the best thing was to break the ice somehow maybe with a joke or something, cause we hadn't said a word since we left the base, or the "domain" as they like to call it.

"Anybody else in the mood for pie?" Stacey and Gwailur looked at me and paused.

"No, but maybe we'll find a vending machine on the starquest (which was the name of the big enemy ship we were going to) and you can buy something there".

"Do you think they have alien food or normal food, and I hope they take rands otherwise, why steal rands right?" She just gave me a look.

"Oh, you were being sarcastic weren't you, Stacey?!"

"Nah, just a little bit".

"Oh which reminds me, here's something you guys may need for the battle". Gwailur said reaching down his pocket. "Here's two for you, Stacey, and two for you, Njabulo". He gave us something that looked like gum, small, round and yellow.

"Are you sure master Gwailur"

"Yes I'm sure, you will need this just in case".

"Isn't it a little dangerous?"

"Yes but still".

"Wait what is this and why is it dangerous?"

"It's a pill that heals any and all injuries in less than a second, it lasts for at least 5 hours". Gwailur said.

"Then what's so dangerous about it, in fact why isn't it available to us common people, I mean I'm sure it could help a lot of police or soldiers, to-".

"We're approaching the mine straight below". Zarzar said as she started landing the ship slowly and carefully. I looked outside the window, the starquest was below us, it was huge, it looked like the size of a soccer field, it was blue like the sky and it was round but looked more like a Frisbee than a saucer. It was at the bottom of the mine, resting and hiding. We entered the starquest, safely without drawing suspicion or attention.

"Njabulo, put one in your mouth, chew three times, then swallow". Stacey whispered as we entered the parking area, apparently it's where scouters and various other ships enter and stay.

"First tell me what's so dangerous about it". I was too afraid to eat it, without knowing its side effects. Seeing Stacey eat hers didn't make it any less scary for me.

"We don't have time for this, eat it now". The scouter landed and Zarzar stepped out, she looked at every direction, then gave us the, "all clear", signal, which was that peace sign hippies do, the two fingers up thing, and we all snuck out behind her. The place was big, maybe the size of a rugby field, weird looking alien ships filled the place, but it wasn't that lit up, the lighting was dim but I could see a door far ahead, the place was dead quiet, almost like a ghost town, only filled with space ships instead. Zarzar run forward to check security, halfway she gave us the safe signal and so we followed after her, we made it to the door but hid with our backs pressed against the wall just in case someone came, I guess that's why it's so quiet, it's empty. Zarzar was closest to the door, then Gwailur, then Stacey, then me.

"You guys stay out of sight, I'm going to find the main engines room and the control room, Gwailur, Stacey, and you guys have the blueprint of the ship right?"

"Yes, it's in our navigators".

"Ok, make sure no one sees you and if they do, don't let them live to tell, oh and, Njabulo, eat the pill". Zarzar whispered to us as she straightened up, pulled a card out of her right pocket, swiped it and the doors slide open, letting in a burst of light, which Zarzar disappeared into.

"What blueprints, and how'd you get 'em?" I asked Stacey in a whisper.

"Linda hacked the computers on the scouter and got tons of useful stuff, like the blueprint of this map. Zarzar explained this last night, when we were discussing the plan, weren't you listening?"

"Pssht of course I was listening, I'm just...making sure...my...uhm facts are straight, yeah... [Big smile]. And, just to make sure, what's up with the card, Zarzar just used, do you have to pay to get in, is this some sort of club or something? The extra-terrestrial thieves lounge". She looked at me like she was ready to slice me like a club sandwich.

"Hugh, no you buffoon, we took an access card from the hostage and recreated our own, we had to put Zarzars face on it just in case someone wanted to see it".

"Oh right, of course".

"Now eat the pill already".

"Tell me what's the side effects and why it's so dangerous".

"Ok fine, what the pill does is dramatically increase your cell functioning and replication, meaning you'll heal any injuries extremely fast, which puts a strain on your body. Like, say you were running a lot faster than your normal speed, once you stopped running, than you'd get dead tired. Same thing with your body, after five hours, your body starts to feel the strain".

"Well that isn't too bad".

"Jah, but here's the catch, the more injuries your body sustains and heals while the pill is active, the more painful it is when the pill stops".

"What do you mean?"

"Ok, when the pill stops working and your body is feeling the strain, that's called crashing, the more injuries the pill healed, the greater the strain on your body, it's directly proportionate".

"Well that doesn't sound too bad, I mean the pain will stop at some point right?!"

"Yeah...the thing is, too much of anything can kill you".

"What?!" I said with great shock and fear in my eyes.

"But that's only if you take a lot of damage. You see, like I said the pain is directly proportionate to the injuries healed, your body could get so strained that the pain becomes overwhelming and kills your body, and you".

"And I should eat this pill why again?"

"Because this is a quick-cut mission, if a bunch of enemies attack us and you get hurt, I might be too busy kicking butt to patch you up, and well, I doubt bleeding to death is fun".

"Is there an escape button, or reset button around here, I wanna go home".

"Just eat the pill and trust me".

"Maybe I should just guard the ship you know, make sure it doesn't...suddenly blow up".

"You're a terrible liar you know that".

"Yeah but-".

"Ok how about this, if we make it out alive.....I'll give you a kiss". She said that last part reluctantly but I know she couldn't resist me, my charms were finally starting to set in, my blood sweat-and crying when she wasn't looking worked. I popped the pill in my mouth, chewed three times like they said and swallowed it, I felt stronger and lighter.

"Ok, I'm ready to kick some alien ass, just bring them to me and I will school them on the meaning of pain, heck I'll even give them extra classes".

"Well, you sure have a change in attitude". Gwailur said.

"What the?! Gwailur, I almost forgot you were there". I said startled.

"She's right you are a bad liar, you didn't almost forget, you did forget and besides, I was being stealthy, silent and undetectable, since I'm a ninja after all, it's what we do best".

"Hehe, right well-". I heard a "beep beep".

"Wait". She pulled out something that looked like a phone. "She's planted the first beacon, at the engine room, Njabulo, let's go, and master Gwailur, good luck".

"If things go according to plan, we'll meet up here. Go safe and watch your backs". We walked to the door and Stacey swiped a card, the doors slide open. A burst of light flooded in again and this time I was entering the belly of the beast, I did not know what lied ahead, but I hoped it wasn't a painful beating. Stacey walked through the door and I followed after.

Chapter 8: Faith in yourself

"Ok...I was not expecting it to be this empty". I said as we walked into the empty and dead quiet corridor. It was blue and futuristic-looking, I looked to left and right and the corridor wasn't that long.

"Quick, your back against the wall, now". Stacey said doing just that. When I did, she poked my chest and somehow I became invisible, literally, I freaked out at first but she told me the outfit had tiny cameras at the back, that took pictures and made my outfit blend in. We headed right, taking each step nice, slow and quiet. Being deep behind enemy lines meant we had to be stealthy and go unnoticed as much as possible. Slowly we proceeded, we reached a fork in the road or whatever, and we went in the corridor to our right.

"Hey why is it so empty anyways? Shouldn't there be like an army going up and down these corridors?"

"Most of them are asleep and the rest are probably out on missions somewhere".

"Oh, so that's why we came here so early in the morning".

"Yeah, even aliens hate waking up early in the morning".

"Where are the main engines anyway?"

"They should be close, around...that corner". The corner was a few steps ahead, I was glad the mission was almost done, and I couldn't wait for that kiss, then two Ickberians came from that exact corner, talking to one another, wearing baby blue spandex. We stood perfectly still in hopes that they wouldn't notice us. They walked right passed us and we were in the clear. Then one of them sneezed.

"Bless you". I said instinctively. They looked straight at me and I heard the one guy say.

"See, now we're both hearing voices, I'm telling you, it's the pie we ate". And they continued to walk away. She grabbed my hand and dragged me to the door on the corner. She swiped the card and in we were. The room was big and four big engines rested in the centre of the room. She hit me in the chest and the camouflaje was gone. The room was red because all the lights were red. It also seemed empty, there was a level above us, but the floor of the level above us was only wide enough for at least two people. A bridge extended from one side to another and was in between the four engines. We walked towards the engines, Stacey gave me two explosives to plant on the two engines on the right, she planted two on the engines on the left and our part was mostly done.

"Well look what we have here". A voice came from the level above us. Five Ickberians, standing there looking at us. They wore red spandex though. "You guys sure took your time, my fists were starting to get really hungry". The one in the middle, who was crouching down said with a big grin. They jumped down.

"Wait, you knew we were coming, how?"

"Simple, little girl, the guys we sent to spy on you were the most impatient, annoying, nasty group of people who almost never follow orders, we could find. We knew they'd go against orders and attack you, and that you'd wipe the floor with them, most of us were glad to get rid of them really". His voice was smooth yet oddly familiar. He seemed to be the leader of the group since he was the only one that spoke and he stood in front of them.

"What?! So you tricked us into your hand?"

"Basically, but hey, all's fair in love and war, a ninja especially knows that".

"Hello, Gwailur can you hear me. Zarzar are you there. Hello, hello, anyone". Stacey said as she tried to reach the others with the two way communicator. "Darn it, they jammed the signal".

"So now what do we do, Stacey, run or fight and I'm cool with either but running wouldn't exactly ruin my day, I'm just saying".

"Hahaha, liked I'd let you guys escape, our plan must succeed, it's a shame you didn't see the light and join us when you had the chance".

"What are you talking about, when did you ask us to join?"

"Oh, didn't they tell you. We all used to be class mates, me, my buddies, most of the shipmates, the boss, STACEY, Zarzar, Linda and Gwailur". He said with a great big smile. "In fact, this is kind of a class reunion now that I think about, too bad those injuries I gave Linda left him missing out on this, but at least I settled that score I used to have with him, hehehe". Then it hit me, I remembered his voice. It hit me so hard I took a step back and heard a buzzing in my ears. It was him from the bank, when this all started, and with all the new information he just told me about him being a ninja had me paralysed were I stood trying to process it all and what I was supposed to feel and think. Was I supposed to feel betrayed that Zarzar and them never told me about this. Was I supposed to feel scarred that these guys were as tough if not tougher than Stacey and Linda, who I could never dream of beating in a fight, and out-numbered us five-to-two? All hope, all reasoning and all thought left me for a second. I was unsure if I was in a state of panic, shock or deep fear, the feeling was a bit familiar. It reminded me of when I entered running for athletics at school back in grade 7. I then quickly snapped back into the out-numbered situation I was in, it felt like I was gone forever but coming back I figured it was only a second, since nothing had changed, we were still at a standstill with the enemy, no one had made a move, I guess that guy must have been savouring the look on my face, enjoying seeing his foe mentally destroyed or something.

"Njabulo, don't worry, we can take them". Her words broke the loud silence, but I had a hard time believing her words, it seemed like the odds were painfully against us and we couldn't run. Stacey didn't seem to be in the mood for a retreat or surrender, even if we did run, they'd catch us, it's their ship, they probably know it like the back of their hands, we were between a rock and a hard place. So the only option really was to fight with our all and hope we win, I put my fists in front of my face (like Stacey was doing), prepared to fight, to the half death at the most, I mean past that I doubt would be any use.

"You get the kids, I get the bombs". As soon as he said that, the two on his left dashed to me and two on his right dashed to Stacey. I stood there trying to think of what to do, they were fast and were right in front of me before I could say, "Hugh oh", literally. I ducked and jumped back to evade their hits, one pulled out a staff he was carrying on his back, which reminded me that I had weapons too, I grabbed my staff quick and jumped back again as the other threw his kama, at me. I was afraid that I was moving back too often and that I'd end with my back against the wall, Stacey, told me that I never want to find myself in that situation, because my movements will be restricted, which will cause me to panic, so I decided that it was my turn to charge at them. I did while yelling, "Kiaaaaa!!!" (A trick, Stacey told me scares the enemy and gives me a little boost), and swung my staff at them. They dodged all my attacks like I was on slow-motion. I wasn't fast enough, even with all the tremendous hard work and effort I put into my training, I was barely a threat to them. I was furious and bitterly disappointed at the same time. I just kept trying to hit them but they were too quick, the other guy brought his staff, swinging at full force, straight down, I managed to block it with my staff, but unfortunately, we were at a standstill. I was slightly bending backwards doing my best to keep his staff from brutally crushing my face. The other guy, casually walked right passed me and I couldn't see where he was going, then I heard metal, slide against metal and I knew he was picking up his kama.

"Stacey, help me. Please". I looked to my left and saw Stacey fighting off the other two guys, with her chigiriki. She seemed a bit tired, but was handling those guys, they had a few cuts and bruises and one of them was on his knees in pain.

"Kinda got my hands full right now. You're going to have to help yourself". Came her gruesome and shocking reply.

"But, I can't, Stacey, I can't!!" I shouted in fear and eyes starting to fill up with tears as I heard the footsteps of the other guy, casually and slowly draw nearer and nearer, he dragged his weapons on the ground to scare and taunt me, as I stood there, holding back the one's guy attack, while the other came to finish me off were I stood. "I trained, and trained. I went further than my limits, Stacey, ok! I gave it all I got and I know it. I'm supposed to be stronger, all that training should've made me at least able to put up a fight against these guys. But I'm still weak, I barely improved. I thought training was supposed make me stronger?!!" At that point, tears were running down my face, as the guy kept getting closer, and closer and, Stacey was busy fighting the other two guys.

"That's the problem, Njabulo. You're expecting yourself to be stronger. Don't expect, believe, forget logic, believe you can beat them and you will, believe you've wasted your time training and you have. You have to believe in yourself, if you don't, who will?! So do you believe you're stronger?"

Just then I remembered back to grade 7.

Chapter 9: Don't give up

"Get ready. On your marks...Go". The race began. I had signed up for the 1500, athletics running. For the past two months, I woke up in the morning around 5am and took a long jog. I was preparing and training for this day. I wanted to win and be number one, really bad. I was determined to win, I guess I just wanted to have accomplished something before I went to high school. There were six of us running. It was James, Boitumelo, Tj, Zack, Fred and me. 1500 meant we had to run three and a half times. For some reason, I couldn't run all that fast, as soon as the race started I felt anxious. I was worried what if these guys have trained more than me, what if I just wasn't fast enough. Negative thoughts just flooded my mind but I ignored them. I was far behind the others and couldn't catch up.

We entered the last lap and I was dead tired, I kept asking myself why? Why didn't I improve? Why couldn't I catch up? And why didn't the training help. I just wanted to give up and walk away from the track, but I felt I owed it to myself to at least finish it, I was too close to just simply quite and walk away now. I got to finish line, but I was in last place. Tj, Boitumelo and James won. I was disappointed in myself, I simply couldn't believe that I had woken up around 5am every morning for the past two months for nothing. All my hope and determination was gone, I just sat by myself away from the others watching the other events take place at the school athletics, looking at the big field I just ran across. I was alone with my depressed thoughts, then my friend, Zack, came over to cheer me up. He must've noticed that I was feeling blue.

"Misery loves company they say".

"Yeah, they say a lot of things that are lies don't they?!"

"Come on, Njabulo, cheer up. There are other things you can do besides running you know?!"

"Yeah, but, it's just that I've always loved running..."

"Just try something else for a while".

"What's the point?! I trained for this and I still lost. I'm probably just gonna suck at everything else..."

"Come on, that doesn't sound like a champion, to me".

"That's cause you're talking to the guy who came out last place, if you want a champion, then go to Tj or something".

"Hey, you know what my dad told me when I began training last week for this?"

"No. What?"

"You'll never do it, unless you believe you can".

"Well, I believe I can give up".

"That's not what I mean. Quitters don't win and winners don't quite".

"And you don't lose unless you try".

"It's just one race, stop being so negative, man".

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever".

"Ok, fine I'll leave you to mope, cause I can see you're not in a mood for talking, but try not to be too hard on yourself, it's just a race anyway".

"See you around". He left and I was sitting by myself again, still trying to figure out what went wrong. For the rest of that week I was cold and distant, my friends felt they needed to cheer me up, so they did. In the craziest way ever. I was walking to the gate to wait for the bus, then my friends ambushed me from both sides with water balloons. I was trapped and got hit with like a hundred of them or so. I dropped my bag and chased them around the school. After all that running, my disappointment and anger just disappeared. I just stopped chasing my friends and started laughing for no reason and my friends joined in the laughing. I chilled with my friends and climbed the 4 o'clock bus instead of the 2 o'clock bus that day. I guess their prank helped me get over losing.

Stacey's words made me realise why I had lost. I didn't believe in myself, at the very beginning of the race, I was afraid and so I lost faith and confidence in myself. The reason why all that training didn't help, was cause I didn't believe in myself. What I needed the most was what I just couldn't see. Right then and there, I knew the answer.

Chapter 10: The strength within

"I believe". I said quietly, forcing the words out of me. "I believe!" I said the words louder this time, really meaning it.

"It's too late for a little pep talk, kid". The guy behind me said raising his one kama in the air, I was looking up so I could see it right above me. "Say goodnight". He said as he brought it down aiming for my face.

"I BELIEVE!!!-". This time I screamed it out at the top of my voice meaning it. The bracelet I was wearing under my ninja outfit, so it wouldn't get lost or fall off, started glowing and I felt Linda's skills download into my brain and body. I pushed my staff up, sending the guy with the staff flying back and I donkey-kicked the one behind me with my right foot, causing him to lose his grip on both of his kamas. I quickly knocked back the kama, that was in the air, sending a safe distance from me

so it wouldn't slice into my back. I thrust my staff into the face of the guy who had the kama and span it back to hit the other guy, taking both of them out with ease. I could feel the adrenaline rushing through me, my heart beating and my muscles tensing at that moment.

"See, all you needed to do was believe in yourself". Stacey said. I looked to her and saw that she already knocked out the two guys she was fighting.

"Man that was awesome. I feel like I could take on an entire army now or something". I felt super powerful, it was indescribable, and I thought I was invincible for a second there. It felt good, not just to be powerful but, to have my efforts and hard work pay off.

"Good, now it's my turn to have fun". We both shot a look to my right and saw the leader guy, standing there with the bombs in his hands, smiling. He looked very strong and muscular. He was an lckberian.

"Njabulo, we have to go, now".

"What why, there's two of us and only one of him. We can totally beat him".

"No, we can't. Zanith is too strong and too dangerous for just you and me. We have to go find Zarzar and Gwailur".

"What happened to believing in yourself? If we look for the others he could warn the ship or something. We have to take him out-".

"Listen to me!" I could hear a bit of fear in her voice, which made me nervous. "We have to go find the others, just trust me ok".

"Ok, fine".

"Oh yeah sure, I'll just sit right here and watch you guys, leisurely walk out-Or, or I could just kill you now and make things simpler. For me that is". Stacey dug into her pouch, threw several shuriken at him and a smoke pallet on the ground. I closed my eyes and coughed, I then felt someone grab my left arm and drag me back. My eyes were still closed cause the smoke hurt them. There was a bit of onion in it. I know this because Stacey explained it to me. I tried rubbing my eyes but that didn't help much. Whoever was dragging me stopped for a second.

"We have to get to the others in the control room. It's not far from here. We just have to sprint from here to the end of the hall, turn left, and the first door to our right should be the elevator to the control room". I heard Stacey's voice.

"Where's that tough guy who wanted to pound us?"

"The poison in the shuriken will keep him down for a while. Long enough for us to get to the control room". The pain in my eyes was almost over and I could see slightly, when she grabbed my arm again and run to the other end of the hall at such great speed, I almost fell trying to keep up, as she dragged me along. When we reached the end of the hall, instead of slowing down to turn or even making a sharp turn, she jumped to the side and run full speed again when we reached the other corridor. It was fun, she was amazing, I had never seen-even though I couldn't see much-someone run so fast and in control, and when we reached the elevator, she stopped so easily as if she was walking.

"So where's the up button?"

"Dude, we can't simply take the elevator up".

"Why not? I mean that's what it's for".

"Yeah, but that would be like announcing that we're coming. We need the element of surprise".

"But they already know we're here".

"Hey, where's the fun in being a ninja, if you don't have the element of surprise? Besides, what if they shut down the elevators when they see us inside. We'd be sitting ducks".

"Ok, then how do we get up there?"

"Let me think..."

"What about the stairs?"

"Nah, they may have a few people waiting for us there...so if we can't use the elevators or stairs we..." Suddenly her face lit up, meaning she figured it out"...Ok, follow me, we can't waste time, standing here".

"Well, what's the plan?"

"Just grab my hand and you'll see". She extended her opened hand towards me and I took it, with a look of confusion on my face (no I did not have a mirror to see my face, but I did know I had that look, after all, it's my face) and we started running again. "I hope you're not afraid of heights". Is what I heard her say while we ran.

Chapter 11: A bit of fresh air

"I HATE YOU RIGHT NOW". I yelled, trying to compete with the noise the wind was making. I was surprised there was wind at all, down here in the mines, but oh well, I don't do geography so I won't question Mother Nature-much.

"IT'S THE BEST WAY TO SNEAK UP ON THEM". She replied. We were outside of the ship now. We ran to the parking area or whatever and we got outside the ship, and Stacey gave me bands with long spikes to put on my feet and hands, she said we were going to climb to the control room from outside the ship. I looked at her like a mad person, but she said it's the best option we had in the given situation.

"YOU KNOW, MAYBE WE SHOULD'VE SURPRISED THEM, BY DOING WHAT THEY'D EXPECT US TO DO, WHICH THEY WOULDN'T EXPECT, YOU KNOW". She was next to me, since she tied our wrists together with a chain, as a precaution in case one of us falls. It was my first time doing climbing up something besides a tree and my bed. Luckily having Linda's skills helped greatly with the climbing.

"BUT THEN THEY MIGHT HAVE TAKEN THE PRECAUTION, SO THIS IS BETTER BECAUSE WE WON'T BE CAGED IN LIKE WE WOULD IF WE WERE IN THE ELEVATOR". The wind started dying down and we were now at the arch of the ship, the control room in view. The ship looked like a blue saucer upside down, but the control room, which was at the very top of the ship, looked like a rectangle from the outside. The windows surrounding it clear and clean, the blue roof, well just there.

"Ok, so now what?" I whispered.

"Now we stealthily make our way to the windows and see what's happening in their".

"Roger that". We crawled towards the window, the top of the ship was levelled enough so that gravity wasn't a problem, so we took of the spikes. We made it to the window and looked inside. I looked around and it was pretty big. From where I was looking, I could see steps, in the middle of the room, going down to the lift, all the way to the other side of the room. There were computers and table and chairs in rows of two, and there was like 5 pairs. The room was purple in colour and had two doors besides the elevators, one each side of the room, must have been rest rooms. I only noticed a couple of people in the control room, my eyes darted around looking for Zarzar...then I finally saw her, sitting at a computer."Ughm, ok, now what?"

"That's weird, I was expecting to see Zarcas fighting Zarzar or Gwailur...what's going on here?!"

"Ughm, I hear a beeping alarm-like sound that's increasing in speed, should I worry?"

"Quick, get down!" She jumped back and turn around, and me still being chained to her was dragged along fell to the floor next to her as the windows exploded and glass began raining down upon us.

"WHAT WAS THAT?"

"Sensor grenades, anything stands in the range for longer than thirty seconds, then it explodes. Their prepared for us".

"Big time". We got to our knees and turned around. We looked back into the control room, through the destroyed windows, to see a different image from a few seconds ago. Some muscular looking guy was in front of the elevator doors, in a calm fighting position. Zarzar and Gwailur were charging at him; Zarzar punched high and Gwailur kicked low but the guy dodge their simultaneous attack and jumped to the side to get some space.

"Zarcaz". Stacey exclaimed. She shot to her feet and dashed for the window, me getting pulled along again, the chain was a bit longer than the length of my entire arm. We both jumped in and landed on a platform in the room. I looked around and saw, henchmen laying around like toys in a kids room, beaten up. Zarcas wore black pants with a light armoured-black jacket that left his arms bare. He was Ickberian, like Zarzar.

"What?"

"It was a security video we were watching". She must've sensed my confusion, to answer me. I could pick up anger in her voice, but couldn't figure out why. And again we ran, I was really getting tired of all the running, literally and figuratively.

"Aaargh!", Stacey yelled at the top of her voice as she threw a fist, then a barrage of fists at Zarcas and I had to try and synchronise with her movements and even with our combined efforts, we didn't manage to land a single blow on him. A hand grabbed me and pulled me back swiftly, so much so, that I almost lost my footing.

"How did your side of the plan go?" Zarzar asked.

"Not too good, they took down the bombs". I replied.

"Zanith". Said Stacey.

"We tried to communicate with you guys, but the signals were jammed". Said Gwailur.

"Yeah, we know. Seems like this is where Sally meets Marry-".

"What, who's that, Stacey? Are they our back up?"

"Actually, Njabulo, it's a saying, it means, this is where the plan falls apart".

"Ooh". We were all panting, the four of us, facing Zarcaz who seemed only a little bit tired, which this is the part I always hated in stories and movies. You know, the part where the heroes are losing, everything is going bad and you can't see any chance or hope of them beating the bad guys and as much as you know that they'll win in the end and the day will be-relatively-saved, you still can't help but to be hooked into it and want to know how they get out of that jam.

"It's ok, you can catch your breath, I really don't have anything to worry about". Said Zarcaz. I also hate it when they taunt, trying to make you lose hope, so I felt I had to say something.

"Look, I don't know how it works on your home planet, no offence Zarzar, but here on earth, the good guys always win".

"Depends on who is the real villain, perception, is the key word".

"Whad'ya mean?"

"I'm actually trying to help your race, by ruling it, they haven't told you everything I said did they? Just that I plan to control everyone right?...Well that's not the full story".

"So, this is the boss? Who is this Zarcaz guy anyways?" I asked.

"He is my brother". Said Zarzar with a voice trembling in fury.

"So they haven't told you about me I see".

"So, what's up with the sibling feud?"

"It must have something to do with what happened between me and father".

"You killed him and now I, will kill you". I was shocked to the bone to hear that. I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

Chapter: 12 gone with the wind

"Pssht, doesn't matter what the full story is. Besides, I'd never buy into your lies, buddy". I said with a clenched fist and an angry expression. To think, that he would kill his own father, just filled me with anger for some reason.

"Well at least hear the full story first-". The elevator doors opened and Zanith stepped out, grinning his evil grin."Aghh, just the person I needed".

"What do you need Zarcaz?"

"I'll be right back, keep them alive until then will you". Before I realised it, he was literally right in front of me, he moved so fast, closing the short distance between us, I didn't even notice him at all. He grabbed the small-ninja-sword on his back, and I just saw a flash of silver in front of me, for a mere second. His hand was on my chest, palm open, then he pushed me with such a great force I lost my breath for a second and was hurtling backwards in the air. He ran after me. I looked back at the others, staring at me in shock, and I noticed that the chain, that was tied to my wrist and Stacey's wrist, was cut. As I was hurtling backwards Zarcaz, running besides me at an amazing speed, suddenly jumped and I could feel a tug on the back of my shirt, it was Zarcaz pulling me up, as we emerged from the same window me and Stacey jumped in through. Then he began running,

dragging me along, all I could see was the window and the blue exterior of the ship getting smaller and smaller. He jumped again, then as soon as he landed on the ground, he was back to the same pace. We entered a tunnel, and I remembered that I had kunai knives, so I grabbed one and stabbed his arm with it, he didn't stop running so I kept randomly stabbing the arm that was holding me. Finally he released his grip and stopped, while I fell on my back and continued sliding. I sat up and looked around, it was completely dark, and so I pulled down the shades from under the hood. I could see in night vision, but they made everything green. We were in a clearing with multiple tunnels leading to multiple directions. There were tracks coming from all the tunnels, joining at the centre of the clearing and Zarcas was standing a few steps in front of me, rubbing his arm.

"If you're planning on killing me here, you should know...I'd prefer it if you didn't". I was holding the kunai, up to him-arm extended and kunai horizontal-just like Stacey showed me. Ready to defend myself against his attack.

"If I wanted to kill you, I would have done so in the control room, no, I came here to tell you my side of the story".

"Hugh, why couldn't you tell me back there?"

"Because after I tell you the whole story, I'm going to ask you to pick a side, and I wouldn't want them interfering".

"I told you, I'm never turning evil, no matter what, I'm a good guy till the end".

"And as I told you, it depends on who is the real villain. After I tell you how I killed my father, you can decide, which one of us, is the true villain".

"Fair enough, I guess I have no choice but to listen".

Chapter 13: A bedtime story

"You may think that Presidents and royal families rule and control countries, but I shall tell you now, you couldn't be further from the truth".

"Well then, who's in charge, more aliens?"

"No, it's money. You earthlings have a saying. 'Money talks', do you not?! Money rules everything, people are bribed and bribed. You all hunger for money, you have insatiable greed, and I find it strange that you value something as weak as money. It comes and goes, some of you value it more than live itself, but I cannot fully grasp, why you put so much power in money.

When I had learnt this, I decided that I would save humanity from its own greed, before it destroyed itself. I gained many followers, who agreed with my view, my plan was simple: steal all the money in the world, so we would control it, and not let ourselves be corrupted by it. I asked my father to join me, but he refused, he said we should give humans a chance, that hopefully in time, they would learn from their errors. My idea spread to everyone in the project, I had tried to get everyone to see my point of view. We were all divided, those for my plan and those against it, my father being completely against it. At some points, fights broke out between the two parties, there was a great deal of tension, so we decided to leave the project and pursue my plan, but there were those who stood in our way, father being the most passionate. We could not simply walk out of the training grounds, so there was a great battle, 17 years ago, father and I fought to the death-and I won.... Only half of us escaped, the rest were either killed in battle or, imprisoned afterwards.

I still do not see why father refused to see it my way, he knew better than me, how this world operates, he had spent more time here than me. During my time, as a ninja, in the Alien shinobi, project, I have travelled to many places on this planet, seen a lot of things and learnt even more. Rich men, hold power, those with money control the rules and those without money are destroyed by the rules".

"Your father was right, you should give us a chance, we at least deserve that much".

"A chance to destroy yourselves? We were brought here and trained to protect all who needed us, even if we have to protect them from themselves". He said strongly.

"But what if the power goes to your head, what if you also become corrupt by the money?"

"Preposterous, I have no greed, only a sense of justice".

"Well that's a broken kind of justice yo". He then pulled out his sword, from the sheath on his back.

"You must understand, it is for your own benefit, now, will you choose to join me and save human kind, or do you wish to be one of the many people I crush along the way?"

Chapter 14: The mysterious Kunoichi

"Well I-" I was afraid to reply, if I said yes, he might have seen through my lie and unwillingness to join, but if I said no, he'd probably turn me into sliced bread before I even finished saying it. I was in between a rock and a hard place.

"Do you not see it boy, this is the opportunity of a lifetime for you, we can save human kind, do you not wish to see your kind prosper?! So what will it be, drop your kunai, and join me". I wasn't sure what to do, I thought of ways to escape. I could try running away, but he's pretty fast, I witnessed that back in the control room. There's no way I could beat him in a fight and trying to lose him in these tunnels will only get me lost. I started to panic, deep down inside, trying to come up with a plan, then suddenly, he raised his arm to the side and caught what looked like two needles between his fingers.

I looked to the side and from one of the tunnels, emerged a kunoichi (a female ninja), who I didn't recognise. She held a pipe in her hand, which meant what Zarcaz caught was actually blow darts, tipped with poison. Her ninja-yori was all black, with a pink kitten stamp on the left of the chest. She looked like an adult.

"Have you stooped so low, Zarcaz?"

"You still interfere? I heard you quite the project after the battle".

"I have one last thing I have to take care of, before I retire".

"And that is?"

"Ending you, ARGHHH". She pulled out two kunai knives, and charged straight at him. It was an amazing fight, hard to put into words. All I can say is, there was a lot of jumping around, dodging each other's attacks and shuriken being thrown. My eyes could barely keep up with their intense fight and movements, at one point I was afraid of getting caught in the cross-fire. The fight lasted for maybe 5 minutes or so until, they both just stood there, holding their weapons ready, sweating like pigs.

"If only your father didn't stop me from killing you then".

"You would never have been able to defeat me, in fact, enjoy your last few breaths".

"I don't think so". She charged at him and her kunais met his sword. They stood at a stale might, applying all their force to push each other. "Hey kid, RUN".

"What?"

"I said- RUN, I'll handle this". She nodded at one of the tunnels, then I got up quickly and ran.

I felt kinda bad, leaving her like that, without even so much as helping her, but then again, she did tell me to run, so I ran and ran, as fast as I could, I just kept running. The sounds of metal, clashing against metal grew dimmer and dimmer, until I saw a light, it was the tunnel leading back to the ship. I stopped running, and tried to think of what to do. If I go back to the control room, than Zanith will be there, after all, if they had defeated him, they probably would have gone looking for me by now, and found me, or maybe I should go back and help whoever that person is that saved me from Zarcas. Wait a minute, (I checked my watch) it's been like three hours since the mission began, not that much time left. I gotta do something, and I gotta do it quick. I thought to myself. I was at a cross-road, I was too scared to do either, but I knew a decision had to be made, and quick. Then I suddenly realised- the more I thought about it, the more I got scared, so right then and there, I just ran, I still can't say the choice I made was the best one or not, but I just stuck with it. My every fibre was telling me it was a bad idea, but since I already made the decision, it was too late to turn back-it was like going on a huge slide, if you're too frightened to do it, than you just have to stop thinking and jump in, that way It'll be too late to turn back.

Chapter 15: A good day to die

I got there and they were still battling, but Zarcas seemed to be winning. "Hey! kunoichi". She was on one knee, breathing heavy and a few feet away from Zarcas, who seemed to be barely able to stand.

"I told you to run, what are you doing back here?!" She maintained eye contact with Zarcas.

"I can't just leave you here, come with me so we can regroup with the others, our number will be more than enough to take them down".

"I didn't say go back to your friends, I said run, leave this place altogether. This life isn't for you, trust me kid, you're better of forgetting all this". I was shocked and left speechless, I thought she was the back up, here to help us all.

"I'm not a coward, and I'm not leaving my friends! Maybe this life isn't for me, but giving up isn't my thing".

"Listen, I'm not asking you to walk away from this...I'm asking you not to step any deeper into this world, there are better things, just don't take this life. Believe me when I say, giving up is a strength at times, and this is one of those times".

"Not when people's lives are at stake, the world is depending on us-me-YOU-".

My words were cut short by a sharp and sudden pain in my stomach. The kunoichi was looking at me with wide-eyes and a look of shock and horror, then I heard Zarcas speak. "Sorry to disturb your little bonding time, but like you humans say, time is money". I looked his way and his hand was splayed

open and out-stretched towards me, I looked down and saw the kunai knife covered, with splattered blood on it-my blood, piercing my stomach. I fell to my knees and heard the kunoichi scream."Nooooooooooooooooo!"

Chapter 16: A family matter

She shot to her feet and ran towards me. She grabbed me, then threw a few smoke-screen pellets behind her. She carried me, in her arms, as she ran back through the tunnel to the ship.

"Take me to them". I managed to only say that much. I was starting to feel cold, my strength was completely gone, and blood was slowly starting to fill up in my mouth.

"Damn you. Why did you have to come back?!!" She was crying, I couldn't understand why she would cry for me. Who was she, that she came right when I needed her, anyways? Her tears were falling on my face as we reached the end of the tunnel. She jumped and landed on the ship's exterior, then kept running until we got to the top and jumped into the control room. "Somebody help!"

I managed to look across and saw Zanith taking a beating from a bruised up Gwailur, and Stacey and Zarzar, catching their breath sitting, with their backs supported by the desks. Stacey looked this way, then got up and ran towards me.

"What happened?" Stacey asked, then, grabbed the kunai knife and pulled it out, which was extremely painful.

"What are you doing?"

"Don't worry, he'll be just fine". My wound healed up and I was feeling better, I was surprised that the pill-thing worked so fast. The kunoichi put me down.

"Trust me kid, the pay isn't worth the job". Then she jumped out of the control room and vanished.

"I'm so glad you're ok". Stacey said as she hugged me tight.

"Yeah, so am I. You can thank that kunoichi, who was she anyway?"

"Beats me". We heard a thud, then looked at the direction of the noise. Gwailur knocked Zanith out.

"Njabulo, are you alright?" Zarzar asked as she came running towards me and also joined in the group hug. "We tried to go after you, but Zanith called for back-up"

"I'm fine, I'm fine, but thanks for asking-it's ok, really guys".

"Njabulo!" Gwailur said running towards me. "You're alive I-".

"ARGHHH". We looked up and saw Zarcaz jumping from the window and landing a few feet in front of us. He was a bit torn up from the fight with the kunoichi.

"That's it, I'm taking you down, you monster". Gwailur said as he left my side and approached him.

"No, he's mine". Zarzar said as she stopped Gwailur. "Pass me a kunai". Stacey gave her one and she charged at Zarcaz. They clashed, kunai versus sword. At first they were at a standstill, then they both jumped back.

"So, little sister, how about one final spar?" He said and dropped his sword.

"I'm going to kill you, and avenge father...I swear". She dropped her kunai and they charged at each other again, but this time, they went hand to hand. She kicked, he blocked with a fist. He punched, she dodged. It was epic. They were using martial arts to fight. Some mad hand-to-hand action was going on. I could feel the intensity in the air. They seemed to be evenly matched, because neither of them had landed a punch on each other yet.

"You guys go to the engines and carry out the mission, I'll be right behind you". Zarzar said.

"What? We're not leaving you!" I replied.

"She's right, Njabulo, we can't just stand here and idle by". Gwailur said.

"Exactly, we should jump in and beat Zarcaz together".

"No, we can't".

"And why not?"

"Because it's something she needs to do on her own".

"What if she loses the fight?"

"Trust me, this is important to her-we shouldn't help, if we intervene, she may never get closure".

"Isn't life just a little bit more important than closure!?"

"Sigh, it's never that simple, Njabulo".

"Njabulo, please go". Zarzar said while fighting.

"Stacey, talk some sense into them, we can't leave her behind". Stacey looked at me with sad eyes, about to tear up, she sucker-punched me in the gut and I was left temporarily stunned. She picked me up over her shoulder.

"Let's go, master Gwailur". They ran to the elevator. I looked up, to see Zarzar and Zarcaz still in a heated battle, but it seemed like Zarcaz was winning, he was starting to land blows on her and she was tiring out then the doors closed.

"Zarzar..." I whispered.

Chapter 17: A stroll down pain lain

"Ding". The elevator went.

"We've reached the bottom floor, now let's go blow up those engines". Gwailur said as the doors opened.

"Sorry about that". Stacey said as she put me down. "It had to be done".

"You had to leave a friend behind?!"

"It's not like that ok, you have to understand".

"I can't, I can't understand how you guys don't even care enough to stop her".

"We had to, Njabulo! We had to ok. If we stopped her she would've never gotten over it. You don't know what she's feeling inside". Said Gwailur. "All that anger and frustration, you don't have to

understand why we left her, you just have to understand why she has to do it...alone". We began walking to the engines.

We got to the engine room without harm.

"Do you have any bombs left, Stacey?" Asked Gwailur.

"Just the small back-up ones".

"We'll have to make due". He walked to an engine, ripped it open and started messing around with the wiring. "Stacey, please pass me one".

"Yeah sure (tosses a bomb at him). What are you planning?"

"I'm gonna connect the bomb to the engine, making the engine itself a bomb. I'll do it for each one".

"Ok, I'm done with all four now".

"How long till they detonate?" Stacey asked.

"I set them for 10 minutes each, so we better get going".

"What about Zarzar?" I asked.

"Let me radio her. Zarzar, come in, we'll fly up to the window and pick you up there in the next 5 minutes, over". We left the engine room and found hundreds of minions waiting for us.

"Ughm, guys what do we do?" I asked.

"Simple, we charge straight through!!" Follow me". Gwailur charged right through them all. There were so many of them, like a miny-army, luckily for us, they weren't expecting us, so they weren't armed. Gwailur kept charging through them all and we were right behind him. We finally broke through all of them and were in the clear. Then I saw it up ahead.

We were almost to the door, to the landing area. I could see it, only a couple of feet away, when all of a sudden I felt a great pain all over my body, encompassing me, excruciatingly. Gwailur and Stacey also seemed to be in the same pain. We all stopped dead in our tracks, paralyzed by the pain. I fell to my knees, then flat on my stomach, I could barely move the way the pain was so overwhelming. I looked up and Gwailur and Stacy where in more or less the same state as me. Stacey, right in front of me, rolled up into a ball on the ground, lying on her side. Gwailur, a few steps away, sitting up against the wall, clenching his side with pain written all over his face-his pink hippo, and slightly human-ish face.

"DAMN IT, WHY NOW". I heard Stacey, curse to the top of her voice. It was the pills, those damned little, yellow devils. Just when we were so close, now they had to expire and just as I thought things were bad, I heard voices from behind.

"Well, well, well, look what we have here. Sitting ducks, hahaha". One of the voices said. I could hear their footsteps as they walked closer and closer. I tried the best I could to get up, but all my muscles were tensed up and straining, I had no energy and my body felt heavy.

"How long-do the affects-last?" I managed to say through the pain.

"A couple of minutes". Stacey replied.

"Yet unfortunately, we don't have a couple of minutes". Said Gwailur.

"Yep, but it's plenty of time for us". Said one of the minions, now standing right behind me. He knelt down and pulled out a kunai knife from my pouch. "So, which one of you should we kill first hehehe?"

"I am master Gwailur, of Jonin Rank, I will not let you bring harm to them!" He said as he slowly got up to his feet. He charged at them. I couldn't see cause it was behind me, but I did hear some butt being kicked, then a thud on the ground, so it must've been someone being K.O.ed. A hand grabbed my collar from the back and lifted me up, and I was just dangling there like a puppet.

"Ok, let's go before we're out of time". He put my arm around the back of his neck then picked up Stacey and did the same. I was on his left side, she was on his right side. He dragged us to the door. Stacey pulled out the card and opened the door.

"Guys, I don't think I'll be able-to carry you all the way to the-ship".

"We'll have to-work together than. On the count of three". Stacey said. "One...two...three". We all started walking, carrying each other. It was very painful, but I knew I had to, I knew giving up and falling back down was not an option. As much as every step killed me, I wasn't going to stop. It felt like we were walking forever.

"We're almost there, master Gwailur, just a little bit more". The ship was just a bit up ahead.

"I don't think I can-go on for much longer".

"It's ok-master Gwailur, you can rest-we'll carry you from here". Said Stacey. He stopped walking and so we carried him. He must have put himself through a lot, fighting those guys, so he deserved to take a break.

When we finally got to the ship, we put Gwailur down on a seat and Stacey took the controls. The pain was starting to become bearable.

Chapter 18: Good intentions

"Hello, Zarzar, do you read me, we don't have much time till those engines explode. We're in the ship, waiting outside the window of the control room. We have to go. Now". We waited for a response but got none. "Hello, Zarzar, are you there? Do you need help?...hello, Zarzar; Zarcas, does anyone read me?".

"Should I go in after her, Stacey?"

"Can you move again?"

"If you're referring to the pain, then yes, it's almost completely gone, it's just my stomach that's still in pain".

"And master Gwailur?"

"He's knocked out, fast asleep probably. Shouldn't he also be fine by now, like us?"

"Yeah, but he took a lot of hits fighting Zanith, we all did".

"Wow, is Zanith that good?"

"Very, so his body is still re-adjusting to have been working over-time healing his wounds. Anyway, still no reply, so best you go fetch her. Fast". I jumped off the ship and into the control room.

There she was, facing down Zarcaz. They both looked exhausted and had cuts in various places. I could see from here that they were breathing heavy.

"This ends now, brother. I've waited for this moment".

"I had hoped you'd see things my way, little sister, but if you're going to stand in my way, I have no alternative but to kill you".

"You were always so controlling, it always had to be your way or no way, hugh".

"Talking won't take us anywhere. Let's finish this".

"For once I agree, brother". He jumped up and came down with his sword. "This, is for FATHER!" She also jumped. They met in the air and Zarcaz's sword cut clean into her shoulder and her Kunai pierced his chest. They both came crashing down and landed next to each other. Their blood was purple.

"So, now let's see who dies first, brother".

"Hehe, you've gotten a lot better, Zar-i, I must admit". He said and coughed out blood. "Yet it is still a shame that you wouldn't assist me".

"Because our duty is not to condemn. It is to serve and protect".

"Duty, what exactly is duty? It may have been against our code to try and control them, but was it against our morals to try and save them from themselves? I know this world very well. It is being rotted away by the money they so grave. They destroy everything, including their lives and souls, for money. I wasn't prepared to stand by and watch them suffer so blindly, not while I had the strength and means to do something". Tears started rolling down the side of his face. "Couldn't you all understand that much?"

"That may be the case, but they at least deserve the chance, to decide their own fate. It's their world, not ours. If we stop them from making that mistake, then they'll never learn. We have to give them at least that much, a chance..."

"Hahahaha. A chance. It sounds so simple and innocent, until it's too late, but since I feel I won't be around much longer...I wish the human race good luck, with their 'chance', and I hope that you live, sister, and see to it what they make of it...also, I apologize-for everything-". He said as he took his last breath.

Chapter 19: A daring escape

"Njabulo, come in, you need to get outta there, like yesterday! With or without Zarzar". Stacey said on the radio. I got up and ran to fetch Zarzar.

"Come on, let's go". I said picking up Zarzar in my arms (like superman). I ran to the window and jumped out of the control room and got back into the ship. Zarzar was half conscious and I didn't remove the sword from her shoulder, because I was afraid the bleeding would get worse.

As the ship began ascending, I heard a loud noise, almost like thunder, from the belly of the Starquest.

"Oh no, oh no, we gotta get outta here. We're within the blast range". Stacey said, in a panicking tone, as she ascended the scouter. I looked out the window and saw the flames of the blast, blow

through various openings in the Starquest and then the flames came out the control room and extended towards us- it was almost like the fire was a giant hand reaching for us -and it was huge.

"We're not gonna make it Stacey!"

"Yes we are, Njabulo, yes we are!"

"The explosion is catching up to us, and fast".

"We'll make it, now brace for impact". She said then the flames caught up to us and enveloped us, I could hear the exterior of the scouter, taking damage. The computers went crazy, saying 'warning, warning'. I held Zarzar tight as we were shaken. The momentum of the flames pushed us higher and fast.

Then it all stopped. The noise, the shaking and the heat, it all just instantly stopped and there was a great silence.

"Did we make it?"

"Yeah, yeah we made it, Njabulo". I opened my eyes and saw that we were all ok-well relatively ok. I looked back, through the window, and saw the flames shooting out the mine, but we were a safe distance from it now, heading back to the dome.

Chapter 20: Dome is where the heart is

We made it back to the domain. Zarzar's wounds were treated just in time and luckily she lived. Linda, was fully recovered when we got back, we found him training.

"So, what about Zarcaz and Zanith?" Linda asked. We were all sitting in the kitchen, eating (well except for Zarzar, she was in the medical room, recovering). We had taken a shower and changed

"Zarcaz is dead, as for Zanith, I don't know, but I doubt he escaped the explosion". I replied.

"Well, Njabulo, I have to admit, you're not half bad at being a ninja". Stacey said.

"Yes, you show great potential".

"Was he that good, Gwailur?"

"Well he did survive this mission against Zarcaz and Zanith. They are powerful adversaries, Linda".

"Oh and did I tell you how he fought back two guys, all by himself?"

"Come on, Stacey, we both know I couldn't have done it without you".

"Either way, nicely done". We fist-pounded.

"Njabulo. You have helped us, greatly in this mission and we thank you. You would make a great ninja, so-we were wandering....would you like to join us? Would you like to become a permanent, alien shinobi?"

"Wait, what master Gwailur?" I was shocked, and left speechless. I didn't know what to say. Was I prepared to be one? This was all too sudden. I spaced out, over-thinking it.

"You don't have to answer now. Take your time".

"And no pressure, ok. Your free to say no, or yes, or whatever". Stacey said. We continued eating and Linda changed the topic to cars.

After eating, we all went to rest a bit. I on the other hand, walked around a bit and ended up sitting on a window sill, outside (it was round, large and had a big window sill for me to sit on) gazing up at the stars thinking..."What about this life and everything I'm used to? Can I say goodbye to that?"

"Thank you, Njabulo, you have my gratitude".

Chapter 21: My decision

"Well, I guess this now brings us to the present". Njabulo said.

"Well, I for one think, you'd make a great Alien shinobi, but it's still up to you to decide". Zarzar replied.

"Yeah, but I have to know. If I say yes, what exactly changes, do I only come to school twice a week, like Stacey always does? Do I go live in space with you guys or something?"

"Well, if you were to say yes, then you'd first have to get proper training at the ninja academy. Then after your training, you would become a permanent, Alien shinobi. As for living on another planet, it would depend on the mission and its length".

"Well, that doesn't sound too bad. I think I'll go tell Gwailur my decision now".

"Let it wait till the morning, for now, we all need to go rest".

"Yeah, you've got a point". He stood up and entered the window. "Goodnight, Zarzar, I'm off to bed now".

"I'm sorry for breaking my promise to you". He turned back and saw a tear drop rolling down her cheek, as she looked him in the eye.

"What are you talking about, Zarzar?" He said, confused.

"The promise I made you in the very beginning, that I'd protect you. I'm sorry I couldn't stop Zarcaz from taking you, and I'm sorry I couldn't have been there to stop him from stabbing you". More tears started rolling down her eyes.

"It's ok, it's ok". He said and went to give her a hug. "It's ok, I'm fine now and I'm glad that you're fine to. There's no need to apologies".

"Again, thank you, Njabulo". She got off the window and walked back to the medical room. "Sleep well, Njabulo".

Chapter 22: A kiss farewell

"I see then, and you are 100 % sure of your decision, Njabulo?" Gwailur asked. They were standing in the court yard, Njabulo and him. Zarzar was still in the medical room and Linda was training, because he was upset he got left out of the mission (even though it was due to his wound). It was sometime around 10 in the morning.

"Yes; yes I am".

"So, I suppose, now all that's left to do is pack your bags and go home".

"So will I ever see you guys again?"

"Oh, you will, well you'll see Stacey more often, but we'll also be around".

"Well then, I'll go pack now. Thanks".

"Wait, master Gwailur, can I speak to, Njabulo for a minute, alone". Stacey said as she walked in. She was dressed in her pyjamas, whereas Gwailur was wearing a bath robe and Njabulo, was wearing his normal clothes.

"Oh why, of course, I'll be going to go eat breakfast now". He said as he turned and walked away.

"So, crazy day yesterday huh?!" Njabulo said, to break the ice.

"Haha, yeah, but you get used to narrowly escaping death, and you did it like, what, three times in that one day".

"Haha, I guess third time is the charm".

"Hehe see, I told you, you'd be fine".

"Maybe I was just too motivated to die".

"Which reminds me". She grabbed him by the collar and pulled him close. "For surviving the mission". She whispered gently and kissed him. Njabulo could feel his heart race, as he put his arms around her waist, and their lips locked, perfectly together and all of time seemed to stand completely still. They both felt an overwhelming warm sensation encompass them and a sort of magic, take hold of their souls and absolutely, nothing else in the world, mattered to them, for that moment that felt like ages and decades passing, in a flash. "I said I'd give you a kiss". She whispered softly as she withdrew and their eyes locked together in place.

"Wow that was definitely worth almost dying three times".

"Then I guess, I owe you two more". They kissed once again.

Chapter 23: Back home

He said farewell to Zarzar and Linda. Gwailur and Stacey got dressed in normal clothes, so they could drop-off, Njabulo at his house.

"Thanks guys, it was really awesome going on that mission". Njabulo said, sitting in the back of the mini cooper.

"And we are in your gratitude for helping us". Gwailur said.

"Yeah, we owe you one dude". Stacey said.

"I hope we work together again, someday". Gwailur said.

"Same here, guys". He got off the car and stood at the gate of his house. "I'll see you guys around". He waved.

"Don't be a stranger now, and hala at your Mom for us". They drove off and Njabulo walked into the house.

"Hey, mom are you home?" She came from her room, at the end of the hall.

"Hey jay-jay, you're back. How did that 'saving the world' thing go?"

"It went great thanks".

"Hey son, I hear you're a superhero". His father was back from work. He was average build. He wasn't chubby, but he didn't have six pecks either.

"Haha, hey dad, no not exactly. Which reminds me, there's something I need to tell you guys".

"Oh, what's that?"

"I am now, an Alien shinobi. I'll go to the training academy in December. Stacey is going to take me there and after my training is complete, I get to become an official Alien shinobi".

"Ughm, what's an Alien shinobi?" They both asked in unisons with a confused expression on their faces.

"It's a long story, but it goes something like this..."

The end

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