

The Call

Van walked into the office, holding the door for the three girls trailing behind him. As they entered, he stared at the sign above the receptionist, shaking his head. "E-M-E Training Squadron," he mumbled, closing the door.

Daria led the way to the receptionist, smiling brightly at the woman. "Hello, ma'am. We're all here for the interview with Mr. Blue and Agent Striker."

"As expected, early. May I see all of your temporary ID cards?" The receptionist stood, scanning each of their IDs. "Perfect. Give me just one second. You may take a seat if you'd like."

Nodding, the brunette waited for the girls to find a spot, sitting at the end of the bench in front of the glass. "I can't believe we're here."

"Me neither." Venus shook her head, pulling her ponytail loose. Turning, she held her ponytail holder out to her brother.

Starting to redo her ponytail, Van glanced at the other two, his face lighting up. "Do you think they'll interview us separately?"

"They could. Or they might interview us as a group." Daria straightened out her collared shirt, crossing her legs. "I can't believe I'm wearing ripped jeans in this building."

"When we asked about attire, they said anything you could wear to school was appropriate." He shrugged, patting Venus' head once her ponytail was done.

"I feel like this is appropriate." The younger teen looked down at herself, holding her arms out for her flowy sleeves to dangle.

"You're fully covered. You look appropriate. Charlie's got on a button-up and a pair of jeans; she should be fine. Actually, Charlie...you're quiet. You okay?" Van leaned forward to look at her, tilting his head. "You nervous?"

"I hope they don't do the interviews alone. I feel like I stumbled into this talent, and I don't wanna disappoint anyone." Charlotte shook her head, her ponytail swinging alongside it.

Daria scoffed, lightly smacking her shoulder. "Charlie...you didn't stumble into anything. You know, none of us had the instinct to evacuate the people."

"Mmm...yeah. But still..."

"Charlie, you did an amazing job out there. We all stumbled into this hero talent. That's why they wanna recruit us. So we can hone it in and feel confident in our abilities." Van stared at her with a sympathetic expression, patting his sister's arm. "Swap with me." He stood, waiting for her to slide over before sitting next to Charlotte. "You did a good job." He wrapped his arm around her, squeezing her softly.

"Maybe I'm only anxious because we're here now."

"You probably are. If they're interviewing us by ourselves, you should trust yourself in whatever you say. It'll go fine."

"You're right." Charlotte nodded, straightening out her shirt and sitting upright. "You're absolutely right."

"There you..." Van watched as the receptionist walked out from the desk, turning his attention to her. "Go."

"Can I take Mr. Vancouver Pyun-Multani and Ms. Darlene Boone?" The woman smiled, opening the door behind her.

Standing, the brunette looked at his friend, slowly stepping through the doorway behind her.

"So, Mr. Pyun-Multani, your interview will be conducted by Mr. Blue and Mr. Laurier. Ms. Boone, your interview will be conducted by Agent Striker and Ms. Chou." The receptionist began to lead them down a hall, knocking on a door and waiting for an answer.

Emmett Striker opened the door, peering out before snapping his fingers. "Ah. Ms. Boone, come in. Mr. Pyun-Multani. Good luck with your interview." He moved aside for Daria to walk in, nodding at Van.

The brunette nodded back at him briefly, following after the receptionist as soon as the door was shut. Only a couple of doors away, she stopped again, knocking on the new door.

Skye Blue opened the door, smiling brightly at the two. "Thank you very much, Beatrix. Come on in, Mr. Pyun-Multani." He started to walk back into the room, gesturing for him to sit at the table.

Van looked around the room and made his way to the table, sitting down across from Skye and the other man, who he assumed was Mr. Laurier.

"So, Mr. Pyun-Multani. You can call me Skye, but I don't really care about suffixes. This is Mr. Maximus Laurier." He gestured to the dark-haired man.

Sitting up fully, Laurier gave a brief smile and a slight wave of his hand. "Good morning. You can call me Max or Maximus."

"So, we're gonna try to get...a little less formal. Don't worry about sirs and whatnot. In that case. Can we call you Vancouver?" Skye glanced up from the folder he held, bobbing his head back and forth. "If you're comfortable."

"No one calls me Vancouver. It's just Van."

"Alright, copy." The orange-haired man flipped the folder open, pulling his application out. "Alright. Let's review some things really quickly. So you're Vancouver Pyun-Multani. Is that Indian? Multani?"

"Yeah, my mom is from Pakistan, and my dad is Korean."

"You're 16 now, and you're turning 17 in August. August 1st." Skye leaned back in his seat, eyes scanning the paper. "Let's see...your Mom did approve. How hard was that?" He mumbled with a small chuckle, flipping it over. "Alright. So you're a Fabric Ripper?" He set the paper down, clasping his hands together over his stomach.

"Yes." Van nodded, resting his arms on the table.

"So, when you say you're a Fabric Ripper, describe to me in detail how this works." Maximus rested his head on his hands.

"I basically just think of the situation I'm in and try to think of something helpful to it. Not really anything in specific, just kinda vague. And if I'm lucky and a rip opens up, I can pull something out of it."

"So...for example, when you were fighting in the mall. You fought Hyperflame, right? The Sun Witch. What did you pull out of that rip?"

"I pulled out a metallic shield. It shielded me from the flame until my sister showed up." Van bobbed his head up and down, leaning back in his seat.

"So...question." Skye sat up completely, smacking the table lightly. Grabbing a notepad from the folder, he flipped to a specific page. "Got it. I have to ask any Fabric Ripper about this. Do you ever feel...like your conscience is not your conscience? Like it's a different person...?"

"Actually...as of recently. Yeah."

"Wait...seriously?" Skye glanced between him and Maximus.

"Yeah. I thought maybe I was just going crazy...but sometimes I hear a voice that's like my conscience. He offers me advice about things I don't know. Oh, and sometimes it's more than one; it's two or three!" Van snapped, growing more and more excited. "Like, he'll tell me about things I pull out of the rips or give me ideas on what to do in situations."

"I...really?" The orange-haired man tilted his head, tapping his foot. "So...that's..." He turned to Maximus, a small smile creeping across his face. "You're the first person that's said yes to that question, Van."

"Can you hear any of them now?" The dark-haired man leaned forward, eyebrows raising.

The brunette stared down at the table in thought, tapping his fingers against it. "I think they're all silent now..."

"Hm...so you're actually a dimension ripper." Maximus began to scribble in his notebook, turning over to his partner.

"Alright. So...can I ask why you jumped into action that day at the mall?" Skye clasped his hands together, tilting his head.

"Honestly. Darlene...or Daria, started the action, and I couldn't leave her to deal with it by herself. We've all done some side training with local heroes and fighting classes because we wanted to be heroes, so it felt like it was a good opportunity to help the people."

"Fair point. So you've always wanted to be a hero?"

"Yes, I have. It's been my passion for a long time."

"So...what type of emotion would you say you usually exude?"

"I would say I'm confident, if not protective. I like to take care of people, but I also find it hard to take care of myself. I can protect others well and watch after younger peers. However, I guess self-care is hard for me to consider." Van nodded softly, crossing his arms.

"I appreciate the honesty. What else are things you would say about yourself, Van?"

"I'm ambitious. I like to dream about achieving all the things no one has ever done. I would like to be better than all of my idols. I would like to save the world. Uh..."

"You have a lot of dreams, hm?" Maximus smiled softly, rapping his pen against his notebook.

"Yeah. And I completely aim to succeed in all of them."

"So what do you think you could learn from Mishap or our trainers?" Skye tilted his head.

"I think if I were to train with you, I would be able to learn how to properly take care of situations like what happened in Dallas, with a team, and a plan, and backups plans. Defenses and offenses, knowing where everyone's at. Those types of things."

"Geez, kid. You know more than I do." The orange-haired man muttered, shaking his head. "So what do you think about the training-school-rest routine?" He piped up, dropping his chin on his hands.

"I think it sounds nice. I'm only a junior in high school, so I think finishing school is just as important as being a good hero."

"Yeah, makes sense. And you think you could work well in a team that's not just your friend and your sisters?"

"Definitely. I'm very shy, but I integrate well within groups."

"Did you prepare all these answers?" Maximus placed his hand up, halting Skye from asking another question.

"...definitely not."

Snorting, Skye straightened the papers out, nodding. "You seem like a full package, Van. Honestly...I can't think of any more questions I would ask." He slid a paper over toward him, setting a pen on top. "You can sign at the bottom if you'd like to join us."

Van stared at the paper, slowly taking the pen. Clicking it, he signed his name at the bottom, sliding it back over. "This is it?"

"Yeah, man. We'll hop into a full evaluation and background check before officially taking you in, but you should join us in August or September."

"Oh wow...will I get to meet any of my peers before then or...?"

"It's very low chance." Maximus sat up, shaking his head. "You won't be entered in the facility until a couple of days before the whole process starts."

"Ah...okay. So...is there anything else I should know?"

"Just keep doing you, man. We'll see you in a bit." Skye stood slowly, shaking his hand.

"Really? This is all?" Van stood up as well, glancing between the two men.

"Yep. Most of our other questions will be answered when you guys come in and do your actual evaluations come time." Maximus shook his hand firmly, placing his hands in his pockets afterward. "We'll be keeping an eye on you, Daria, and your sisters, though. That was brave shit you did out there."

"Thank you." Van gave a small head bow, starting to exit the room. "Have a good rest of your day." As the two men wished him the same, he pushed the door

open, briskly walking back down the hall toward the waiting room. Once there, he went through the double doors and sat next to Daria. "You finished?"

"Yeah." She nodded, eyes closed as her head leaned back.

"How do you feel?" The brunette crossed his arms, sinking down some.

"Like...my stomach is gonna come through my throat."

"Oh."

"In a good way, though."

"Oh."

Daria opened her eyes, a smile spreading across her face. "Bro...we're gonna be training with fucking heroes." She whispered before punching him in the arm. "Did you feel that?"

"Ow...yes."

"Do you think one day we'll be training people?"

"I know so." Van leaned back more, closing his eyes and nodding with a content face.

"Bro, I'm so excited. Oh my god?" The purple-haired girl stood, stretching her limbs out. "I didn't pre-train for nothing. I'm ready to kick ass." She began shadowboxing in the air, exhibiting her moves to the very humored receptionist.

"This is it." The brunette sighed softly, crossing his legs.

'Yeah, Van. *This is it.*'