

Monday  
August 21st, 2028  
14:42 hours (PST)

"I heard he defeated over 100 Troobian soldiers by himself," Nathaniel brought up, leaning back up against the wall as they waited to be seen by the commander of the station. It had been a long road to finally be in SPD academy, finally on the road to being trained as a power ranger and defending the city. To say he was excited about the opportunity would have been an understatement.

"Well I heard he defeated Emperor Grumm by himself right out in front of the academy with the entire city watching," Ella mentioned, doing her best to emulate her brother by leaning back, but found that if she did, her feet were nowhere close to the ground. With a good five or six inches, her feet simply dangled in front of her.

Before he could answer, they could hear a toilet flush in the distance, and a few moments later a door to their left opened as their mother stepped out, drying her hands on a piece of paper towel.

"You'd think that this far into the 21st century we would have done away with paper towels in bathrooms by now," she said, tossing it in a nearby trash can, then headed over to her children. "Do you guys have everything? Your lunches? Your enrollment papers? Do you know what you're going to say in the interview?" she asked them.

"Yes, mom," they said in unison.

"Did you check in with the reception and let her know you're here?"

"Yes, mom," they repeated, this time even more dry and emotionless than before.

They knew she meant well, but this was the moment they had been waiting for their entire lives. They were finally in SPD academy. Both of them had been accepted into the advanced training program, which was rare, so they were both determined to make a good impression and to prove they belonged there. And again, while their mother meant well, it didn't give the impression of strong, independent cadets they were hoping to instill in the commander by having her with them.

"Uh oh, you have a little something..." she stepped closed to Nathaniel, licking her thumb slightly, then using it to wipe away what looked to be grape jelly in the corner of his mouth. Nathaniel struggled to keep her away.

"Come on mom, stop..." he complained, but it was no use.

It was at that moment that an older woman that walked by. She had long, blonde hair that she kept in a ponytail hanging down her back. Ella noted that the woman did not have on an official SPD uniform, but recognized her. She leaned over to her brother, nudging him with her elbow.

"I think thats Z," she whispered.

"Who?"

"Elizabeth Delgato. She was the B Squad yellow ranger. Shes a legend," she told him.

"Thats not her," he said.

"Yes, it is."

"No, thats Officer Sydney Drew, the pink ranger," he whispered.

The woman stopped directly in front of them, turning to them with a pleasant smile on her face, and one hand resting gently on her stomach. If they had to guess, she was at least six months along.

"Actually," she leaned over to Nathaniel. "Its Sydney *Tate* now," she quickly highlighted the ring on her finger. "Has been for a few years now," she placed her hand on his head, purposely but playfully messing up his hair. "You'll do fine in there, rookies. Remember, we were all rookies at some point," she said cheerfully, then continued towards her husband's office. She opened the door, and the twins tried to get a good peek inside, but without much success.

"See, I told you," Nathaniel insisted.

"Whatever, we were both wrong."

"But you were *more* wrong," he said.

"Stop it, you two. You're about to be full time cadets training to be rangers," their mother wedged herself in between them, sitting down and putting an arm around both of them. "Back in my day, we didn't have training. Princess Shayla just..."

"... she just recruited us. We had to learn by the seat of our pants," Ella said, rolling her eyes slowly as she mocked her mother.

"We didn't even have a red ranger when we started," Nathaniel added, mocking her as well.

"Okay, maybe I've told you the story a few times," she smiled. "You know I still have my old growl phone. Maybe I'll come to the academy, teach a class," she suggested.

“No,” the twins said in unison.

She sighed. “Fine, you’re both adults now. I’ll leave you to it,” she stood up, kissing each of them on the forehead, but then quietly decided not to mention to either of them that there were imprints of her lipstick on their foreheads. She giggled to herself slightly.

“Thank you mom,” Nathaniel said, speaking for them.

“Just give me a call when you settle in and you get your dorm assignments,” she reached in her purse, pulling out her old growl phone and showing it to them. “I’m one call away,” she told them.

“Thank you mom,” Ella shot back, equally as frustrated as her brother.

She nodded slightly, understanding that her children weren’t children anymore and needed time and space to grow. She put her growl phone back in her purse, then walked away.

“How long before we get morphers, do you think?” he asked his sister, getting back on track.

“I dunno. Unless the city is in danger almost all at once, and the B Squad rangers are nowhere to be found. I guess they would have to promote us,” she said.

“I heard there use to be an A Squad, but they were evil.”

“No way. There is no such thing as evil rangers.”

“Its happened once or twice.”

“I mean it.They turned on SPD and everything. I read it on one of those history websites. There’s a blog from someone named Piggy who explained it all,” she said.

“You’re going to be being something you read on the inter galactic internet written by someone named Piggy? Don’t be silly,” he said.

“You’re probably right.”

They were interrupted as the receptionist walked over to them. Nathaniel was the first to notice the warm, inviting smile as she approached them. “The commander will see you now,” she informed them.

“Okay...”

“... this is it,” he answered.

The two of them stood up, taking a deep breath and instinctively reached for one another's hands for support.

"You ready?" she asked.

"I'm ready."

"Let's go!" Ella said as the two of them walked towards the commander's office.

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The two of them stepped out of the commander's office and the doors slid closed behind them. As soon as they were closed completely, they let out a sigh of relief.

"That went well," he said.

"It did. I wonder why he didn't believe us about dad. That's weird," Ella mentioned.

"Well, I should get to my dorm assignment. You want to meet in the mess hall at 1500 hours?" he asked her.

She looked down at her watch, then up at the clock on the wall, then back at her watch. "What is 1500 hours?"

"It's 3 o'clock. Do you want to meet in the mess hall at 3 o'clock?" Nathaniel elaborated.

"That gives me about 45 minutes. Okay, I'll see you then," she said.

"Okay. See ya," he said, hurrying away.

Ella took a moment to go over her schedule, pulling a small slip of paper out of her back pocket and going over the information.

"Where the heck is Hall C4?" she asked outloud.

"I can help you with that," a voice said.

Ella looked up as a young woman stepped out of the rest room, approaching her. She likewise had on a cadet uniform, but the thin metal bars above her SPD insignia indicated she was a third year cadet. Her hair was a short, brownish color and, while she tried not to make it too

obvious she was staring, she also had what appeared to be a robotic right eye. They'd done a great job of making it look as realistic as possible, but Ella recognized it right away.

"I'm Cadet James," she said cheerfully. "We don't really do first names while we're on duty. But mine is Asia, for the record," she extended her hand to her.

"I'm Cadet Enrile," she paused. "Ella," she introduced, obliging her hand.

"Rookie, huh? I can tell a rookie a mile away. I'll think you'll be alright here. Where is your dorm again?" she asked.

Ella stared down at her paper again. "Hall C4."

"That's actually my dorm, too. It gets really confusing this time of year with all the new cadets coming and going. I'll take you there," she said, motioning for Ella to follow.

The two of them stepped out of the main building and into the promenade area. In the middle of the promenade was a beautiful fountain, encompassed by walkways, each of them leading to a different restaurant of some kind.

"This is the promenade area. You'll probably spend a lot of time here as its the only place on campus to eat. First year cadets aren't allowed to leave campus during school time, but none of us really go out anyway. This place has the best Eltarian beef stew in the quadrant, why leave?" Asia explained as they walked.

Ella was amazed at the diversity in the school. She'd grown up in a society that had already signed the interplanetary treaties, so she was no stranger to seeing different sorts of alien races around time, but she had never seen so many of them, or so many different types.

"So what color are you?" Ella asked.

"What do you mean?"

"You're a third year cadet. What color power ranger are you? I didn't notice any color on your uniform, unless my brother was right and there is a black ranger. That could get confusing," she said, not realizing her sentence was trailing off a bit.

"I'm not a ranger. There hasn't been a need for new rangers in almost 4 years now. The B Squad do a good job of defending the city, but for the minor stuff, they have us. The newbies," she said as they continued to walk.

They cleared the promenade section, then entered another building. The sign out front read *Oliver Hall C*, Ella noted.

"You'll find the dorms at the end of this hallway, then to the left. What room are you assigned to?" Asia asked.

"Room 846."

"That's actually right across from mine, I'm in 847. If you ever need anything, give me a shout, rookie," she said cheerfully.

"I will. Thanks."

"I gotta go. I have a weapons class and tactical training at 1530, but I'm sure I'll see you around," she said, waving slightly as she turned around, walking back out the main doors.

Ella sighed, then made her way down the hall and towards her dorm room. She stepped inside, actually surprised at how big the rooms were. There was a set of bunk beds on the right side of the wall, and one single bed on the opposite side of the room. Inbetween the beds was a desk big enough to accommodate at least two computers, and at the end of each bed was a closet space. The desk rested up on the only wall that had a window, which overlooked the promenade area.

Ella noted that there was a yellow duffel bag on the single bed, meaning someone had already claimed it as their own. *Bummer*, she thought, but decided to claim the top bunk as her own. She unzipped her jacket, revealing a white tank top underneath, draping her jacket on the bed to let any new potential roommates know that this was *her* area.

"You know you're suppose to stay in uniform for the entire shift. Taking off your jacket will earn you a demerit, and three demerits is a suspension," a girl said dryly as she walked into the room, stepping into the closet and going through one of the bags.

"Hi. I'm Ella," she said cheerfully, extending her hand to her.

The young lady stepped out the closet, looked down at Ella's hand, then up at ear to ear smile on Ella's face, then rolled her eyes. "This isn't a popularity contest, cadet. No one is here to make friends," she said dryly, using the small ladder to climb up to the top bunk. "We're here to serve."

She laid down, quickly kicking Ella's jacket off the top bunk and to the floor. Disappointed, but determined not let it show, picked up her jacket and put it back on. "I don't see why we can't do both."

"Because the time may come where I have to order you to your death, and the last thing I want to do feel bad about doing it because I like you. We're officers, we have a duty. That's all the matters," she told her.

Ella sat down on the bottom bunk, letting out a sigh. Suddenly, it occurred to her that even though this... this stranger was being rude, she was right. There very well may come a time when she had to order someone to their death to save the rest of her team, or even she may be ordered to do something that could result in her death, and caring about them would make it harder to carry out that order.

"You're wrong," she said softly.

"Excuse me?"

"I said you're wrong," Ella stood up, turning around to face the girl. "Yeah, we may have to give an order we don't like, or take an order that we don't want, but that doesn't mean we have to be mean to each other until the time comes. I would rather follow an order from someone I respected as a person and an officer than to take an order from someone who didn't see the value in me as individual. My name is Cadet Estella Enrile," she said proudly, extending her hand to her.

The girl glanced down at Ella, who seemed determined not to move until her hand was obliged. It became obvious that she wasn't going to back down, so the girl reluctantly slid off the top bunk, shaking Ella's hand.

"Monroe. DeVika Monroe, from KO-35," she introduced.

Now that they were face to face, Ella was able to point out minor differences between her and her new roommate. She was only an inch or so taller, but that could have been due to the slight heel on her boots. Her eyes were all black, no pupils of any kind, and her arms and legs seemed longer than the average human. The most noteworthy difference was the fact that she had three fingers on each hand, and even though she had long, jet black hair, her pointed ears stood out as one of the more unique features Ella had ever seen. It was also worth noting that Monroe's hand felt like plastic in hers as they shook.

"Nice to meet you, Monroe," she paused. "We don't really do first names while we're on duty," she said with a giggle. "Oh, and one more thing... the top bunk is mine," Ella told her.

DeVika nodded slightly with approval. "I'm going to like you, rookie," she said.

Ella smiled.