

# Sworn enemies

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*Kevin 11 returns from the Null Void and takes a vengeance on the Tennysons.*

*The story continues in the future.*

*Can Ben 5 000 stop him? Read, and find out the details!*

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# 1 - Chapter 1

## Ben 10

### Sworn enemies

#### Chapter 1

It was raining. A lightning flashed on the sky.

A tetramand flew through a wall, destroying it completely. A shape evolved from the rain.

- You thought you could get rid of me that easy, Tennyson? – said a raspy voice.

Fourarms stood up from the debris and replied.

- Actually I thought I'll never have to see your ugly face again!

- Insolent brat! Once I remove the Omnitrix, you will beg me to let you die! – shouted Vilgax, and while he spoke, his muscles grew larger.

- Come and get me, tough guy! – answered Fourarms and the opponents began to run to each other.

The tetramand punched Vilgax on the stomach and then on his face. Vilgax teetered, but didn't fall down. He made a counterattack, and hit Fourarms on the head, forcing him to the ground again. Before he could strike down once more, Fourarms kicked him on the leg, making him to retreat.

- You're pathetic! – declared Vilgax, picking up a huge truck. He tossed it to smash his opponent, but Fourarms caught it and threw it back to Vilgax. He avoided it, and the truck exploded behind his back.

- Think again, squidface! – shouted the tetramand.

- Enough! I won't be denied again! – roared he and tried to attack, but Fourarms was faster. He hit the ground, creating a shockwave, which zapped Vilgax into the air. As he was spinning, Fourarms ran below him, and when he fell down, he punched him, with all of his hands. Vilgax was smashed into the ground. The tetramand stroked down again. He squeezed him into the ground. Vilgax was finally defeated. Fourarms turned around and began to walk away, when the Omnitrix timed out. With a red flash, Fourarms became Ben.

- Well, at least you're sense of timing gets better... - said Ben to the watch. He walked to the road, where an rv emerged from the curtain of rain. Suddenly, he heard a voice from his back.

- This is not over, Tennyson! – hissed Vilgax, and raised up his fists to destroy Ben.

- It is now! – shouted another voice. Then a blue zap hit Vilgax, but his armour protected him. It was Grandpa Max, with a blaster, standing in the door of the Rustbucket.

- You won't stop me! – roared he and jumped into the air to smash them.

- Kimocho objectia! – said Gwen and her energy blast took down their enemy. Ben just avoided Vilgax's body, as he fell down once more.

One of his huge drones impacted on the surface. Vilgax climbed up to its head, and shouted:

- Some day, I will have you, Tennyson! Some day!!!! - And he flew away with the drone.

- What would I do without you, guys? – asked Ben.

- You would mess up your whole life, of course. – replied Gwen.
- Sorry, we had some trouble picking up your trace, after you fight Vilgax's drones. – explained Grandpa Max.
- No problem, Fourarms had it covered... I can't believe he's still trying to get the watch, after we kicked his butt like fifteen times... - declared Ben.
- Yeah, it's a mystery, like what's under your bed... - said Gwen.
- You know, I'm kinda got used to this fighting aliens stuff... I need a change... - spoke his mind Ben.
- I'd feel sorry for you if I'd have the time... but I don't! – replied Gwen.
- Could you stop badgering me just for a little??? – hissed Ben.
- Okay, you two, that's enough! Look, the weather cleared up! Let's go buy some junk food you like! – suggested Max.

Ben and Gwen looked to each other with a surprise.

- I though it was an ordinary day, but I was wrong! Thanks Grandpa! – cheered up Ben.

As they were having a great time, somewhere, hundreds of miles away, something disturbed the deserts peace.

Yellow flashes appeared from nowhere. They grew larger and larger, until they united in a vortex. It sucked in every small thing nearby. But, a sinister shape evolved from the glowing portal. He jumped out from it, his feet hit the ground. The vortex behind him became smaller and smaller, then it disappeared with a yellow flash. As the wind blew the dust away, the features of the strange creature became clear.

- Finally! I'm out of that freaky Null Void! And now the sweet revenge on that little gnome, Ben! – hissed Kevin.

## 2 - Chapter 2

### Chapter 2

The rv stopped in the parking zone of a mall. As the Tennysons walked to the entrance, Ben whispered something to Gwen.

- Yeah, tell me about it! I'd never thought he will allow us to eat something normal this summer... – replied Gwen, glancing at Max, if he heard it or not. They entered the mall.

- I love this day! – cheered Ben, packing up a lot of chips and candy. – This must be enough for the rest of the summer! – said he.

When they finished shopping, Ben asked his grandpa, if he could go to the arcade.

- Okay, here are some coins you can spend. – agreed Max. He also let Gwen go to buy some new shoes.

- He's in a really awesome mode today. – said Gwen.

- That's what grandpas for! – replied Ben, and quickly disappeared in the arcade, before his cousin could manage to react.

When his grandkids left, Max went to a bookstore. All of them had a great time. When Gwen finished her shopping, she went to the arcade to find Ben. When she entered, she got surprised of what she saw.

- Ben!!! What are you doing? – asked she, with an angry voice.

- Having fun, of course! What else? - and he winked to Gwen.

- Ah, you're really annoying! Stop this foolishness right now, and get back to Grandpa... – said Gwen.

- You're just jealous, because you can't play six videogames at the same time! – replied Ditto.

- I'm not convinced.

- No? Check this out! I'm the newest high score champion! I rule! – declared Ditto, and gave a five to the other one.

But the Omnitrix timed out, only Ben remained. – Oh, man! – sighed he.

- Come on, king of all dweebs! – said Gwen.

- After you, your Highness! – replied Ben, and bowed.

They reunited with their grandfather and left the mall. Then the Tennysons hit the road again. But soon, they ran into a traffic jam. The kids didn't care, they were busy with the candy.

After a few minutes, Max saw a detour, and some police officers. When he got close to one, he asked what's the problem.

- We had to close the nearby roads, because some car thieves are escaping, we're chasing them, but it's too dangerous for civil traffic. You have to turn around.

Max obeyed. He quickly got out of the jam, and looked to Ben, who realized Gwen's staring at him as well.

- What? – asked he.

- Maybe it's a good time to go hero, Ben. – suggested Max.

- What for? I can't handle everything around here! – declared the boy.

- Ah... – sighed Gwen, and continued reading her spell book.

- Sometimes I hate to be a hero... – dabbed Ben resignedly, and put down his candy. – I'll take care of

this as fast as I can. Going Xlr8! - He pushed the omnitrix, and with a green flash, he became...

- The werewolf??? Oh, man! I can't believe it! – said Benwolf. – Which way should I go? – asked he.

- The detour is over there! – pointed Max to the correct direction.

- Thanks! – said Benwolf, and opened the door. He jumped out, and arrived at the top of a car. Then he jumped to another car top. He leaped huge distances like this, until he jumped to a building's wall. With his sharp claws, he could climb up to its roof, to see the road better. His sensitive ears could hear the sirens of the police cars, but they were far away.

- Oh, great! How am I supposed to get there without Xlr8? – asked Benwolf himself. He looked to that direction, where he heard the sirens. Then he jumped into the air and landed upon the top of the next building. He repeated the same action until he recognized the stolen car. The night was falling, his senses became sharp and clear. He jumped down to the roof of a smaller building, and looked down. In the right moment, he vaulted over the railing. He landed on the top of the wanted car.

- What was that? – surprised one of the thieves. He looked up, and saw two hands tearing apart the roof. Then the hands grabbed him and threw him out of the car. Then the werewolf jumped onto the rear seat.

- What the hell are you doing back there... wow! What is that thing? – asked the driver in horror.

- I'll take care of this! – hissed his partner and brought out his weapon. He fired at Benwolf, but the alien was faster and with a twist, he leaped back to the roof. A few other shots were fired, but to no avail, none of them hit Benwolf. He was hanging on the roof. He managed to climb to the front of it.

- Time to put you out of traffic, guys! – said the alien, and opened his mouth. The ultrasonic howl of his broke down the engine, the car was slowing down eventually. When it was safe, Benwolf jumped down from the roof. One of the thieves tried to shoot him, but he managed to wring the gun out of his hand, and forced both of them to the ground. The police arrived there rapidly, and arrested the bad guys. After that Benwolf disappeared in the night. When he tried to leap, the omnitrix timed out. The boy fell down.

- Why can't you just wait until I'm not in the air? – asked his watch Ben.

Soon, Max arrived with the Rust bucket and picked him up. He went to bed early, he was exhausted because of a hero's work.

Next day, somewhere in Texas, a strange and horrible creature was just robbing out a little gas station.

- Put the money in the bag! – commanded Kevin. As the poor old attendant was obeying him, Kevin glanced at the TV. He saw a news flash of another alien hero's good deed. In Los Angeles.

- Ben... – hissed he. The attendant finished. – That's all you got?! – shouted Kevin.

- Please don't kill me! – begged the attendant.

- I won't kill you. – smiled Kevin devilishly. – Thanks for the money, loser! – shouted he and ran out. He sprinkled some gas around the place. Then he made a spark with his Heatblast hand, and the whole station became one with the flames. He slowly walked away from the burning petrol station.

- Now, I know where you are, you little geek! You're always the hero! But I'll make sure you won't be in the news anymore, Ben!

With these words, and with Xlr8's speed, ran away on the dusty road.

## 3 - Chapter 3

### Chapter 3

On that night, Ben had a nightmare. He was ready to fight Dr. Animo and his mutated stag beetle. As Diamondhead, he quickly defeated Animo, by slicing his pet. As the police took the crazy scientist away once again, the people clapped and feted Ben.

But something went wrong. Sinister, dark clouds blocked out the sun. Kevin's shape slowly evolved from the crowd.

- Nice work, Benjie! So heroic... Forgot how much I hate heroes! – shouted Kevin, and fired projectiles at Diamondhead.

Ben thought as a petrosapien, he'll remain unharmed, but Kevin's projectiles tore his skin. He looked to the scars, then to Kevin in surprise.

He wanted to fight back, but the omnitrix timed out. Kevin's shadow crested him.

- Let's finish this! – hissed he, as he rose his crystalline hand to stab Ben. Suddenly, Max appeared in his plumber suit. He fired at Kevin, but to no avail. Kevin left Ben behind, and approached Max menacingly. Ben couldn't move, just watched the events. His grandfather stood no chance against Kevin. He forced Max to the ground, and rose up his hand once more. Then he did it...

Ben woke up. He was freaked out by this nightmare. He looked at his sleeping family. After he found everything all right, he tried to get back to sleep. He tossed and turned, but couldn't fall asleep again. He decided to go for a walk in the fresh, morning air. He put on his clothes and silently sneaked out from the rv. Ben thought it was a good idea to leave LA, and stay in this camping for the night. He enjoyed walking aimlessly on the grass, breathing the fresh air. He climbed up to a little hill, and watched the rising sun. It was beautiful. Then he looked to the omnitrix. He saw his own reflection in the glass of the device. This was the first time, when he had some deep thoughts, for example, what does it really takes to be a hero. He was just standing there, in the growing sunlight and enjoyed to be alive. The moment soon passed by. Then his nightmare came to his mind, but it seemed nothing else than a pale memory now. Suddenly he heard a noise from nearby. He looked around, but couldn't recognize anything suspicious. Ben looked around once more and went back to the rv. He didn't know, he had been watched... After he left, Kevin's head emerged from the bushes. He made an evil grin...

When Ben got back to the Rust bucket, his family just woke up.

- Where were you, Ben? – questioned him Max.

- I had a nightmare, then I couldn't get back to sleep, so I went out for a morning walk. – explained Ben.

- Okay. Hope you're hungry, for I have something special for you today... Roach salad with mashed potatoes! – enthused Max.

- That's gonna be... weird. – declared Ben.

- What's weird? – asked Gwen, who just came out from the shower.

- You don't wanna know. – replied Ben with a grimace on his face.

But, something interrupted their chat. They heard an explosion.

- What was that? – asked Gwen.

- Turn on the TV, Grandpa! Maybe we'll know... – suggested Ben.

Max agreed.

- ...something incredible happened! It appears that a meteor hit the downtown of Los Angeles! It's unbelievable! Look at that strange smoke! – the announcer said.

- I'd better check that out myself! – said Ben, and turned into Heatblast. He flew into the city on his carpet of fire. Soon, he arrived to the disaster area. The meteor flew through three skyscrapers, and left a wide and deep path of destruction in the ground. Ben couldn't see the meteor itself, it was blazing in orange flames. As Heatblast, he could go into the flames, where nobody else couldn't. He rose his hands and created fire beam, to put out the destructive flames. As he got closer to the meteor, he heard something, but he wasn't sure, he was busy with the fires. Then he heard it again. He paid attention to it this time. It was a strange voice crying for help. He ran to the meteor. Now, he could clearly hear the strange voice. It seemed that it was coming from the meteor itself.

- Help, help, help me!!! – cried the voice.

- Where are you? I can't see you! – shouted Heatblast.

- Here, in here! Help me!

Heatblast touched the meteor, and realized, that it's not a meteor, but a spaceship. He melted the casing with his hands. Enormous amount of black smoke rushed out from inside.

- Are you in here? – shouted Heatblast. He couldn't see anything from the smoke.

- Here... – the voice was weak now. Heatblast knew he didn't have much time. He jumped inside the ship, and tried to locate the source of the voice. Suddenly, he felt something on his foot. He looked down, and saw an arm. A second later, the timeout warning beeped once... Heatblast quickly grabbed the hand... The warning beeped twice... He dragged the pilot out from the ship... The warning beeped for the third time.

- No, not yet, just give me a few more seconds! – begged Heatblast... The fourth beep. He jumped out and grabbed the pilot again and ran away from the flames. As he ran, the omnitrix eventually timed out, but both Ben and the pilot were in safety.

The smoke did not clear up yet, Ben couldn't see the features of the pilot. He could recognize, it has no legs, and has claws. But he didn't know what alien this could be.

As the wind blew the smoke away a bit, the alien came to, and stood up... in fact, it was floating close to the ground. It was coughing, couldn't breathe well, such as Ben. The smoke finally cleared up, and Ben looked to the alien in horror.

- Ghostfreak???

The alien looked back at him, but didn't reply, just coughed again.

- Oh, if I only knew that it was you, I'd let your ugly butt burn! – he rose his fist and tried to attack the creature. At that moment, the a huge smoke cloud emerged from the ghost's mouth, when it coughed. When Ben attacked, his fist went through the alien's body.

The alien quickly turned around, and opened it's chest. The black and white tentacles grabbed Ben, and rose him up, right in front the alien's face.

- Let go of me!!! – shouted Ben. He couldn't move in the tight squeeze of the tentacles.

- How dare you??? – asked the creature.

- Hey... this voice... you're not Ghostfreak... – recognized Ben.

- What are you talking about? My name's Lantara. – introduced herself the alien.

- Oh, sorry! I've messed it up again, I thought you were somebody else... – explained Ben.

- You should be more careful what you do or say! – suggested Lantara.

- Would you let me go now? – asked Ben.

Lantara put him down, her tentacles disappeared in her chest.

- I'm Ben Tennyson. – rose his hand Ben, for a shake.

Lantara accepted the greeting.

- So, you're an...

- Ectonurite. Yes.

- Then why didn't you phase through the ship's casing? – asked Ben the logical question.

- I couldn't concentrate hard enough, I was so scared...- replied Lantara.

As she spoke, Ben looked at her body.

- What? – asked Lantara in surprise.

- Don't take it seriously, but you don't really look like a girl...

- I know. We are not exactly the most beautiful beings in the universe. There's not much difference between males and females though. – said she.

- Stay away from my grandson! – shouted Max, with a blaster in his hand.

Ben stood before Lantara.

- No, Grandpa, she's not Ghostfreak! She's a good guy! – said Ben.

- You can't trust the aliens, Ben! Come here to me! – replied Max.

Ben obeyed.

- Where are you came from? – asked Max. Gwen and Ben followed the events from behind him.

- My home planet is Anur Phaetos. It's billions of light years from here. – answered Lantara.

- What are you doing here?

- I did not calculated your planet on the way, I've slowed down from hyper speed too late and I've crashed. The ship blew up; I don't know how I got out... All I remember after the impact is Ben.

Max put his weapon away. Suddenly Gwen had an idea.

- Hey, why are you immune to the sunlight? – questioned she.

- Well, it's a natural ability of the females ectonurites. – Lantara explained that countless eons ago, her planet had two suns, but both of them blew out, and the planet remained in complete darkness ever since.

- So, this is encoded into our genes. The legacy of our ancestors. – she mused a bit.

A huge crowd started to form around them, so Max suggested to go, they have got enough unwanted attention.

- What about her? – asked Gwen.

- Yeah, we can't just leave her here! – declared Ben.

Max agreed, and Lantara joined them in the rv. They left the city behind and went back to the camping. During the trip, Lantara explained that she's alone, decided to leave her dark homeworld, and discover the universe.

- How you're going to travel now? Your ship is destroyed. – said Gwen.

- No problem. We can create a space vehicle from our own ectoplasma. It's not really a ship, it's more like a capsule, but you would call it a spaceship. But it takes a long time to make one. – replied the ectonurite.

- And how can you control it? – asked Ben.

- Telepatically, of course. - laughed Lantara.

Lantara told them a lot of informations about herself and her home planet, and other galaxies she visited so far. The Tennysons agreed, that they will help Lantara to create a new space capsule. Then she recognized the watch on Ben's wrist.

- So it is true. – said she.

- What? – asked Ben.

- The omnitrix does exist...



## 4 - Chapter 4

### Chapter 4

Ben told the story how, he got the omnitrix. Lantara paid attention quietly.

- But I still don't know how to make it work well. – Ben finished.
- He had the master code once, but he messed it up, as usual. – Gwen said.
- Heh heh, I love you too! – replied Ben.

Once, the sun finally disappeared on the horizon, Lantara prepared to create another capsule. She explained the method is easier in the dark.

- I need to be alone for a while. – said the ectonurite. Everyone left, she remained alone in the night. This procedure was horrifying. She's chest opened, her tentacles came out, and a white, jelly-like thing began to form. It grew larger, until it filled her whole chest. Then it just slipped out from among the tentacles. Lantara sighed.
- Are you okay? – asked Ben from behind. He just came out from the rv.
- Yes, the most difficult part is over. – said Lantara, and looked down to the white jelly.
- It takes a long time for the ectoplasma to become a solid mass. Is there a safe place where I can keep it until then?
- Yes, you can use the trunk of the rv. – replied Ben. Lantara just looked at him, didn't know what he's saying.
- Oh, sorry. – Ben ran to the trunk and opened it. – Big enough?
- Perfect. – said Lantara. The white jelly began to float into the trunk, right before Ben's face.
- How did you do that? – surprised the boy.
- The telepathic contact already exists. I just had to concentrate on it. – explained she.
- Bedtime! – yelled Max from the door of the Rust bucket. Ben obeyed. As he entered, he had a question.
- Where will Lantara sleep?

The Tennysons looked at her.

- Don't worry about me. - replied Lantara. Before anybody could react, she slowly phased through the rv's wall.

Eventually, they all went to sleep, not aware of the fact that Kevin was nearby.

- Tomorrow, Benjie, you will get a lesson, you will never forget... – whispered he.

Next morning, Ben woke up first. He found this strange; usually he likes to sleep a lot. As he was doddering in the semi darkness, a voice accosted him

- Sleep well? – asked the voice.

Ben looked around but couldn't see anyone, beside his grandfather and cousin. Suddenly, Lantara became visible behind his back. Ben recognized her.

- What are you doing? You scared me... I've almost went hero. – stuttered Ben. In this illumination, the ectonurite looked so sinister, that Ben wanted to get away from her as far as possible. However, he defeated his fears and went to the fridge. As the light flashed the area, his bad feelings disappeared.

The sun slowly occupied its place on the sky. The day was about to get started...

The Tennysons were preparing to leave the camping, when the radio announced, that a strange looking creature is rampaging in LA.

- I suppose we have to delay our travel, Grandpa. Some alien wants to be butt-kicked. Going Fourarms!  
– said Ben, and slammed the omnitrix. After a green flash, he became Xlr8.

- Oh man! This is unbelievable... Well, appreciate what you have! – assessed the situation Xlr8. His blue face disappeared behind the windshield and he ran away.

Lantara came out from the rv. She didn't use the door again.

- What's going on? – asked she.

- We have to follow Ben! – said Gwen.

- I know he looks confident, but he can always use some help. – declared Max. – Get inside!

Lantara got inside... through the walls again. Max started the engine and headed to the city.

Xlr8 arrived in the downtown. He saw great destruction, and flames everywhere. Suddenly, a familiar voice accosted him.

- Hello Benjie! – the voice seemed to be too familiar...

- Kevin! – surprised Xlr8.

Kevin slowly faded in from the smoke. He held two screaming hostages in his crystalline hand.

- I'm glad you remember me, partner! I know you won't miss an opportunity to be a hero again! – said Kevin.

- How did you escape from the Null Void? – questioned him Xlr8.

- That is none of your concerns. – replied Kevin coldly. – But this is!

He stretched his pyronite hand and shoot fireballs at Xlr8. He avoided them; one after the other, none of the fireballs could harm him, because of his speed. Then they stopped.

- Release them, Kevin! You have a business with me, not them! Just you and me! – demanded Xlr8.

- You're right! We have some business, freak! – agreed Kevin, and threw the hostages away. Xlr8 reacted fast, as always, and caught them before they landed on the pavement. The hostages ran away in fear, only Kevin and Xlr8 remained.

- That's it! You asked for it, pal! – warned him Xlr8.

- Come and get me! – shouted Kevin, and jumped in the air. As he flew, he raised his Diamondhead-hand to strike down. He missed it; Xlr8 was already behind him, when he hit the ground. Kevin turned around, and created a fire beam. Xlr8 jumped up to avoid it, and kicked Kevin's face like sixteen times. Suddenly, Kevin grabbed him, and tossed him away. Xlr8 had a painful landing, but he stood up rapidly and ran back. Kevin shot projectiles at him. He avoided all of them.

- Hold still, puke bag! – roared Kevin. He opened his mouth and made some Stinkfly goo, which ended up on Xlr8's head. He was unable to see anything, and his run was stopped by Kevin's chest. He grabbed the kineceleran, and stretched his body. Then he hit Xlr8's stomach with his knee. Then he dropped down Xlr8 on the ground.

- Noooo! – yelled Max, and Gwen at the same time. They had just arrived with the Rust bucket. Max and Gwen began to run and attacked Kevin. He grabbed both of them, and raised them up.

- You are no match for me! – hissed he threw them away. He ran after them and punched Max several times. Lantara just watched the events. Kevin's mutated shape reflected in her eye, his evil laughter echoed in her ears. She looked at Xlr8, and knew it was Ben, who saved her life before. She felt the fury, which slowly filled her body and mind.

- Hey, tough guy! – shouted Lantara. Kevin turned back and saw a purple energy blast. That took him down. He stood up and saw Lantara at full potential. Her chest was wide open, her tentacles were

coiling, she had spikes on her shoulders and she had sharp teeth.

- Back off! - said Kevin and shoot projectiles and fire beams at her. She changed her protoplasm, so the fire and the crystals phased through her. Lantara shoot another energy blast from her chest. This time Kevin avoided it...

As they were fighting, Xlr8 came to. He teared the goo apart. He felt pain everywhere, but stood up. He recognized Lantara on the battlefield. He ran there rapidly. A massive ball of Stinkfly goo hit Lantara. Interestingly, her protoplasm became solid. Kevin struck down. Lantara flew back and hit the side of the Rust bucket with her face. She fainted.

- Enough! – shouted Xlr8 began to run, to attack Kevin. But before he could do anything, the omnitrix timed out with a red flash. He was Ben again.

- What's the matter? The little hero got scared and ran away? – asked Kevin bitingly. He forced Ben on the ground. The right hand of his became a sharp sword, ready to stab Ben.

- Finally, I'll get my revenge! - Kevin smiled devilishly. Suddenly, he heard a moan. It was Max. Kevin's grin turned satanic even more.

- Wait, I have a better idea! I'm sure you will like this, Benjie! – laughed he.

He picked up the helpless Ben from the ground and threw him to a wall. Before he could fall down again, he made a rubber-like goo, and trapped Ben on the wall.

- Enjoy the show! – said Kevin and left him there. Then he grabbed Max's shirt and dragged him where Ben could see everything.

- What are you doing? He's not the part of this! Leave him alone!!! – roared Ben.

- He is now! – replied Kevin and raised his crystalline hand. In that moment, the images of the nightmare flashed in Ben's mind. The situation was almost the same.

- No, no no, I cannot let this happen! – shouted he furiously.

Max opened his eye. The last thing he saw was Kevin and his devilish grin. These were the last moments for Max. And Kevin enjoyed every one of them. And Ben had to watch every one of them. And Gwen? She wasn't there at all... She's disappeared.

But this was merely the beginning of Ben's sufferings...

## 5 - Chapter 5

### Chapter 5

Watching the execution of his own grandfather is far too much to take for a 10-year-old boy.

Ben went mad. Somehow, he could tear apart the goo. He slammed the omnitrix several times, but it was still recharging.

- Work! Work you good for nothing waste! – shouted he in tears. To no avail, the watch remained red. As soon as Kevin finished Max off, he wanted to do the same with Gwen. But she wasn't there at all.

- Hey, where's your nerd cousin? What ever! – said Kevin.

- You shall pay for this! – roared Ben. He freed himself, and ran to punch Kevin. He wasn't fast enough. Kevin slapped him on the face, with his crystalline hand. Ben retreated and collapsed. He touched his face... His palm was bloody.

- Well, my work here is done! I figured revenge tastes much better this way! – laughed Kevin.

- I'll rip your head off!!! – cried Ben.

- I wouldn't count on it! Well, see you around, Benjie! You will hear from me again, sooner than you think! – said Kevin and ran away with Xlr8's speed.

Ben slowly stood up, ran to his grandpa, but it was too late. He broke out in tears, and cried heavily above Max. His tears washed away his blood from his face.

- He won't get away with this, Grandpa! I'll take care about it! – vowed Ben.

After all of this, Ben realized, that Gwen's disappeared. Suddenly, he heard a groan behind his back. He turned around and saw Lantara. She's just came to. She touched her head.

- What happened? That thing was so powerful; he tossed me away like a little piece of rock... – said Lantara. Then she looked at Ben and recognized his wound.

- What happened?

- Kevin murdered him. – replied Ben coldly. Lantara looked down to Max.

- I'm sorry. – said the ectonurite with condolence.

- Not your fault. It's mine. I was not powerful enough to save him.

- Power isn't everything – answered Lantara.

- But it could have save my Grandpa. – said Ben in tears.

- You can't save everyone.

- Why? Some day, I will be able to save everyone! Some day, I promise. – Ben hissed. He fell into his thoughts.

They were just standing there, in the middle of destruction, as the crowd slowly surrounded them.

- You're like Ghostfreak, you could merge with him and bring him back... – enthused Ben.

Lantara bent down to the boy, and put her hands on his shoulders. She looked into Ben's eye.

- Ben. He's gone. Nothing can change this. Nobody can bring him back. – said she.

- I know... replied Ben. They were just stared into each other's eye, and in this moment, Ben didn't found the ectonurite ugly or hideous. At this moment, she was the only one who stood beside him and understood his feelings. He didn't care anything else. His gash was still bleeding and the crowd around them went bigger and bigger. He didn't care.

- We should go... – said Lantara and pointed to the people.

- I can't leave him here like this! And Gwen's disappeared! – yelled Ben.  
- We will find her! But not now! We already have too much unwanted attention! – declared Lantara.  
- You're right! – admitted the boy. He stood up looked at Max once more. Lantara grabbed his hand.  
- What are you doing? – But he understood soon. As Lantara touched him, he became invisible as well.  
They could leave the premises unobtrusively.

When they got far enough from the city, Lantara turned visible again.

- What now?

- We have to take care of your injury first. – said Lantara.

- I don't want to go to any stupid hospital! – declared Ben.

- Then let me help you.

- How?

- If I merge with you, you'll heal much faster. – explained Lantara.

- I don't know. I knew an alien like you, who wanted to merge with me to control the omnitrix. – said Ben doubtfully.

- I don't want the omnitrix. Not every ectonurite is evil! It's merely a malignant tattle! I just want to repay you for saving my life. That's all. But if you don't want it, it's okay. – replied the alien.

Ben touched his gash. It was deep and bleeding very intensively.

- Okay, let's do it. - agreed the boy.

- Trust me. Ready? – asked Lantara.

- I think so.

Lantara changed her protoplasm and merged with the boy. Ben's eyes turned black as the ectonurite took over his body. Accompanied by white flashes his wound began to heal. It slowly shrank, like if somebody would have reversed a film. The gash disappeared from his face, but a strange looking scar remained at his eye. Lantara got out.

- Wow... that was... weird... – stuttered Ben and touched his face. The blood and the gash disappeared. Then he felt the scar.

- What's this? – asked he.

- The petrosapien crystals have irreversibly damaged your tissues there, even I couldn't fix it. You'll have to live with this scar for the rest of your life. – explained Lantara.

Ben walked to a puddle. He saw his reflection in the dirty water.

- Strange scar... Like a lightning... – mumbled he. – It will always remind me of this day. It will help me to never forget what happened today. To never forget my vow. Kevin shall pay with his life for taking my Grandpa's.

Lantara just blinked, didn't know what to say...

Soon, they went back to the city, to find Gwen. The hours of their search were useless.

- My capsule! – Lantara yelled suddenly.

- What? – asked Ben.

- I left my capsule in your vehicle! We have to get it back! I don't want to make a new one!

- Why?

- Because it's painful and takes a lot of energy. – replied Lantara.

They rushed back to the disaster area. The cleaning had already begun. The police have just towed the Rust bucket away.

- There! – shouted Ben. – Can you get the capsule out with your mind?

- No, something's blocking the contact! I have to get closer. – replied Lantara.

Ben sighed, and slammed the watch. He turned into Stinkfly.

- Come on! – said Stinkfly.

He grabbed Lantara and took off, after the Rust bucket. He could quickly catch up, and landed on the top of the rv. Lantara phased through the roof. A few seconds later, she came back with the capsule in her hands.

- It's already solid! – said Lantara.

- Good. – replied Stinkfly and grabbed her again.

They left the Rust bucket behind.

Later, Ben and Lantara were in a park. There was nobody else, only them.

The boy spoke his mind.

- I don't know what should I do... There are so many problems came from nowhere... Grandpa's gone... I don't know where's Gwen... And what for? Why he did it, I cannot understand... I don't know what to do... I should go back home... that would be obvious...

Lantara listened to Ben's words patiently. However, she was from another world, she couldn't comprehend everything that Ben said. She believed that death is a natural part of the life.

She couldn't do anything else, just floated beside Ben and put her arm around the boy's shoulders.

This movement surprised Ben, he gave a start at first, the ectonurite's hand was cold and harsh, but it was a friendly gesture. So he touched her hand. They made a strange couple, the ectonurite and the human. Both of them found it weird, but didn't tell the other. The moment lasted for a few minutes only.

Then the boy made a few steps ahead.

- I wonder how I'm gonna tell my parents about all this... – said he. – I should go Xlr8 and ran home, but that would be suspicious, how I got home so fast...

He put his hands in his pocket. He found nothing there.

Suddenly, Kevin's words echoed in his ears: "you will hear from me again, sooner than you think!"

- He took my wallet! - he yelled.

Lantara looked at him and blinked.

- Why does he need my wallet?

- Maybe you've lost it, during the battle... – speculated Lantara.

- No, I don't think so. Kevin took it... – replied Ben.

"You will hear from me again, sooner than you think!"

- He must have taken it when he slapped me...

"You will hear from me again..."

- My address is in my wallet...

"...sooner than you think!"

- HOME! – shouted Ben.

- What? – asked Lantara.

- I don't have time to explain! – said Ben and slammed the watch. He turned into Xlr8 once again, and stormed out.

## 6 - Chapter 6

### Chapter 6

The distance was not an obstacle for the kineceleran, but Ben realized the situation too late... When he arrived to his home, it was already in fire. He saw Diamondhead crystals and Stinkfly goo everywhere. The flames reflected in Xlr8's eye as he stood there, before his burning home.

- Mom! Dad! – shouted he and rushed inside the flaming house. The heat was beyond endurance but he continued to search for his parents. Soon, Xlr8 collapsed and fainted because of the heat. The omnitrix timed out. Suddenly, a fireman grabbed Ben and dragged him out of the house.

Ben came to in a hospital room. He had bandages over his head and arms. He slowly turned his head left and recognized Gwen sitting beside his bed, reading a magazine.

- Gwen? - accosted her Ben weakly.

The girl put down the magazine and hugged him.

- Thank goodness you're all right! – said she.

- Where were you? You've disappeared...

- Ssssh, don't speak now. Everything will be all right. – assured him Gwen.

Ben fell asleep again.

It was about midnight, when he woke up again. At first he saw nothing, but felt cold.

- Lantara? – asked he.

The ectonurite became visible beside his bed.

- How are you, Ben?

- I'll live. How did you get in here?

- I can phase through solid masses, remember? – smiled Lantara.

- Oh.. yes... What are you doing here? I thought you've left ages ago...- said Ben.

- No, I haven't. I could have, but I don't want to go before I assure you're all right. – explained Lantara.

- I'd never thought an alien like you can be that... emotional... – said Ben.

- The outside isn't everything, you should know the best. – replied the ectonurite.

- Yeah, you're right... First looking at me, no one could tell, I can turn into different aliens... – laughed Ben weakly.

- True. I'd better go now... Don't want anyone to recognize me in here. Take good care of yourself, Ben! – said Lantara and phased through the wall.

- You too. – whispered Ben to himself.

Next day, Gwen came in again.. She told Ben, that his parents are gone too. Obviously Kevin did it. She also told ben, that the red flash, that the omnitrix made when it's timed out, saved his life. The fireman saw the flash and then he found Ben.

- Where were you? We needed you in the battle, and you suddenly disappeared.

- Well' that's a long story...

- We have time. – said Ben.

- We'll talk about this, when you get better... – replied Gwen nervously.

- Give me a straight answer please! You're willing to answer my question yes or no? – said Ben angrily.

- Okay, okay. Ben, I have to admit something. I was a coward. I ran away. I saw what Kevin did to you and to Grandpa

And I felt I won't be able to stop him... I'm so sorry, I know it's unforgivable... I... – Gwen said.

Ben listened what she said felt the anger slowly fills his mind.

- What??? – He yelled.

- Don't yell at me! Look at this from my viewpoint! If you were I, what would you did? – asked Gwen.

- What would I did? I'd have used my magical skills to do something! – hissed Ben.

- You're right. I could have done something... but it wouldn't stop Kevin, you know it too! – declared Gwen.

- I'm so sorry, I know it worth nothing now, but I really regret what I've done.

- Your sorry won't bring grandpa back! – shouted Ben.

- I've made a decision, I have to live with it, not you. – replied Gwen and turned her back to Ben. She saw a green flash and when she turned around she had to face Diamondhead. Ben's scar appeared on the petrosapien as well.

- No, you won't have to live with this! – shouted Diamondhead and he fired projectiles at her, but Gwen avoided them.

- What are you doing? Have you lost your mind???- cried Gwen.

- I've lost my mind??? You did, when you abandoned us there, aaarrggh! – roared Diamondhead. He made a spear out of his right hand and struck down, where Gwen stood. He missed it, the girl jumped away. Then he swung his hand but Gwen ducked.

- Stop it! You're supposed to attack Kevin, not me!!! – yelled Gwen. Suddenly Diamondhead grabbed her.

He raised her to look into her eye. She was squirming in the tight and steely squeeze of the petrosapien's fingers.

-You're not Ben! The Ben I know would never do such a thing!!! – said Gwen.

- Kevin took my good side! – Diamondhead grinned.

- You're like him! If I look into your eyes, I see the same emptiness as in Kevin's! – shouted Gwen.

Diamondhead's distorted face suddenly became smooth and surprised.

He put down Gwen.

- I don't want to see you again. – declared him coldly. Then he shot some projectiles at the glass. It broke into pieces and Diamondhead jumped out from the window.

Ben and Gwen won't meet for eight years.

*(I know the story is kinda dark now, but it will have a happy ending, I swear!)*



## 7 - Chapter 7

### Chapter 7

Diamondhead was running, without any aim or purpose. He stopped on a hill. He bent down to his knees and repeatedly hit the ground with his fists. He cried, when the omnitrix transformed him back to Ben. Suddenly, he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was Lantara. She help Ben to stand up.

- How did you know I was here? – asked Ben wiping his face.

- Followed you. I was in the room, when you transformed. I wanted to say goodbye, because I'm leaving, but when I saw you're having an argument with your cousin, I decided to stay away. – explained she.

- What? You're leaving already? – surprised Ben.

- Yes. I just wanted to have a few words with you before I leave. – replied the ectonurite.

Ben suddenly had an idea.

- Take me with you! – He requested.

- What? – Now, Lantara got surprised.

- Take me with you! I want to go with you! – repeated Ben.

- But why? I don't understand! You have a beautiful home planet, with a working sun. Why do you wish to leave?

- You haven't seen the other side. There are so many evil persons like Kevin.... Besides, I've got nobody left now. – said Ben.

- That's not true. There's your cousin...

- She betrayed and abandoned me, when I really needed her. She's no one in my eyes. – declared he.

This speech surprised Lantara again. She began to think.

- Is this what you want? To cruise around the universe, facing danger? – questioned she.

- Yes, I'm sure, without a doubt. – replied Ben.

- Well, if this is your choice, you're free to join me. – agreed Lantara.

- Yes! – enthused Ben.

- Come with me. – said the ectonurite.

She led him to her capsule. It was bigger than last time Ben has seen it, and was completely solid.

- How are we supposed to get in? – asked Ben.

- You always need a revision of my natural abilities. – smiled Lantara and phased through the capsule.

Her lower body has already disappeared inside, when she grabbed Ben's hand and pulled him in. There was surprisingly big space in the capsule; both of them could find a comfy place. In fact, they were lying on the floor.

- Ready for take off? – asked Lantara.

- Yeah, bring it on, baby! - Ben yelled.

Ben expected a loud outburst and some pain, like when he was on Tetrax's ship, but this was very different. Lantara touched the two sides of the capsule, which became gauzy. They could see through it's casing all around. This sight amazed Ben. The capsule slowly began to float. Then it rocketed to the sky. Ben saw the city shrank, until it disappeared from his eyes. The capsule soon reached the upper atmosphere. Orange flames emerged all around it. Ben got scared a bit.

- Don't worry. – eased him Lantara. – It gets better when we reach hyperspace.

After a few minutes, they left Earth behind. Ben looked at the planet once more, before the capsule accelerated to hyperspace. Ben saw blue, white and black colors everywhere they were changing rapidly from one to another.

- Where are we going? – asked Ben.

Lantara smiled.

- Well, I have a few ideas...

## 8 - Chapter 8

### Chapter 8

A huge explosion shattered the area, as the bounty hunter in the black armor threw a grenade to destroy his opponent. As the smoke cleared up, the features of Fourarms became visible. The grenade did not damage him.

- Long time, no see, Sixsix! I thought Tetrax and I kicked your butt for good last time! – said Fourarms. As Sixsix realized, his attack was a failure, he activated his jetpack and flew up. Then he shot hundreds of laser beams at the tetramand.

With a green flash, Fourarms changed into Xlr8 and avoided the pelting lasers. He ran up to a building's roof and jumped into the air. He became Cannonbolt and hit Sixsix. Both of them fell down, their impact made a crater in the ground. Cannonbolt stood up first and crawled out from the crater. All of a sudden, Kraab appeared and grabbed him with his nipper.

- I suppose we have some unfinished business. – He declared and threw Cannonbolt away. The pelarota destroyed a few smaller buildings before he hit the ground.

Sixsix said something on his own language.

- Stop complaining! Let's find him before he changes into something else! – yelled Kraab and drilled a shaft into the ground. Sixsix scanned the area from the air. There was smoke and dust everywhere, he couldn't see anything.

Meanwhile, Kraab emerged from the ground. He saw a green flash in the smoke. He fired lasers at that direction.

- I know you're here somewhere. You will regret what you have done to me! – shouted he.

Behind him, a shadow evolved from the smoke. A green energy blast struck Kraab down.

- Think again! – said Eye Guy.

Suddenly, Sixsix charged at him from the air. He grabbed him and flew higher. Eye Guy quickly transformed into Stinkfly and spat some goo into Sixsix's face. He couldn't see anything and crashed into a building, but he was still holding the lepidopterran's sting.

- Let go of me! – yelled he.

Sixsix got rid of the goo but a purple energy beam hit him on his chest. Stinkfly freed himself and watched Sixsix spining as he fell down.

- Need a hand? – asked Lantara. Suddenly, a red laser almost struck her down.

- Wow! – said both of them jointly.

-I'll handle this! – declared the lepidopterran and flew above Kraab, who shot the beam. Stinkfly went Upgrade and fell upon the robot, to merge with him. This attack was successful, with green electric discharges, Upgrade fried Kraab's brain out. As he turned into his original shape again, Kraab collapsed. Upgrade reverted to Ben.

- Oh yeah, who's bad?! – enthused Ben.

Then he heard a noise from behind. He looked back and recognized Sixsix, who trained his weapon at him.

The bounty hunter said something on his own language again. Ben's answer was a wide grin, as he saw what Sixsix couldn't. Lantara became visible behind him at her full potential. She phased through

Sixsix's armor and knocked him out, reaching inside his brain. The ectonurite even shot him with an energy blast. Sixsix fell into a swoon.

Ben looked at Lantara with a questioning visage.

- What? – She asked. Her chest closed as she reverted to her normal shape.

- Maybe that last energy blast wasn't necessary.

- You have to defeat your opponent assuredly. – replied Lantara.

- Yes, mom, you're right. – joshed Ben.

- Gimme a break and let's go! – smiled Lantara.

They entered the capsule and left the small planet of Dactola behind. As they accelerated to hyperspace, Lantara asked Ben.

- Where should we go next? Any ideas?

Ben scratched his head.

- Well, I was wondering... if we could visit... home. – speculated Ben.

- Good idea! Next stop: Earth! – agreed Lantara.

As the capsule softly sleeked in the hyperspace Ben fell into his thoughts.

Eight years passed by, since he had lost that battle against Kevin. Eight years away from Earth. It's a long time. From a child, Ben grew up to a handsome young man. He also decided to grow a beard. He learned how to subordinate the omnitrix to his own will. He had a lot of experiences. He had visited many planets in the universe, alongside with Lantara. Although he missed the school studies, he wasn't barbaric. Every places he visited, he adopted something. For example, on Galvan Prime, he went to the Universal Database, and found everything about Earth, beside thousands of other planets. He downloaded the data into a small circle-shaped trailer record and spent his time studying it, when they were traveling in the hyperspace. He had changed a lot in his attitude. As he was thinking about this, suddenly Gwen came to his mind. He found that strange, because he never had a thought of her, since he left Earth. Then he touched his scar. It remained on his face, just as Lantara predicted. Even his alien's inherited it. Then he forgot the scar and thought something else. Lantara and he made a good team, just like Max and Xylene did. He had a good relationship with the ectonurite, they understood each other. As the time passed by, Ben learned to overstep on her outside looking and appreciate her inside. He spent a lot of time thinking about old times. He remained silent and Lantara did not want to disturb him. She knew Ben would tell her what he wants, if he wants to tell.

After a few days, the capsule came out from hyperspace in our solar system. This time, Lantara knew exactly where Earth was, she didn't make the same mistake twice. In fact, she slowed down a bit early. Ben looked out and saw the Saturn. But they soon left it behind, they were approaching Earth faster, than Ben thought. Two hours later, Lantara prepared to enter Earth's atmosphere. The orange flames appeared around the capsule, but Ben didn't paid attention to the phenomena, he got used to it.

A couple of minutes later, Lantara put the capsule down gently. She helped Ben to get out from it. What Ben saw, wasn't the sight he counted on. New York had been completely destroyed. Half of the city was under water, half of them burnt down. The smoky remains of the skyscrapers were still there. There were petrosapien projectiles everywhere.

- Kevin. – whispered he the word.

- Look! – Lantara pointed to a spaceship, its front was in the ground. Green weeds grew around the vehicle, which seemed so familiar to Ben.

Finally, he realized whose ship he is looking at. It was Tetrax's, the *Resolution*.

- No! – Ben said.

They could see traces of battles everywhere. Suddenly they heard a noise.

- Well, well, well, look who's back! Welcome home, Ben Tennyson! – said a raspy voice behind them. Ben looked up and recognized Vilgax.

With a green flash, Ben transformed into Fourarms.

- I see, you have learned a few things about the omnitrix!! But you will fall now, no matter what you turn into! – roared Vilgax as his muscles began to grow. He immediately struck down, but Fourarms quickly snapped out of it... maybe it was too quick for a tetramand.... Vilgax's fists couldn't harm Lantara either, because she changed her protoplasm to avoid the strike. She soon reached her full potential and fired many energy beams. She even grabbed him with her tentacles and Fourarms hit him. Lantara released him, as he flew backwards.

- What are you doing here? You're supposed to chill out in outer space! – yelled Fourarms.

- That was before you've disappeared. You should know me better! You cannot stop me! I've decided, if I can't have the omnitrix, at least I'll have the satisfaction of destroying your homeworld. – replied Vilgax and picked up a burnt out tank to destroy Fourarms with it. He threw it upon the tetramand, but he smashed it into pieces. He ran to Vilgax, and punched him. Again, Fourarms was too rapid for a tetramand.

Vilgax flew through a skyscraper, which collapsed on him. But he survived and jumped high in the air. He wanted to stomp Fourarms, but he avoided it, with awesome speed. Vilgax blinked.

- How are you so fast? – asked he.

- It's one of my newest skills. – replied Ben shortly, and changed into Spitter. The enormous amount of slime hit Vilgax's chest and made him retreat. Then he became Cannonbolt. Lantara fired a more powerful energy beam at Vilgax's head. He fell down. Cannonbolt jumped in the air, and hit him on the stomach. Lantara wanted to phase through his head and knock him out, but unexpectedly, Vilgax grabbed and tossed her away.

Cannonbolt changed into Brainstorm. This alien form was a lacetiguan, like Xylene. He used his telekinetic skills and threw many huge rocks and other debris to Vilgax. He fell off. A second later, he stood up and made a counterattack. Brainstorm focused on Vilgax himself. A green aura surrounded him and sent him back rapidly. Vilgax banged into a thick, strong wall. He fell down to the ground. A moment later, Ben already towered above him, as Diamondhead. Vilgax blinked. He couldn't understand how Ben got here so fast. He flew back at least five hundred feet... A petrosapien can't be that fast... He looked up to Diamondhead. Even he got frightened by his expression.

- As you said, I've learned a few things. – said Diamondhead coldly. He formed a spear from his right hand.

- And I shall stop you right now. – continued he, as Vilgax tried to stand up. Surprisingly, a massive fire beam came out from Diamondhead's left hand. The heat melted Vilgax's armor. He forgot what is pain like during the years. Now, he got a revision.

He looked to Ben once more. He saw, that Diamondhead's left hand was like Heatblast's.

- Impossible! – said he. This was his last word, before the petrosapien spear went through his body and tore him to shreds. Diamondhead reverted to Ben. He felt Lantara was watching him.

- What was this all about? – asked she.

- You know, this was the guy I told you about. I had to do it. I had to make sure. He must be stopped. – declared Ben.

- You don't have to apologize for me. You make decisions; you know what you're doing. – replied the ectonurite.

- I've never wanted this to happen. I've never wanted to see Earth like this. – said Ben emotionally.

- I know. This is not your fault. – answered Lantara.

- Yes it is. I should have been here, to protect her.

- Don't blame yourself. – said Lantara and put her arms around him.

A few minutes later, Ben stepped away from her.

- I need to see someone. Alone. – said he.

- I understand. I'll wait here. – agreed Lantara.

- You will be all right? – worried Ben.

- Oh, I'm a tough girl, I can protect myself, you know that. Go. – smiled Lantara. She knew exactly whose Ben going to visit.

Ben smiled back, before he transformed into Xlr8. His face disappeared behind the windshield and he stormed out.

Xlr8 ran to Gwen's place, at least the last one he knew. He found nothing there; the house was ruined and empty. As he came out, he had an idea. He changed into Brainstorm and tried to telepathically locate his cousin. He dilated his mind and after a few attempts, he could reach Gwen's. Then he reverted to Xlr8 once again and ran away to find her.

He had to intercept the whole country. When he arrived to his destination, he became Ben. Only then he recognized Gwen, who was in big trouble. She was surrounded by a bunch of suspicious, dirty men.

- Come on, sweet heart, you know what we want! – said one of them. The others laughed.

- Don't make this harder, than it supposed to be. – said another.

- Never!- hissed Gwen.

- All right, we'll get what we want, this way, or the other! – yelled the one, who seemed to be their leader.

He slapped Gwen on the face, she fell on the ground.

- Fresh meat, boys! – laughed their leader.

- I don't think you'll enjoy this baby! But I will! – grinned he. Gwen wanted to stand up, but he floored her. She was helpless.

Ben couldn't hear their talk very well, but it became obvious for him, what they are planning to do with Gwen.

- You're not going anywhere, until you satisfy us all! – roared the leader. Gwen kicked him on the stomach. The leader groaned, then slapped her again. Gwen lost her consciousness. Then there was a green flash.

- Take your dirty hands off her! – shouted Fourarms as he came out from the shadows.

- Stay away, freak! She's ours, wait your turn! – replied the leader angrily. He turned to Gwen again.

- I said, leave her alone! – yelled the tetramand, and punched the leader. He hit the ground far away.

- What do we have here? A hero! –said another man. He held a chain in his hands. The other two had a baseball bat and one of them had a small knife. The one with the chain attacked first. Fourarms grabbed the chain and gave it a pull. Then he punched it's owner. Then all the others attacked him, but he defeated all of them. The group ran away cowardly. Gwen came to. She recognized Fourarms.

- Ben? – asked she weakly.

Ben turned into himself.

- It's all right now, I'm here, Gwen....

## 9 - Chapter 9

### Chapter 9

- Are you all right? – asked Ben.

- I knew you would come back. – replied Gwen, and hugged him. First, Ben surprised, but a few seconds later, he returned the hug.

- Everyone else thought you're dead! Even I believed it! But deep within my heart I knew you're alive somewhere! – continued Gwen, as she stood up. Then she felt Ben's rigid look on herself.

- You still hate me, right? – asked she.

Ben remained silent. They just looked into each other's eye, as the wind blew their hair. Ben had to admit himself that Gwen became a foxy woman after all these years. She had long hair, expressive, warm eyes and an excellent body. Of course, he still looked at her as a relative.

- You'll never forgive me. – declared Gwen softly.

- I will never forget that day, Gwen. Never! – said Ben.

- I'm sad you still find it this way.

Ben almost said, he's not here because of her, it was just a random idea to come home, but he decided not to mention it.

Suddenly, he saw something flying in the air...

- Look out! – said he and rescued Gwen from the explosion. She surprised, because Ben owned Xlr8's speed, without transforming into him.

- How did you do that? – asked she.

- Later, we have company! – replied he shortly and pointed to a ruin of a smaller building. A vicious group of flourana appeared on the roof. They were throwing explosive seeds to them. Ben rapidly took Gwen to a safer place, behind a wall.

- How did those Wildvines got here? – asked he.

- That's a long story. – said Gwen.

- You're always saying that! – laughed Ben nervously. He changed into Brainstorm and flew up. When he was in the air, he became Cannonbolt and fell upon the flourana. However, some of them avoided Ben's attack and captured him with their stalks. Cannonbolt went Grey Matter, so he could get out of the deadly squeeze. When the flourana attacked him again, he was already Heatblast. He fried most of the Wildvines, but a few still remained and threw more seeds at him. The explosion forced Heatblast to the ground. Before the flourana could trap him again, he went Xlr8 and eluded from them. He found a hiding place and transformed into himself, to work out his strategy.

- Ben! Cold kills mostly all kinds of plants! – yelled Gwen from the other side of the building.

- That's it! – smiled Ben. He revealed his position on purpose. When the flourana attacked him, he changed into Artiquana and froze the rest of them.

- Thanks for the tip. – said Artiquana.

- It's nothing. Just like in the old times. – smiled Gwen.

The alien transformed back, and walked to his cousin.

- What happened here? – asked her Ben.

- I'll tell you everything later, I promise. But we gotta go! It's not safe, soon there will be more creatures!

– explained she.

She grabbed Ben's hand and led him through a labyrinth of ruins and debris. They found themselves in the former downtown. Gwen stopped before an old theatre.

- Here we are! - declared she and pulled Ben inside.

- This is where you live? – asked he.

- Yes. – replied Gwen, as they entered the main concert hall. She led Ben further on, until they arrived to the dressing rooms.

She invited Ben inside. There were candles, books and cans everywhere. He also recognized a strange writing on the walls.

- Hungry? – asked Gwen holding a canned bean in her hands.

- Yeah, I could eat. – said Ben with a pale smile.

They set down to a table and shared the food.

- Huh... How romantic... dinner in candlelight... – remarked Ben.

- The electricity went out four years ago. – answered Gwen.

They finished the rest of the can in silence. After they snuggled themselves on a sofa Ben asked his cousin once more, to tell him what happened on Earth.

Gwen closed her eyes as she began to remember to all of those terrible events.

- It began after a year, you've disappeared... Nobody could stand a chance against them. It was a dark day, when Kevin gained control over the portals of the Null Void. I don't know how he could do that, but he released every creature from the Null Void. Those aliens hunted in hordes and grew stronger. We tried to defend ourselves first, but their supernatural powers rapidly destroyed our forces. The great cities have fallen, one after the other. A little hope emerged, when Tetrax came to rescue us. He fought violently, but there were too many. He had been captured and maybe killed, I'm not sure... After he defeated Tetrax, Kevin declared himself as ruler of the world. He subjugated anyone, who dared to oppose him. He became stronger and stronger, as he obtained more and more alien DNA. But this was merely the beginning... some of those alien life forms extinct, our climate wasn't the best for them, I suppose... However, most of them survived, furthermore, they began to mushroom. Soon, they reached the other continents. I don't know if they succeeded there or not... But America is doomed. Only a few resistant groups remained... Even now, we can't unite, you saw those men back there. If you hadn't come...

Gwen finished the story. Ben listened thoughtfully.

- How did you survive? – asked he.

- After they destroyed the bigger cities and towns and their population, most of the aliens preferred to stay in the middle of the continent. At least I see this way. But, there's been only a few aliens appeared, since I live here.

Ben recognized a teardrop, on Gwen's face. He touched her cheek.

- Do you know where Kevin is? – Ben looked deeply into her eyes.

- Of course. Everyone knows that. But nobody dares to go there. It's the most dangerous part of the continent.

- Where?

- That was the first city, which has fallen. They call it, the Beyond Recovery-City... New York.

Ben's eyes grew large.

- Lantara...

- What? - asked back Gwen nervously.

- Don't have time! – replied Ben, and changed into Xlr8.

- No, wait! You can't leave me here like this! – stooped him Gwen.

- Why? You left me there alone, remember? – said Ben shrewdly. Before his cousin could react, he



stormed out.

When Xlr8 arrived back to New York, he found no one there. He became Ben. He walked to the capsule carefully. His eyes were watchfully scanning the area. He sneaked to Tetrax's ship and stood against its casing quietly. Suddenly, a hand stopped his mouth from behind and pulled him through the casing. It was Lantara.

- What are you doing... – began Ben, but he was interrupted.

- Ssssh! They are everywhere. – whispered the ectonurite.

- Where?

She led him to a creek.

- Look! – said she.

Ben saw a blue, four-legged, six-eyed alien, with huge teeth and sharp claws. It was sniffing on the ground.

- It's just one... – said he.

A few seconds later, a full-grown vulpimancer jumped down from a rock. He was followed by three blue aliens.

- Damn it, it's a Wildmutt. He has heat vision he might spot us. – worried Ben.

- I know. Stay calm, we'll see. – eased him Lantara.

Soon, another two blue creatures appeared. They slowly approached Ben and Lantara, as they were sniffing. Suddenly, the vulpimancer recognized their heat signs. He roared and ran there to kill.

- There's gonna be trouble! – yelled Ben and turned into Spiderweb (a brachypherran, a creepy, arachnid alien, with six hands and eyes. His power is to capture anything in a cocoon, or quickly weave strong web, to use it as a rope or something. He can quickly climb up on upright objects or he can move upside down. His bite contains a venom, that causes temporary paralysis).

He raised his hands and fired a white mass, which turned into a cocoon in the air and captured some of the blue creatures. But the vulpimancer evaded from Spiderweb's shots and continued his rampage to kill Ben.

Spiderweb changed into Spitter and fired his slime on the vulpimancer. He didn't see it, because it was cold. He rolled a few times, then went sprawling on the ground. But, he wasn't defeated. He shake his head and stood up, but Lantara shot him with an energy blast. Then she merged with the vulpimancer and knocked him out.

- We should go, before there will be more! – suggested Lantara.

Ben almost agreed, when he glanced at Tetrax's broken ship. Then Gwen's words came to his mind.

*He fought violently, but there were too many. He had been captured and maybe killed, I'm not sure...*

- No, I must check something out! – replied Ben.

- Not now! – said Lantara.

More and more various aliens emerged from the ruins.

- I owe him! Without him, I wouldn't be here! – shouted Ben.

- I know what you're planning to do. But I'm sure he doesn't want you to get killed. Because if we stay, we won't live for long! – said Lantara, with a little anger in her voice.

- Okay, move out! – agreed Ben.

They got to the capsule and took off, before the aliens could tear them into shreds.

Meanwhile, in the highest skyscraper, Charmcaster reported to her master.

- Master! Someone entered the city.

The man, set on a throne, made out of stone. The shadows covered his face.

- Who? – asked the man. His voice was cold, commanding and sharp.

- It seems that Ben Tennyson has returned. – replied Charmcaster.

- I can't believe it! I thought he hanged himself up! – smiled the man.

- What do you want me to do? – asked Charmcaster.

- Go down to the prison block and guard the petrosapien! Sit tight, no matter what! Understand?

- Of course.

- Good girl! Now go! – commanded the man.

Charmcaster left him alone. He stood up and slowly walked to the window. As he stepped out from the shadows, his features evolved.

He was Kevin.

## 10 - Chapter 10

### Chapter 10

The capsule slowly landed in front of the theatre. Lantara and Ben met Gwen inside.

- Where were you? You left me here like a piece of junk! – complained Gwen.

- I had to save someone, who's close to me! It's something that you can't understand. – retorted Ben sharply.

- I can't believe it! Why can't you step over that day? Yes, I know it was terrible, but you can't live in the past! I've made an unalterable mistake. I know. But I managed to move along and live.

Ben made a step ahead.

- I've lost my whole family that day! I was ten! – He shouted.

- So was I! – replied Gwen.

- You can't imagine what I've been through! You can't feel all those mixed feelings what I have! I thought you've changed, but no! You remained the same! – declared Ben.

- Oh, really? And what have you done so far? Abandoned your planet to travel around the universe! You weren't here to stop Kevin, and that's why he could do what he did! – yelled Gwen.

Suddenly, Lantara phased through Ben, to face her. She was at her full potential.

- You don't have the right to blame him! You were the one who abandoned him, in the time of need! You left him all alone! Look at his face! Just look at that scar! It's just one of the consequences of your decision! – shouted the ectonurite.

- Hey, no one asked you! This is our business, not yours! – replied Gwen coldly.

- I don't think so! I know him much better than you ever did! And I care about his feelings! He had no one else, just me on that day! And I've adopted him and taught him to improve his skills! What did you do? Nothing! You should be thankful! He have lost his family because of you and still saved you a few hours ago! – yelled she.

Lantara was ready to shoot Gwen down with an energy beam, but Ben stepped among them.

- I've lost my family too! – shouted Gwen, fighting her tears.

Ben's eyes grew large.

- What?

- Why do you think I'm all alone? A horde of lymax aliens killed my family, when I was thirteen. They only spared me, because I was in the shower and they can't stand water. – cried Gwen.

Ben couldn't say anything. Lantara reverted to her normal shape.

- Maybe there's not a big difference between us. – said he quietly, after a few minutes of silence.

– Maybe I do couldn't overstep what you've done. – Ben continued. He suddenly hugged his cousin.

Gwen hugged him back. They were just standing there in tears. Lantara watched them silently and discovered a little bit of jealousy in her heart.

Meanwhile in New York, Charmcaster walked down to the prison cells. She grew up as well; she wore a long-sleeved, black outfit. She had the same white hair, but it was much longer. She also had a bigger voodoo bag. Her steps echoed in the dark corridor. She raised her hand and mumbled a short spell, which turned on all the lights. She walked further on, until she arrived to her destination. As she looked

into the cell, she saw a narcotized, tied up petrosapien, behind a powerful electric field. He slowly looked up to her.

- Sometimes, I wonder why we bother taking prisoners. – said Charmcaster with disgust.

She mumbled some spells again and a chair emerged from the ground.

- I hope he knows why I'm wasting my time here. – nattered she.

Suddenly, Kevin's voice echoed in her mind painfully.

*Yes, I know exactly what I'm doing!*

Charmcaster remained silent and waited patiently.

- I've gotta save him! – declared Ben.

- No, you can't go there, it's too dangerous! Besides, you don't know if he's still alive. – replied Gwen.

- I have to try! I owe him. – said Ben.

- I'll go with you. – assured him Lantara.

- No. I must go alone this time.

- What's your plan then? – asked the ectonurite.

Ben told them.

- If I won't come back in five hours, you must take Gwen and leave the planet. – finished Ben.

- We won't leave you here! – said the females.

- I tolerate no argument on this point. – commanded Ben. He turned into Xlr8.

- Wish me luck! – said he and stormed out, before the girls could reply.

Xlr8 stopped and reverted to Ben. He used Wildmutt's and Benwolf's senses at the same time. He found no aliens, the city was calm and clear. He tried to telepathically locate Tetrax, but to no avail. He doubted, that he's alive. He changed into Brainstorm, to strengthen his telepathic skills. He had to search for a long time, until he could pick up a weak signal of Tetrax's mind, although he couldn't locate him exactly. He went Xlr8 again and looked around. The green flashes of the omnitrix were very conspicuous in the night. The kinceleran rapidly found the prison blocks, but didn't know which cell Tetrax was imprisoned. However, he was fast and easily discovered the petrosapien's whereabouts. Tetrax was tied up, with a strong metal rope. His armor was taken; his arms were bare. He was floating between wakefulness and sleeping all the time, because a special gas narcotized him. Xlr8 recognized that his crystalline skin has many cracks and breaches.

He changed into Fourarms. When Tetrax recognized him, he muttered something.

- Don't worry, pal! I'll take you out from here! – said the tetramand, as he ripped the bars apart. Then he recognized the powerful electric field. He transformed into Buzzshock and sucked up all the electricity. He reverted to Fourarms again.

- Ben... – Tetrax began dazedly, when Fourarms untied him.

- I'm here! Don't worry!

- Ben... – mumbled the petrosapien.

- What?

- Ben... You shouldn't have come here... – gasped he.

- What are you talking about? – asked Fourarms. Tetrax recognized a shadow behind the tetramand's back.

- It's a trap! – shouted he and tried to fire some projectiles, but he was too weak. Suddenly, a voice accosted him.

- Hello, watch-boy!

Fourarms turned around.

- Charmcaster!

- Oh, it's so nice of you to remember! – said Charmcaster mockingly.

- Yeah, you're the one I just need, like I didn't have enough problems! – replied Fourarms.

- Enough chit-chat! Surrender yourself, or you shall be destroyed! – commanded Charmcaster.

- We both know I can't.

- Then suffer the consequences! – hissed she and created a massive energy beam. But Fourarms evaded from it, with Xlr8's speed. (and he was also carrying the helpless Tetrax.) He ran out of the complex, and then stopped.

- It's over, we're safe now. – said he.

- I wouldn't count on it! – yelled Charmcaster, emerging from the sand. In fact, she was the sand. She raised her hands, streaming a dense mass of sand, which buried them alive. The witch returned to her original shape, but suddenly, a green tentacle erupted from the ground grabbing her. Soon, Wildvine dug himself up, holding Tetrax in his other hand. He put him down softly and his other hand coiled around Charmcaster's body as well. The flourana stretched her. But she used some spells to create electricity, which ran through Wildvine's body, forcing him to release her.

- You will not defeat me so easily! – yelled Charmcaster, and threw a few explosive eggs at him.

Wildvine fell on the ground.

The witch approached him in the vortical dust. But Ben already changed alien form. He turned into Shockwave (a vocilofluctida, a middle-sized alien with red and white skin and with two enormous paws. His power is to create loud, destructive shockwaves, by rapidly clapping his huge hands, like Fourarms, but much stronger.) and clashed his hands. With an earsplitting boom, a blue bowshock destroyed a few buildings, before it reached Charmcaster and took her down. Shockwave slowly approached her. Suddenly, Charmcaster summoned two vicious rock creatures to destroy Ben. He clapped his hands once more and the wave smashed the creatures into pieces.

- Do not underestimate my powers! I've learned a few things, since our last encounter! – said he and transformed into Heatblast.

- As have I! – yelled Charmcaster and raised her hands. She chanted some spells and struck down. Heatblast shot some fireballs, but they have been put out, as they impacted into the massive water-jet, which Charmcaster have just created. The spout hit the pyronite and forced him to the ground.

- Aaaarrgh! – roared he as he changed into Artiquana and froze the flood. Then he went Xlr8 and kicked Charmcaster's face many times.

She wasn't defeated yet, she threw dozens of explosive eggs at him. Xlr8 retreated and changed into Benwolf. He opened his mouth and made an ultrasonic howl. Then he jumped into the air and kicked Charmcaster on the face, forcing her to the ground.

- How do like this? I'm not that little boy anymore! – shouted he, and turned into the Mummy. His bandage surrounded Charmcaster's body. Suddenly, Buzzshock's green electricity ran up to her on the bandage and knocked her out. The Mummy released her unconscious body. After that, he changed into Spiderweb and trapped her in a cocoon.

Ben reverted to himself, as he ran to Tetrax. He was lying on the ground

- Are you all right? – asked Ben.

Tetrax opened his eyes.

- Ben? Is that you? – His voice was powerless.

- Yes. Can you get up?

- I don't think so... That venom is still in my circulation... but I'll try. – replied Tetrax.

Ben helped him but he was too heavy. At least, Tetrax was in a sitting position, he could see what Ben couldn't. Charmcaster was sneaking behind his back, planning to stab Ben with a knife. She had little

remainings of the cocoon on her clothes.

- Behind you! Aaarrgh! – yelled Tetrax and with a painful struggle, he fired a projectile at her. It went through Charmcaster's right leg.

- Oooooouch! Damn it! – shouted she in pain, as she bent down to her knees. She was unable to fight anymore, just shouted and cursed on the ground.

- Let's get out of here! – said Ben, changing into Fourarms, ignoring Charmcaster's painful cries. He helped Tetrax to stand up, but suddenly, various aliens appeared from everywhere. Fourarms recognized a lot of flourana, vulpimancer, lymax and other vicious creatures. They were surrounded. The aliens slowly approached them, the ring around Ben grew smaller and smaller. He knew there are too many, and he can't defeat all of them and protect the helpless Tetrax in the same time. But, he braced himself for the battle.

- Prepare yourself, pal! This is gonna be a bumpy ride! – said Fourarms ironically, to Tetrax.

- We'll blow them away! – replied the petrosapien with a weak smile.

The distance between them and the aliens was only a few feet. Fourarms faced a dribbling loboan. He opened his mouth to create an ultrasonic howl, but all of a sudden, a purple energy beam struck him down. A moment later, the beam hit another alien. Fourarms looked up to the direction, where it came from. She recognized the flying capsule. Lantara's upper body was outside, she fired the energy beams.

- Need a ride? – asked she and shot a series of beams, like a machine gun. The aliens immediately replied with explosive seeds, ultrasonic howls, or more energy beams. Fourarms smiled and went Stinkfly. He grabbed Tetrax and flew up, before the ring of aliens could finally close around them. Stinkfly was struggling with Tetrax's weight; he couldn't stay in the air for long. The attacks from the ground also endangered his flight. He flew in a crisscross, until he reached the capsule.

- Get him first! – yelled the lepidopterran. Lantara grabbed Tetrax's legs and pulled him inside, by changing her protoplasma.

- There's not enough room for me! Go! I'll follow you. – said Stinkfly.

Suddenly, a loboan howl struck him. He fell down. The aliens billowed around him.

- Ben! Noooo! Hang on! I'm coming! – cried Lantara.

Ben lost the control over the omnitrix. With a red flash, he reverted to himself.

- Go! Just go! – shouted he.

As Lantara glanced back, she saw his arm disappearing under the aliens....

# 11 - Chapter 11

## Chapter 11

- What happened? Where's Ben? – asked Gwen nervously.  
- We have lost a battle... he remained there. – replied Lantara.  
- What?! Why did you go after him then? To do nothing? To just stand around and watch his demise?! – yelled Gwen.

Lantara floated to her, to look into her eyes.

- Don't use that tone of voice with me! Listen! I don't like you, more than you like me! But you're not the only one here, who cares about Ben! Besides, he's not dead. I'll go back to rescue him, as soon as possible. Nevertheless, my capsule needs some repairing, it has been damaged by the alien attacks... Now, give me a hand with him. – answered the ectonurite angrily. She and Gwen carried Tetrax inside. After they placed him on the couch, Gwen asked Lantara what they should do with him.

- Nothing. I suppose we'll just have to wait until the venom empties from his circulation. Then he'll be able to regenerate himself.

- You did what? – yelled Kevin at Charmcaster.

- I'm sorry master, the petrosapien's attack was unpredictable... – excused herself Charmcaster. She looked up to the throne, where Kevin sat. A moment later, he was right before Charmcaster. She blinked because of the surprise, but suddenly, she got a big punch on her face.

She flew back a few feet.

- I gave you this, because you have been defeated by a helpless, dazed opponent. – declared Kevin distinctly.

Charmcaster stood up in pain. Her hair messed up and she couldn't stand on her right leg. Although, she didn't had the time to realize all this, Kevin was already in front of her again. She braced herself for more punishment, but Kevin lecherously touched her cheek.

- And I give you this, because you held on in the battle with Tennyson. – said he. His voice was soft and warm.

They kissed.

- Now, you must regenerate yourself. But mark my words! I won't be so forgiving next time! – warned her Kevin.

- Thank you, master! – replied Charmcaster and limped away.

Kevin made a devilish grin. He had a new plan in his twisted mind.

Next day, a powerful storm assaulted the walls of the old theatre. The heavy rain didn't allowed Lantara to go after Ben.

She was repairing the capsule, when she heard a noise from downstairs. She phased through the floor and found herself in the hall. Suddenly, the door opened wide. A shape evolved from the rain. It was Xlr8. His legs were shaking, he was gasping and he had many injuries.

- Gwen! Come quick! – shouted she.

Gwen ran upstairs.

- What? – Then she recognized Xlr8.

- Ben? – asked she doubtfully.

Xlr8 didn't reply. He made a few steps inside. As he bent down to his knees, he changed into Fourarms. Then he went Diamondhead, then Benwolf, then Cannonbolt.

- He has no control over the omnitrix! – determined Lantara.

Ben fainted and with a red flash, the watch transformed him back to himself. He collapsed.

Ben opened his eyes. He saw Gwen sitting beside him.

- How long I've been knocked out? – asked he on a weak voice.

- Two days. – replied Gwen shortly.

Tetrax and Lantara entered the room.

- How are you Ben? – asked the petrosapien.

- I'm okay, it's just a few scratches. What about you?

- Since I'm not under the affection of the venom, I'm fine. I must thank you. For everything you've done. – said Tetrax.

- It's nothing. You would have done the same if you were me. – answered Ben. Then he turned to Lantara.

- You okay, girl?

- Never been better, since you're here again. – said the ectonurite warmly.

- You need to have rest for now. – suggested Gwen.

- Good idea. – smiled Ben and fell asleep.

A few days later, most of Ben's injuries healed, but he was still weak. He spent most of his time having conversations with Gwen, Lantara and Tetrax. It was quite warm and confidential in the candle light.

- How did you survive after we've left? – asked him Lantara.

- Well, I don't remember everything... I was scared, as those aliens surrounded me, that's for sure. I even lost control over the watch. I saw your capsule flying away then the aliens forced me to the ground. I thought they will eat me alive, but then I went Fourarms. I managed to stand up but there were too many. I tried to go Stinkfly, but they didn't let me use my wings. I had to choose a powerful alien form, so I thought of Cannonbolt. But, there wasn't enough space to roll, so I went Diamondhead and fired projectiles everywhere. To no avail, they continued to fight me. I was so exhausted I couldn't keep up. I was lying on the ground smashed, defeated, and prepared myself for the death. I don't remember clearly what happened after this. I might saw someone, who said something... I didn't understand his words. Then all the aliens disappeared... I don't know how I got back... – said Ben.

- Back there, in the prison... I saw your tetramand form owning your kineceleran form's speed. How is it possible? – questioned him Tetrax.

- Yeah, when he saved me from those losers, he was as fast as Xlr8, but he was himself at that moment. – confirmed Gwen.

Lantara just smiled.

- During the years I've spent with Lantara, traveling around the universe, I've obtained a few things. One of them is an alien, which I call Powersource. This alien can copy any other specie's abilities and use, or even combine them with other skills. When I got this form, his DNA merged with all the other genetic samples in the omnitrix. This allows me to combine and unite my alien's abilities, even if I'm just Ben. However, the current alien form's skills are dominant. For example if I'm Fourarms, I can use Xlr8's speed, but it's gainful only in short distances, because Fourarms doesn't have Xlr8's fast reflexes, just his velocity. You see, it's just an extra option to make my fighting skills even better. But I don't know much about using Powersource at full potential. – explained Ben.



Next day, the wind blew the storm away. Ben and Tetrax agreed to have a light practice. Both of them grew stronger after their injuries and both of them needed the physical exercise. They went out to a former park, nearby the theatre. There was enough opened space to rampage.

Tetrax and Ben stood in front of each other. The females just watched them.

- Okay, boy, show me what you got! – smiled Tetrax.

Ben smiled back and changed into Heatblast. He shot fire beams at Tetrax. But he jumped into the air and curled up, like Cannonbolt. He went through the fire beam and hit the pyronite on the face.

Heatblast fell off.

- Come on, I know you can do better than this! – said Tetrax and fired some smaller projectiles at him.

Heatblast used Xlr8's speed to avoid them. He almost went Shockwave, but he realized that would hurt Tetrax, so he thought of Fourarms and grabbed the petrosapien, but he grew spikes all around his body, forcing the tetramand to release him. Fourarms hit the ground with all of his hands, creating a smaller earthquake. Now, Tetrax fell off. He walked closer to the petrosapien. Suddenly, Tetrax fired some crystals and they formed a vest around Fourarms upper body. He ended up on a wall.

- Do you remember to this technique? I used it on the prison planet, when we were looking for Azmuth. – asked Tetrax.

But Forarms have disappeared.

- I'll show you some new tricks! – smiled Grey Matter and jumped on Tetrax's face. He used his sticky limbs to hang on his crystalline face. The petrosapien couldn't see anything, he was unable to remove Grey Matter. He lurched for a few seconds and then fell off.

- What do you think of the short stuff? – laughed the galvan and jumped off Tetrax's face. He reverted to Ben.

- Very original! – Tetrax laughed too, as he stood up.

The girls applauded them.

- Way to go, boys! – Gwen and Lantara said in the same time.

It turned out; both Ben and Tetrax overestimated the powers. The practice didn't last for long, but really exhausted them.

Unfortunately, they will not have time to recuperate perfectly...

## 12 - Chapter 12

### Chapter 12

On that night, Ben lived through the same nightmare. He was ten again, but with his present knowledge. There was Kevin, trying to kill his grandfather. He knew he could stop him. He changed into Fourarms and ran to attack Kevin. Suddenly, he transformed into something else, bigger, stronger and more vicious than ever. He killed Max, before Ben could intervene. As he rampaged there with vengeance, a black tentacle of Kevin grabbed him. As it touched Fourarms, he reverted to Ben. He couldn't get out of the deadly squeeze. Kevin looked into his eye once more, then grinned. He killed Ben as well. A moment later Ben startled out of his sleep. It was dark in the room; he saw nothing except the green light of the omnitrix.

He lied watchfully in his bed. He felt, he cannot sleep back, but he didn't want to wake the others. So he stayed quiet and slowly fell asleep again. Next day, he was walking back and forth nervously.

- Ben, what's the matter? - asked him Gwen.

- I don't know. Something's wrong. – replied Ben angrily.

- What depresses you?

Ben told her about his nightmare.

- It's just a dream I had hundreds of nightmares, since you've left. – said Gwen.

- No, you do not understand... I had the same kind of dream, the night before he killed grandpa! It's a prediction, I tell ya! – yelled Ben.

- I believe you. – assured him Gwen.

Ben smiled at her, she smiled back.

It was late afternoon; Ben was having a conversation with Gwen. Suddenly, they heard a loud bang. Their eyes met.

- What was that? – asked Gwen.

Ben had already gone Xlr8 and ran to the noise's direction.

Tetrax and Lantara were playing chess, when Xlr8 whooshed beside them.

Tetrax! – said he, without even stopping.

The petrosapien quickly stood up and followed Ben. Lantara did the same. Gwen was running behind them.

Xlr8 soon found the source of the noise. Something had broken a window. Small pieces of glass were glittering everywhere.

- We're not alone! – determined Lantara, pointing to the floor. There were footprints on the dusty parquet.

- Let's see who's here! – said Xlr8 and changed into Wildmutt. He sniffed around in the air, then on the floor. His gills on his neck opened as he scanned the area. He didn't find anything suspicious. He reverted to his original shape.

- That's strange. I should have sniffed out the intruder, with Wildmutt's heat vision. – scratched his head Ben.

- Maybe our little guest isn't here anymore. – speculated Lantara.

- Or, you didn't recognize him because... – started Gwen.

- He's cold as the walls here! Gwen! Duck! – shouted Ben, as he saw something black evolving behind her. As Gwen crunched, he raised his hands and created Heatblast's fire beam. Tetrax shot hundreds of projectiles at the creature, but it was gone.

- Where is it? – The males surprised.

Suddenly it grabbed Lantara and tried to pull her in the shadows, but she changed her protoplasm.

- Hands off! – yelled she and her tentacles coiled around the creature's arms. Then she fired an energy beam. The black creature hit the floor. Somehow it got rid of the ectonurite and disappeared from her eyes.

- Our friend is quite brisk! – declared Tetrax.

- Where did it go? – asked Gwen.

- Form a circle, lean your back to the others! – suggested Ben, as Benwolf.

Everyone found that a good idea.

- It's still around here somewhere. Keep your eyes open! – said Lantara.

Something ran beside them, they could hear its steps on the parquet. Tetrax shot a crystal there. Then they heard the same noise, but from the other side. Lantara fired a beam, but it only destroyed a few planks.

*He's sizing us up, trying to find our weakest point, where he can attack!* Ben said telepathically and sent the thought to the others. They surprised by hearing Ben's voice in their heads, but quickly realized what the situation was.

*Gwen, change places with me!* Ben thought. Gwen obeyed, they quietly changed sides.

A second later, the black creature jumped down from an upper plank, but he was struck down by Benwolf's howl. He transformed into himself.

- What did I tell you? – smiled Ben. They heard a rasping sound. The creature has disappeared once more. But Gwen recognized him in the shadows.

- There! – said she and pointed to the pair of glowing eyes.

Ben stepped closer.

- Be careful, Ben! – said Tetrax from behind, ready to intervene.

- Who are you? – Ben asked the creature.

It just laughed, but it was more like a rattling.

- You still haven't figured it out? – said a familiar, raucous voice. The creature turned his head to a window. Ben followed its visage. The others too. They all saw the setting sun.

Ben looked back at the creature. Then his eyes grew large because of the recognition.

- Isn't it beautiful? – rasped the creature, as the environment became darker and darker.

Suddenly, something came out from the creature. Something, Ben knew about way too much.

- Ghostfreak????! – Ben and Gwen yelled together.

- Muhahahaha! It has been a very long time! How are you Ben? – asked Ghostfreak.

- I can't believe it! I fried you two times! How can you be alive?! – shouted Ben.

- Yes, you did! But Kevin has resurrected me, to destroy you! – explained Ghostfreak.

- That's impossible, no one has your DNA, but me!

- Wrong again! When Kevin sucked up the energy from the omnitrix, he obtained my DNA as well!

Then he looked at Lantara.

- Lantara, is that you? – asked Ghostfreak.

- What?! You know him? – surprised Ben.

- Why don't you explain to our old friend? – laughed Ghostfreak.

- Of course, I know him! Everyone knows him on Anur Phaetos! – shouted Lantara.

- Oh, you know that's not all, my love!

- My love? What the heck is he talking about? – questioned her Ben.

- I had a relationship with him. – admitted Lantara.

- What?! How could you have a... Why didn't you tell me about this? – asked Ben.

- I was young and naive and he was so attractive! I didn't know he was a criminal, when I first met him!  
– explained the ectonurite.

- After I told you my secret, you didn't do anything! Wait, that's not true, you played up with me, for a long time! – said Ghostfreak.

Ben looked into Lantara's eye.

- I don't understand... How could you held this back from me? I thought we know everything about each other. – stuttered Ben.

- I'm sorry Ben. I should have told you... But I'd never thought I'll see him again. Yes, he was a criminal, he committed many terrible things and I even helped him... He just used me, he doesn't have emotions! After I realized that, I've left him. Then he disappeared. Everyone believed, he's dead....

- How romantic! I don't mean to interrupt this lovely chat, but Ben has a date with his doom! – shouted Ghostfreak and grew bigger and stronger as he reached his full potential.

- I won't let you do this! – yelled Lantara.

- It's not in your hands! – roared Ghostfreak and grabbed her with his tentacles. Before Lantara could change her protoplasm, he shot her down with an energy blast. She fell on the ground unconsciously.

- You will regret doing that! – hissed Ben and changed into Heatblast.

- Gwen! Take care of her! – said the pyronite as he ran to face Ghostfreak. Gwen dragged Lantara away from the battle.

- Eat this! – Yelled Heatblast and he shot a massive fire beam. Tetrax emerged from behind him, and unexpectedly punched Ghostfreak's head, but the ectonurite's tentacles turned black and green, like Upgrade. The new tentacles grabbed Tetrax and knocked him out with electricity. Heatblast raised his hands, creating a deadly rain of fire. Ghostfreak avoided the menace; the fireballs went through his body. He counterattacked and shot a powerful energy beam at Heatblast. Before it could reach him, he evaded it with Xlr8's velocity. Then he turned into Brainstorm.

- You won't stop me this time, Ben! – laughed Ghostfreak and fired another beam. Brainstorm's green aura surrounded the purple beam as he telekinetically modified its course. It turned around in the air headed to Ghostfreak. He was struck down by his own weapon. But he wasn't defeated and continued the battle. He opened his mouth and made an ultrasonic howl. Brainstorm formed a dome shield around him and avoided the attack.

- How can you do that? – surprised he.

- Kevin shared a few clever tricks with me! – grinned Ghostfreak. Suddenly dozens of small, sharp crystals began to rain at him. Tetrax was attacking him from below.

- Die, petrosapien! – roared the ectonurite and created a stronger howl. Brainstorm went Shockwave and stood against its way. He clapped his hands and his far more powerful soundwave annihilated Ghostfreak's. Shockwave changed into Fourarms. Ghostfreak floated in front of him, planning to defeat the tetramand in a scum. They were struggling, muscle against muscle. Fourarm's hands were all occupied with Ghostfreak's hands and tentacles; he couldn't do anything, when the ectonurite shot him down with an energy beam. He fell on the ground, but his opponent was already above him. He grabbed his hands, with the new Upgrade tentacles, and forced him to the floor. Ben had a random idea.

- Time to fight you with your own kind! – yelled Fourarms. After the green flash, he became Ghostfreak. The original Ghostfreak with the Upgrade tentacles looked at him in surprise. Ben Ghostfreak smiled. Suddenly, the omni-symbol on him sparked. Many green electrical lightning came out from it, accompanied by a humming sound, which grew stronger and more earsplitting as the electric discharges grew bigger. The two ectonurites wanted to release each other, but they couldn't.

- What is this?! – shouted Ghostfreak despairingly.

- Ben! Change into something else! There are too many identical DNAs in a too short distance! – yelled Tetrax.

Ben wanted to do as the petrosapien's said, so he thought of Diamondhead, but the omnitrix didn't do anything. He wanted Cannonbolt, then, but he remained in his ectonurite form.

- Tetrax! I can't! – cried Ben. The sparks, electric discharges and the humming grew more intense every second. He realized, his hand merged with Ghostfreak's.

- Aaaaaaaaaarrrrrh! – shouted Ben Ghostfreak and the original Ghostfreak together in pain.

Then, there was a big, powerful, green explosion. The shockwave forced everyone to the floor. Ben and Ghostfreak finally ripped apart, and flew back to the opposite directions. With a red flash, the omnitrix transformed Ben back to his original form. He hit the ground, such as the original Ghostfreak on the other side of the room. But there was no room. In about a two hundred feet wide circle, everything had been destroyed. Tetrax released Gwen and Lantara. His diamond-hard skin protected them; otherwise, the explosion would have killed them both.

Ben! - yelled Gwen and ran to him. Tetrax and Lantara followed her.

Before they could reach Ben, a strange noise got their attention. They looked at the original Ghostfreak on the other side of the former room. He was still alive, but not for long. His body was black, he couldn't move, just crawled on the floor. He moaned something. He called Lantara's name. he wanted to raise his hand to reach her, but he couldn't. Then he turned into black dust. He extinct. Lantara watched his demise with a rigid eye.

Ben came to.

- What happened?

- You're alive! – Gwen and Lantara hugged him.

As Tetrax stood there, suddenly he began to smile first; then he broke out in a loud laughter.

- What's so funny? – asked him Gwen.

-I'm sorry... Haha... i've just realized... what happened, hahaha! – stuttered the petrosapien.

All the others had a questioning eye. Tetrax went serious.

- As I said, there were too many identical genetic samples in a short distance. The original Ghostfreak supposed to be dead. When Ben turned into his ectonurite form, the omnitrix couldn't handle the same DNA. That led to a discharge, and then to an explosion. When the omnitrix absorbs the same genetic composition, it only keeps the stronger one and deletes the weaker one. You're lucky, you proved to be stronger than the original Ghostfreak. That's why you stayed alive, when he didn't. – jabbered the petrosapien.

- Slow down, pal... That's too much for one round... – joked Ben. The girls helped him to stand up. They went to the other half of the theatre, which remained undamaged. They put Ben into a bed, he immediately fell asleep. The others had a short conversation, then they also went to sleep.

The encounter with Ghostfreak exhausted Ben and the others as well. They can rest for now, but not for long. Soon, they will have to fight for their lives...

In New York, Charmcaster finished gazing into her crystal ball. She almost healed from her injury, although she still had a crippled foot. She didn't recognize Kevin, who was in the door.

- See anything mentionable? – asked he.

- Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't see you! – apologized Charmcaster.

- I asked something. – Declared Kevin shortly.

- Oh, yes... Ghostfreak have failed, Master. Tennyson is still alive.

- I know. He supposed to fail. He was merely an instrument to weaken Benjie! – grinned he.

- But I thought...

- Do not interrupt me, Charmcaster! – hissed Kevin.
- I'm sorry Master!
- Did you really think that loser would kill Ben? He already defeated that goof two times! I knew he'll fall.
- Oh, I see. But why is that good for us? – asked Charmcaster.

Kevin ran inside the room, with Xlr8's speed and stopped in front of her.

- Have you learned nothing?! He's weak now, like a flower. Now's my best chance to destroy him once and for all! – said he angrily.

Charmcaster smiled. Kevin kissed her lips.

- Tomorrow, I will summon all my aliens and we shall visit my old pal, Benjie! Mu ha ha ha ha ha! – his devilish laughter echoed all around the place.

## 13 - Chapter 13

### Chapter 13

Ben opened his eyes. He was swimming in his cold sweat. He had the same nightmare again, but this time he had a strong headache after the dream. He got up and went for a glass of water.

- This has got to stop... – mumbled he for himself.

Suddenly, Lantara evolved from the darkness right in front of him. Ben jumped back.

- Whoa!!! What are you doing here?! – He asked loudly.

- You know I sleep watchfully. – smiled Lantara.

- But it still weird and unnatural to scare me like that, phasing through things, in the middle of the dark night! – gapped Ben.

- Yes it is! Just like having the same nightmare for three days, that's also weird isn't it? – retorted the ectonurite.

- Yeah, you're right... – agreed Ben. – It's draining my power and this headache... oh, man...

- Relax! – whispered Lantara. She touched Ben's shoulders and began to massage them.

- Oh, that's so good... – sighed he with a little surprise in his voice.

Lantara's palms sometimes strongly squeezed his shoulders; sometimes they were gently stroking them.

- What's the matter? You wouldn't expect from an ectonurite to be that...

- Sensitive... – finished the sentence Ben.

- We should get back to sleep. – said he after a few minutes.

Lantara agreed and relaxed her hold on Ben's shoulders.

- Did you enjoy it? – asked she.

- Yeah, it was awesome! I didn't know you're that good at giving a massage. – smiled Ben.

They went back to sleep. For the rest of the night, Ben had no further trouble with his nightmares.

The next day arrived. Ben got up late. There was nobody in the room. He changed clothes and then tried to find the others. Suddenly, he heard a singsong. He went on and the chant became louder. He recognized an opened door. It led into a room. Ben thought it was empty. He pushed the door and saw Gwen in the middle of a circle, made of candles. She was holding an old book in her hands. She didn't see Ben. Her eyes were pale, as she chanted the ancient words. Ben looked around in the room. There was the same weird writing on the walls, and even on the ceiling but the letters had an orange glowing. Suddenly, Gwen put the book down to the floor and drew a circle in the air. Blue smoke followed her movement. Her face distorted as she chanted the spells louder and louder. The two clouds of that smoke united and became a gauzy mass, forming a circle. Ben just watched the events; he was unable to do anything. He heard a thunder, then he saw a blue lightning, evolving from that strange mass. It struck Gwen down, but before she could fall on the ground, Ben caught her with Xlr8's speed. She fainted. The tubular mass have become frayed and the letters on the walls have lost their glowing. Ben carried his cousin to her bed. He put her down. Gwen came to.

- Ben? What happened? Where am I? – asked she.

- I though you will tell me what happened... – replied Ben.

- Oh yes... Now I recall...

- Gwen, since I'm here, I wanted to ask you something. What was that strange writing on the walls? – questioned her Ben.

- I should have told you before... After Kevin seized control and I've been forced to live in abolishment, I've spent most of my time studying ancient magical spells. My plan was to find the spell of time traveling to create a time portal. However, there are hundreds of spell combinations... I've become a fanatic of the time portal, I focused on nothing else. My previous knowledge have disappeared, I had forgotten everything... I still haven't found the correct spell. Even if I'm ever going to figure it out, it takes a lot of talent and practice to actually create one. – replied Gwen.

- You wanted to change the past?

- Exactly. If I could go back in time, a few days before Kevin killed Grandpa, I could warn you to the danger. With the help of my younger self, you would be able to stop Kevin, before he could ever become what he is now. But since I don't know how to make a portal it's just speculation. – explained Gwen.

- And what was that lightning?

- It happens every time I attempt to open a portal. I use the wrong spells and the energy of the portal strikes me, not the time line.

- I suppose that really hurts... – said Ben.

- I got used to it. - replied Gwen shortly. She stood up.

- Where are the others? – She asked.

- I don't know. You sure, you're okay? - worried Ben.

- Yeah, I'm fine. We should find the others, it's dangerous to go out, you can always count on some aliens. - declared Gwen.

Suddenly, a huge explosion shattered the old building. They heard a crunch. They looked up. Above them, the heavy planks cracked, then collapsed. Before they could smash them, Ben changed into Xlr8 and saved Gwen. He ran out of the theatre.

- You were saying? – The kineceleran asked when they were in safety.

- I think we have a bigger problem now. – Gwen said with a little fear in her voice.

Xlr8 looked around. There were different kinds of aliens everywhere.

- Oh, no... – sighed he.

Then a deep voice accosted him.

- Hello Benjie!

Xlr8 looked up. He saw a man floating man in the air. He couldn't see his features clearly, but he already knew his identity.

- Kevin! – exclaimed Xlr8.



## 14 - Chapter 14

### Chapter 14

- I must acknowledge, you're full of surprises! I thought you're dead long ago! But, you're here. – smiled Kevin.

He continued:

- I still remember that day when it all began. That was the best day of my life! Oh, by the way, how's your Grandpa? Mu ha ha ha ha! Don't worry, soon you shall meet him in hell! – He laughed.

As Kevin spoke, Xlr8 wheezed more and more rapidly and he was drooling. Gwen stood beside him but couldn't do anything.

- Ben... – she began.

- Out of my way! – yelled Xlr8. He made a step forward.

- Ben, wait you're too weak to... – warned him Gwen, but before she could finish her sentence the omnitrix flashed, as Ben transformed into Stinkfly. He pushed himself off the ground and flew up.

- Aaaaarrgggh! – roared he as he approached his opponent. Kevin stretched his hands and released a massive spout on Stinkfly. He fell on the ground.

- Mu ha ha ha ha ha! That the best you can do? – grinned Kevin. He softly landed on the ground and walked to the crater. He saw a green flash then he was punched by Fourarms.

- I'm gonna make you pay! – shouted he as he hit Kevin again. But he stopped the tetramands fists.

When he grabbed them, red electricity struck Fourarms. He retreated.

- You have no idea who you're messing with! – hissed Kevin.

- Die! – yelled Fourarms and hit the surface with all of his hands. Kevin flew up to avoid the earthquake.

Fourarms leaped after him, trying to grab him in the air. He missed it. When he jumped up for the second time, he changed into Cannonbolt, right before he reached his floating enemy. The transformation was unexpected for Kevin, the yellow ball hit him. Both of them fell down, but Cannonbolt immediately began to roll on the ground. He went through everything; destroyed a few smaller buildings and some aliens. Kevin had only a nanosecond to jump out of his way. But he couldn't escape that easily, Cannonbolt, quickly changed direction and rolled to the opposite way. Kevin had to run before him for a few seconds until he could fly up. He landed on the top of a pile of debris. Cannonbolt stopped.

- I will destroy you, I swear! – yelled the pelarota and changed into Diamondhead.

- Ha ha ha! You never had the stomach to kill someone! You will never have!!! – mocked Kevin.

Suddenly, Diamondhead ran up to the top of the pile with Xlr8's speed and tried to stab Kevin on the stomach.

- What the... – Kevin surprised, as he avoided Ben's attack. Then he created an ultrasonic howl, which cracked Diamondhead's crystalline skin. He collapsed. With a red flash, he became Ben again.

- Now, you made me real mad, Benjie! Aaaaarrgh! – roared Kevin, and began to mutate. His right hand became a fiery tentacle, his left hand was a tetramand's, but more muscular, and he had an Xlr8/Upgrade tentacle coiling out of it. He grew two more hands, one of them was like Diamondhead's and the other looked like Wildmutt's. Two wings emerged from his shoulders, one of them was Stinkfly's, the other was grey and familiar to those flying creatures in the Null Void. Eight long tentacles grew out from his back, four of them reminded Ben of Wildvine's hands, four of them were grey and spiky. But the most horrible metamorphosis involved his head. In fact, his head split and formed three,

different separate heads. One was a combo of Fourarms, Grey Matter and Ripjaws. The middle one was a flaming skull, the third one united Ghostfreak and a creature with enormous teeth. He slowly towered upon Ben.

- Now, I'll finally get rid of you forever! – shouted the three heads together.

He raised his Fourarms hand to smash Ben. All of a sudden, Tetrax and Lantara appeared and attacked Kevin from the air. Lantara fired a powerful energy beam, Tetrax shot ball-shaped crystals, they were like little meteors. Lantara's beam reached Kevin first, but he placed his Wildmutt hand in it's way. It turned out; he had a part of Cannonbolt's yellow armor at the elbow of that hand. The armor reflected the beam; it's headed back to the ectonurite. She had to change her protoplasm to avoid her own beam. Then Kevin recognized Tetrax's crystalline asteroids. He swayed his fiery tentacle, like a lash and destroyed the crystals. In the mean time, Lantara became invisible. She picked up a huge plank and smote Kevin's head. He instantly turned to that direction, but saw nothing. The ectonurite became visible, right in front of his nose and punched him. Then Tetrax distracted Kevin, by firing hundreds of small projectiles at him. He raised his hands and surrounded his opponent with a crystal wall. But it didn't held Kevin back for long. After a few secondary explosions, he broke out with a fire beam.

- Ha ha ha ha! You will learn soon enough, that nothing can stop me! – exclaimed Kevin from the air. He spit a big amount of Stinkfly goo and shot fireballs right after it, because he knew the goo is combustible. Lantara had some experience with this material, last time it solidified her protoplasm. She avoided it, unlike Tetrax. When the fireballs came in contact with the goo, he literally exploded in the air. He flew through a building, with flaming body. Seeing this, Lantara fired four energy beams successively. The last one eventually managed to shot Kevin, but he was still in the air. She turned invisible again, evading from Kevin's petrosapien projectiles. She wanted to knock him out, by touching his brain. Before she could do that, Wildmutt's gills opened on one of Kevin's necks. He recognized Lantara's heat sign and gripped her with his Xlr8/Upgrade tentacle. Kevin touched her head with his Diamonhead hand. That movement forced the ectonurite to become visible.

- Did you really think, you could defeat me like that?! – yelled Kevin spitefully.

Lantara had to face the three horrible heads, before the red electricity went through her body. She felt pain beyond endurance, but set her teeth and reached her full potential. Her tentacles snaked around Kevin's. He just laughed, until he saw a purple semidarkness in her chest. She just smiled at Kevin, then fired the most powerful energy beam, she has ever created. The purple luminosity filled the area. Kevin recoiled as the beam struck him. He released Lantara. Suddenly, he raised his petrosapien hand. Tubular crystals grew out from his arm as he captured the beam. The ectonurite couldn't keep up, she slowly retreated. She wasn't strong enough to match Kevin. Shooting a persistent beam, drained her powers soon enough. Eventually, she flopped down. Kevin's shadow towered upon her. He grabbed Lantara with his fiery tentacle and clamped her. Suddenly, he heard a commanding voice.

- Put her down! – called upon him Ben, as Shockwave. He clapped his hands. The blue soundwave reached Kevin and forced him to the ground. Lantara fell down as well, when Kevin let her go. With a green flash, Ben reverted to his human form. He ran to Lantara.

- Are you okay? - He asked.

- Yeah, I'll live... – replied the ectonurite then fainted. The fury started to blaze inside Ben once again. A moment later – with Xlr8's speed – he was already beside Kevin's body. He was laying on the ground.

- Do you think these years have just passed by and I did nothing? – questioned Ben. Actually, he had a series of questions.

- Do you think I have not improved?

- Do you think I'm still that little kid?

- Do you think I have forgotten what you have done to my family? – Every time he asked something, he made a step closer to Kevin.

- Do you think I have forgotten what you have done to me? – hissed he and combed his hair back with his hands.

He revealed the whole scar, which started at the top of his forehead and ended below his eye, in the middle of his face.

- I haven't!!! – shouted he. The omnitrix flashed, as he turned into Fourarms.

- Now it's payback time! - yelled he and struck down with all of his hands. But Kevin wasn't there anymore. He was as fast as Xlr8 when he stood up and avoided Ben's blow.

- You always talk too much, Benjie! You should have killed me, when you had the chance. But as I said... You never had the stomach to kill somebody. – grinned Kevin. As he spoke, Fourarms ran in front of him with Xlr8's velocity. When Kevin finished his sentence, he realized the situation. The tetramand's one hand was like Diamondhead's and it formed a sharp spear. Kevin didn't understand, how Ben is capable of doing that, but he reacted as fast as a kineceleran too. However, it was too late. The petrosapien spear went through his right shoulder, and damaged his Stinkfly wing.

- AAAAAAARRRGH! – roared he in pain.

- Think again! – hissed Fourarms and grew some spikes on the spear in Kevin's meat.

Kevin was shouting and cursing.

- Oh, sorry, did that hurt? – asked Fourarms with a cruel and devilish grin. Suddenly, the petrosapien hand merged with Heatblast's ,but remained solid, except it was extremely hot. The smell of the burnt meat intoxicated Ben's mind. He began to laugh.

- How does it feel, ha? I bet you've never experienced anything like this! Mu ha ha ha! – said he.

- You're lucky, you know! I wanted to stab your twisted heart! But this bloody satisfaction is good enough for now! – Ben continued.

He grew more fiery crystals inside Kevin's body. He slowly lost his amalgam form, and turned into a human again. He fainted.

Fourarms transformed back to Ben.

- Let's finish you, once and for all! – hissed Ben. He pulled out a petrosapien projectile from the ground. There were many, around them. He raised it to stab Kevin. Before he could do it, a shadow grabbed Kevin and saved him. Ben followed the mysterious person with his eye. She landed on the top of a smaller ruin. Then a flying rock creature appeared from nowhere.

- Charmcaster! – exclaimed Ben.

She didn't reply, just flew away, but she took two persons with her, Ben could clearly see their contours.

- Noooooo! He's mine! He's mine! – shouted Ben and bent on his knees. He began to cry, alone on the battlefield.

After a few minutes, he calmed down and looked around.

He thought:

*Charmcaster left with two persons for sure... That means, somebody have been kidnapped. But who?*

## 15 - Chapter 15

### Chapter 15

Tetrax came to. He was trapped under a pile of rock and debris. He couldn't free himself. Then he recognized a small ray of light. Suddenly, the debris disappeared above him, someone picked up the whole pile. The light blinded the petrosapien, but he saw the contours of his savior.

It was Fourarms.

- Are you okay? – asked the tetramand.

Tetrax touched his left arm, hiding his cracked skin.

- Yeah, I'm fine... He got me... – sighed he.

- I know. I underestimated him as well. I almost defeated him, when Charmcaster showed up... – said Fourarms.

- What about Lantara?

- She's fainted. But I think she's okay.

- Right. – replied Tetrax shortly.

- Where were you by the way? You and Lantara showed up in the middle of the battle... – questioned him the tetramand.

- We were having a fighting practice at the park. I thought Gwen told you.

- No she didn't... – Ben was unable to finish the sentence. The moment came into his mind, when he saw two persons beside Charmcaster. Then he realized. His features distorted as the anger started to blaze in him with renewed intensity.

- Gwen! Nooooooo! – As he shouted he changed back to himself.

- What? What are you doing? – surprised the petrosapien.

- He has Gwen. – answered Ben.

- What are you talking about? You've just said you almost defeated him, how could he take Gwen?

- It wasn't him. Charmcaster appeared and grabbed Kevin, before I could finish him off. But I saw two persons beside her. She have obviously captured Gwen before, when I was fighting with Kevin. – spoke his mind Ben.

- Why would he kidnap Gwen? That doesn't make sense. – replied Tetrax.

- Because he hates me more than anything else. He knows I'm the only one, who's able to stop him.

Most likely, he wants a trade. My life for Gwen's. I must go there! I can't let her down! – exclaimed Ben.

- No you can't! – Tetrax stood in his way.

- Don't tell me what to do! I must go!

- I know. But you can't let Kevin have the omnitrix!

- He almost died by my hands! He'll have no chance if I surprisingly attack now! – enthused Ben.

- You said, you've underestimated him. You still do. What if that's exactly his plan, he wants you to go there. What if it's a trap to baffle you to a place where he feels confident and moves freely? Think about it! – said Tetrax.

- I don't care! I'll save her no matter what! – yelled Ben.

- That's very commendable... but foolish! – determined a voice from behind. Both of them turned around and saw Lantara. She continued.

- He's right, Ben.

- But Gwen's in danger... – Ben began.

- Yes she is. However, you cannot save her, if you just rampage there. Remember, you have been outnumbered by those aliens before. Even you can't defeat them. Besides, you don't know what has Kevin absorbed during the years! Maybe he'll regenerate, sooner than you think. And he has a lot of supporters, like Charmcaster! Listen to Tetrax! – Lantara touched Ben's shoulders and looked into his eyes.

He became doubtful.

- I agree with you, Kevin wants a trade. He won't hurt Gwen, I'm sure. – Tetrax said.

- What if we're wrong and he tortures her or something? I must go there! – Ben replied.

- You will. But for now, you must have rest to regain your power. That's the only way you can help her. – Lantara suggested.

Eventually, Ben agreed. The night was already upon them. They found shelter in a former mall, which soon became their headquarters for the next few weeks...

Charmcaster flew through the wooden door of Kevin's room.

- This is all your fault, Charmcaster! – blamed her Kevin. He was in his combined form, but couldn't reach his full power, he was only an amalgam of the original ten omnitrix-aliens.

Charmcaster stood up.

- My fault?!

- Yes! You have arrived much later, than planned! – Kevin shouted.

- It's not my fault that Tennyson have defeated you. I was there in the exact time. You have underestimated Ben. I can't help it! – replied Charmcaster. She went farther than she ever did.

- Watch your mouth or suffer the consequences! You owe a submission to me, never forget that! – commanded Kevin.

Charmcaster retreated and bowed down.

- I'm sorry, Master!

Kevin reverted to his human form.

- Since you did this the first time, I'll forgive you this once. But remember! Next time, you won't be this fortunate!

- Thank you! – smiled Charmcaster gratefully.

- Now, leave me alone. I still need some regeneration. I must be prepared for Benjie's arrival. – said Kevin.

Charmcaster left him alone.

- Enough! – exclaimed Ben.

- We should wait one more week. Just to work out everything perfectly. – suggested Tetrax.

- No! We have waited long enough! She's probably dying there!

- Don't let the fury consume your mind again! – said Lantara.

- I'm not furious. I just want to see her again. And kick Kevin's butt for good. – replied Ben.

- Do you think you're strong enough to face him once more? – asked Tetrax.

- Yes, I'm in a perfect condition! Those practices proved to be useful after all. – smiled Ben and raised his hand with the omnitrix on it, to give more emphasis to his words.

- All right then. It's decided. – Lantara said. She saw a green flash, when Ben turned into Xlr8.

- See you at the meeting point! – The windshield closed.

- I'm coming Gwen! – yelled he as he was storming out.

Charmcaster awakened. Her eyes had a purple glowing. She gently touched Kevin's bare chest. He was sleeping right beside her, in the same bed. Kevin opened his eyes.

- What is it? – He asked. His voice was already wakeful.

- I sense, Ben is on his way here. – Charmcaster replied.

- Are you sure?

- Yes.

- Good. Hmm... I reckon he uses his kineceleran form. But it matters not. He comes from the other side of the continent, it takes more than two hours to get here...even for a fast alien... We can sleep one more hour. – speculated Kevin.

- Shouldn't we start the preparations right now? What if he arrives earlier? – doubted Charmcaster.

- Trust me, he won't. Now, sleep. You'll need the energy. – said Kevin and erotically touched her cheek.

Xlr8 whooshed through the continent. He felt the cold wind all around his skin, but he didn't care. He was confident, knowing his goal exactly. The run wasn't exhausting for him at all. He owned his senses and reflexes perfectly. He also knew, when he arrives to his destination, he will finally put an end for this. When he confronts Kevin once again, one of them will die.

Kevin opened his eyes and got up. Charmcaster felt the movement.

- What? – She asked.

- He's here. – grinned Kevin.

It was dawning already when Xlr8 halted before he entered the Beyond Recovery-City. He collected his thoughts once more and cleared up his mind. All of a sudden, he saw a dark hand, trying to strike him down. He rapidly evaded the blow and ran back a few feet. As the attacker approached him, Ben recognized that it was a large orcbest. With a green flash, he transformed into Cannonbolt.

- Bring it on, ugly! – yelled he and rolled up. He struck the orcbest and forced him to the ground. But the beast grabbed and tossed him away. Cannonbolt destroyed a few smaller buildings before he fell down. The dust blurred everything. Cannonbolt evolved from the smoke and hit the beast again. Both fell on the ground, but Cannonbolt crackled a few times. When he was in the air, he turned into Spiderweb. He stretched two of his hands and fired a sticky web to the ruins around him. The web attached to the walls, allowing him to stay in the air. A moment later, he shot a white mass from his other four hands. Before the orcbest could stand up, he was captured in a cocoon.

Spiderweb used one of his webs as an offshoot to continue his journey. Suddenly, his web was cut, but before he could fell down, he changed into Stinkfly. He looked back and recognized a pyronite. He was bigger and stronger than Heatblast. The pyronite created a huge fire beam but Stinkfly avoided it. Then he shot dozens of fireballs at the lepidopterran. None of them could strike him down. But one of the balls burnt his left wing. He landed on the top of a building, in front of the one, the pyronite stood on. He looked at the smoking wing.

- Hey, that hurts!!! – He exclaimed and spat some goo. There was a huge explosion when it came in contact with a fire beam.

Stinkfly flew up fast; his opponent couldn't follow his move. He landed behind the aggressive pyronite.

- All right! Joke's over, loser! – said Stinkfly, turning into Spitter. The pyronite ran towards him to attack, but he was struck down by the large amount of Spitter's slime. Assuring his victory, Spitter converted into Xlr8. He ran down from the building, to remain undetected.

Suddenly, a purple electric beam went through his body. He collapsed. With a red flash, he turned to Ben. He looked up, and recognized one of his old enemies.

- I'd never thought we'll see each other, Ben Tennyson! – grinned Doctor Vicktor.  
- Oh, you're the one I've just needed. One more problem! – replied Ben.  
- But this problem will be your last! Prepare to meet the creator! – yelled Dr. Vicktor and raised his hands. Purple electric discharges flashed as he braced himself to take Ben's life.  
- I'll say one word or two before that! – shouted Ben and transformed into Fourarms. The green flash blinded Dr. Vicktor for a second, which was enough for the tetramand to punch him on the face. Dr. Vicktor almost fell off as he retreated. Then he fired a powerful electric beam again. Fourarms thought his thick skin will protect him, but it had no effect on the electricity. It painfully went through his body.  
- Aaaaarrrrggh! – roared he. – I don't have time for this!  
Fourarms wanted to punch his opponent again, but dr. Victor grabbed his fist and smiled. He released strong electricity again, which struck the tetramand. He couldn't take his hand out from dr. Vicktor's mechanical fist. He used his other three hands to free himself. He hit Dr. Vicktor on the stomach. The evil alien flew back a few feet. Then he created an even more powerful electro beam. Fourarms evaded it with Xlr8's speed.  
- Enough of this foolishness! – shouted he. Before the other beam could reach him, he changed into Buzzshock and consumed all of the energy. But it didn't disappeared. He formed a green, electric orb in his palms. Then he stretched his hands and fired it back to Dr. Vicktor. It struck him with great intensity. He wasn't defeated yet, he continued to fire electric beams at Ben. As Buzzshock, he consumed all of them. Suddenly, he had an idea. When the next bema reached him, he became pure, green electricity and merged with the beam. Soon, he got inside Dr. Vicktor and burnt his circuits out. He collapsed. Buzzshock got out and turned into Ben again. He looked around and saw nothing suspicious. All of a sudden, orbeasts, flouranas, loboans, detrovites and dozens of other creatures appeared from nowhere and surrounded Ben. A vulpimancer wanted to jump on him, but he avoided it with Xlr8's velocity. He knew from his previous experience, that he was outnumbered and he cannot defeat them all. Then, he recognized a wrecked tank. He smiled, and the omnitrix flashed...

Kevin followed every moment of the battle from his room, in the highest skyscraper. But, after his last transformation, Ben have disappeared from his eyes. His visage carefully examined the area to find him. Then, he heard an explosion from below.

- What was that? – asked Charmcaster from behind.  
- Clever! – mumbled Kevin.  
- What's that?  
- You can have a guess! It's Tennyson! He's inside!  
- How can he...- Charmcaster began.  
- Lower levels! Go down and stop him! I'm not ready yet! – shouted Kevin.

Charmcaster sighed, and then chanted a spell. She phased through the floor to get down as fast as she could.

Some kind of a powerful weapon suddenly bombed a large hole in the walls of the highest skyscraper. A futuristic battle vehicle rolled inside. It was Upgrade, merged with a tank. It had bigger and thicker white caterpillars, a huge laser cannon and bazookas all around its dome shaped tower. Charmcaster arrived just in time to face Ben.

- You're a fool to come here! This is the place of your demise! - exclaimed she, floating in the air.  
- I don't think so! You're toast! – replied Upgrade and fired a blue laser. It didn't strike Charmcaster, but cut a wide hole into the ceiling. He fired another laser. The witch avoided that one as well. Then, she counterattacked with explosive eggs. But Upgrade was too tough to be defeated that easily. He shot

futuristic rockets at her. Charmcaster's reacted with big iron rings, she used them as a shield. She mumbled some spells and some kind of liquid came out of her palms. Upgrade didn't know what it is, but he sensed, it'll damage him. He unmerged in the last moment. The liquid covered the tank. It turned out it was a powerful acid. It destroyed the metal body of the tank in a few seconds. Upgrade turned into his original shape, and fired a plasma beam. Charmcaster didn't expect that, the beam struck her down. The mehomorph reverted to Ben.

- I told you! Give up when you still can! – said he as he slowly walked to Charmcaster.

- Never! – hissed the witch and struck Ben with a purple energy beam, coming out of her hand. He hit the walls and then fell down.

Charmcaster stood up and approached Ben, but the omnitrix flashed...

- I shall not be stopped! - yelled Cannonbolt and rolled up. He tried to strike the witch, but he missed her. Then he attacked from another direction. This time he was closer. Because of his moves, the dust began to swirl. Charmcaster only saw a shadow attacking from different directions.

- Show yourself, Tennyson! – She shouted.

- I'm right here! – answered a deep voice behind her. When she looked back, she only saw a yellow ball, which struck her down.

- I won't say it again! Stay down! You've delayed me long enough! – exclaimed Cannonbolt.

- I must protect him! – replied Charmcaster. She was floating in the air already.

- You've asked for it! – warned her Cannonbolt and changed into Brainstorm. When the witch fired more lasers at him, he created a green force field to protect himself. Then he focused on the thick pillars, behind her. The green aura surrounded the pillars, as they slowly moved out of their places and headed to Charmcaster. A spell gave extra force to her; she could cut them into pieces.

- You'll need more to go through me! – laughed she. Brainstorm just smiled. The ceiling above Charmcaster flawed. She looked up in surprise. Brainstorm slowly floated out of the room. The first bigger piece of the ceiling fell down. Soon hundreds of others followed it. Charmcaster realized it's over.

- Tennysoooooonnn!!! – roared she, before the debris buried her alive...

Kevin heard Charmcaster's scream in his mind. He knew she was defeated; he prepared himself to face his most dangerous opponent once more...

Ben stopped for a moment and glanced back. He felt a bit of remorse inside himself for killing Charmcaster. Then he thought there are some things that he isn't very proud of. However, he also knew only Kevin is responsible for what he have become during the years. Kevin's the one to blame, he killed his grandfather. Ben knew this time; he'll make him pay for good. But first, he have to save Gwen. Only when he puts her in safety, only then he'll be able to finish Kevin off once and for all.

He came to a junction and didn't know which of the four ways he should choose. Then, he had an idea. He was still Brainstorm; he could try to locate Gwen telepathically. He focused...

*Gwen, Gwen, can you hear me? It's me, Ben!*

He received no respond.

*Gwen, can you hear me? Send me a thought if you can!*

There was still no answer. He continued.

*Gwen where are you? Send me a thought if you can hear me in your mind!*

Suddenly, Gwen's weak voice echoed in Brainstorm's mind.

*Ben, is that you?*



*Yes. I'm here to save you!*

*You shouldn't have come here. Kevin awaits you...*

*Gwen...Gwen, listen! You got to tell me where are you!*

*I don't know, it's dark and cold in here! Gwen began to cry.*

*Okay. Everything's going to be all right! Just focus on me, Gwen! I'll find you!*

*Hurry!*

Brainstorm looked around in the corridor. He recognized a tetramand sentinel turning to his direction. He began to ran to Brainstorm to attack him. At first, Ben wanted to change alien form to fight, but he realized, he might lose the telepathic contact with Gwen. When the tetramand almost approached him, his eyes started to glow.

*You've seen nothing. You will continue your patrol the other way.*

The sentinel obeyed and slowly walked away.

A green aura ripped the door of Gwen's cell apart. The omnitrix flashed as Ben reverted to his original shape. He stepped into the darkness.

- Gwen are you in here? – asked he.

Nobody answered.

- Gwen?

He used Wildmutt's heat vision to locate Gwen. Soon, he recognized a heat sign. He sniffed.

- Wait, something's wrong...

He returned to his normal vision. He saw a strange, glowing structure in the dark. It reminded him of Heatblast's hand... Ben sniffed again.

Two red eyes evolved from the blackness. Then he heard Gwen's voice.

- I told you... You shouldn't have come here! – By the end of the sentence, the voice changed into someone else's.

Ben flinched. Then, he realized...

Suddenly, the curtains moved up from the windows, letting the light in. Ben recognized Kevin's features. He was a full-grown amalgam of the original ten omnitrix-aliens.

- It took you long enough to figure it out. – Kevin grinned.

Ben felt the fury's blaze in his heart, but he remained calm.

- What is this place? Where's Gwen? – asked he. But he already knew his plans are all washed away.

- You have much bigger problems now, than your cousin does! – exclaimed Kevin.

- You wanna play dirty, ha? I'm in! Let's settle this once and for all! – shouted Ben and transformed into Fourarms.

- Muhahahaha! You're gonna regret saying that! – laughed Kevin devilishly.

They began to run towards each other. Both of them jumped into the air and raised their fists...

The final battle of Ben and Kevin has just begun...

## 16 - Chapter 16

### Chapter 16

The moment was like a slow motion for Ben...

He could examine every single detail, when they jumped in the air to confront each other. Ben made the first blow, as Fourarms. He raised all of his hands, and struck his enemy down. Kevin fell onto the floor. Fourarms landed a few feet farther. Then he heard the buzz of Stinkfly wings, before Kevin evolved from the dust. He was flying towards him. He evaded with Xlr8's speed, but Kevin reacted that fast too. He changed direction and punched the tetramand with his Diamondhead arm. Now, Fourarms retreated, Kevin attacked with petrosapien projectiles. Fourarms protected himself with a weaker version of Brainstorm's force field. Kevin roared and created a massive fire beam, which started smaller fires all around the place, but didn't harm the tetramand himself. Kevin ran to him with kineceleran velocity. Fourarms hit the floor with all of his hands, causing the whole story of the skyscraper to collapse. Kevin flew up, right before the floor disappeared under his feet. Fourarms converted to Brainstorm, to levitate in the air. They stared each other down, and then Kevin accosted Ben.

- Is that the best you can do? It's pathetic! – mocked he.

- No, that was only a warm up! – replied Brainstorm and raised his hands.

His green aura lit up everywhere on the floor, as he picked up sharp pieces of debris with his mind. Soon, he collected hundreds of pieces around him. When Kevin flew towards him, he stretched his hands, sending the debris to stop him. But Kevin destroyed all of it with a strong fire beam. Then he punched Brainstorm on the face. The alien has fallen and disappeared in the swirling dust and smoke. Kevin floated above the hole, where he last saw Ben.

- You're too easy. – mumbled he and burnt the lower story with a powerful curtain of fire. He also fired hundreds of projectiles and threw explosive Wildvine seeds down. Suddenly, a green energy ball whooshed right beside him. A second later, another one followed it, this time it almost struck him down. Then, Upchuck's shape emerged from the fire, spitting three more energy balls. Kevin avoided them with kineceleran briskness; however, the last one finally hit him.

- Maybe I'm not as easy as you think! – exclaimed Upchuck and ate a bigger piece of rock.

Kevin bawled, and grabbed a huge pillar and tossed it to destroy Ben. But Upchuck released another exploding spittle which bombed the pillar apart, while it was still in the air.

- Eat this! – shouted Kevin, throwing a large fireball.

Upchuck opened his mouth and consumed it. His stomach grew and began to glow.

- What comes around goes around! – replied he and spat. Because of the extraordinary amount of energy, his spittle was more powerful than usual. The green energy beam struck Kevin on the chest and pushed him against the wide window behind him. The glass has broken into thousands of small pieces as Kevin fell out. He used his wings to stay in the air. He looked up at the smoking skyscraper. There was no sight of Ben. All of a sudden, a huge, yellow ball hit him. Both of them fell down, but Kevin kicked Cannonbolt and avoided the impact. Before he reached the ground, the omnitrix flashed and Cannonbolt changed into Heatblast. He created a carpet of fire and charged towards Kevin. Both of them shot a massive fire beam. The two beams collided, the opponents tried to outdone each other's power, but none of them could succeed. They have reached the ground. Heatblast formed a fiery sword and

rampaged to Kevin. As he was running, he raised the sword and struck down. Kevin defended the blow with his Diamondhead arm. The pyronite brandished his natural weapon and struck again. Kevin sidestepped with Xlr8's speed. When Heatblast tried to behead him, he grabbed the sword with his pyronite arm. He tightened his palm and put out the heat of the weapon. Heatblast blinked in surprise then shot a fire beam. Kevin put his arms together in front of his body and protected himself from the flames. Heatblast fired another beam, but Kevin jumped up and flew towards him.

- Enough! – roared he and beat up the pyronite in a short combat. Heatblast lied on the ground. Kevin's shadow towered upon him.

- I guess you were just lucky last time, Benjie! You're a joke! It was a child's play to defeat you, even with my weaker form! And now it's time to finish you off, once and for all! – declared Kevin. He formed a sharp spear on his crystalline hand.

- With or without the omnitrix... You're merely a man!!! – grinned he and raised his spear. When he struck down, a green flash blinded him for a second. A strong palm grabbed his arm and then tossed him away. Kevin fell on the ground and rolled around for a few times. He stood up and recognized Diamondhead.

- Arrogance has always been your major weakness! And you know what? I think you *can't* mutate to you're most powerful form, because I kicked your butt big time! – exclaimed the petrosapien. Kevin looked at him with blazing hatred in his eyes. Then, he attacked Ben again. Diamondhead fired projectiles, but Kevin easily destroyed them with a swing of his crystalline arm. And, he was already in front of Ben. Crystal distended to crystal as they were fighting hand to hand. Suddenly, an Upgrade/Xlr8 tentacle snaked out from Kevin's left arm and surrounded Diamondhead. The familiar red electricity went through his body.

- Not this time! – struggled the petrosapien and changed into Grey Matter. He escaped from Kevin's deadly squeeze.

- Come back here, you little pipsqueak! – roared Kevin and wanted to stomp the galvan. But Grey Matter stopped his foot by his bare little hands using some of the strength of Fourarms.

- What the heck?! – surprised Kevin.

- Don't underestimate me! – smiled Grey Matter, transforming into Benwolf. He opened his mouth and howled. The sound wave tossed Kevin behind. For a few seconds, there was silence; Benwolf could not detect his enemy. Then he saw sharp projectiles flying towards him. He howled again, the crystals broke apart in the air. Unexpectedly, a massive fire beam struck him down from behind. Kevin evolved from the blurriness with Xlr8's speed. The omnitrix flashed, as Ben reverted to himself. He looked at Kevin. He could reproduce Benwolf's howl perfectly, even in his human form. Kevin drew back a bit.

- You've asked for it, creep! – hissed he and began to mutate. His amalgam body grew bigger, and became different. His right hand changed into a fiery tentacle, and then all the other tentacles grew out from his back functioning as his legs. His left wing changed into a grey bat-like wing and one of his right vulpimancer hand changed into a petrosapien arm. Finally, His two other heads emerged, each of them were more horrifying than the other was.

- Now you will experience my pure, devastating fury!!! – roared the three head together.

His fiery tentacle struck down, but Ben escaped from it with Xlr8's velocity, then he turned into Fourarms again.

He raised his hands and hit two of Kevin's heads. But his body resisted, he didn't fall down, because his strong tentacles on his back held him. He roared and counterattacked. He used Heatblast's fireballs, Diamondhead's projectiles, Benwolf's howl, the strength of Fourarms, Ghostfreak's energy beam, Wildvine's flexibility and explosive seeds, Buzzshock's electricity, Xlr8's speed, Wildmutt's heat vision and his athletic skills and Stinkfly's goo and his power of flight at the same time. As this deadly attack rained at him, Ben didn't know what to do, which alien he should turn into. It was already too late to

think it over. First, the sound wave struck him, then the projectiles, then the fireballs, after that, the energy beam and the electricity, eventually, the goo. It took only a few seconds to weaken the tetramand. Fourarms couldn't see anything, he quickly ripped the slimy goo apart, but Kevin jumped onto the wall of a building, then onto another one, then into the air. He flew towards Ben with Xlr8's velocity and instantly began to punch him wherever he could. Fourarms didn't stand a chance against Kevin's vehement, devastating attack. Before, he was merely playing with Ben, but now he proved that he had perfectly mastered his abilities. He tried to bite the tetramand's head off several times, but somehow Fourarms escaped from his huge jaws.

Ben could barely protect himself; he was in a lack of focus and strategy. He was too busy defending Kevin's powerful blows. He tried to combine his alien's skills, but he wasn't as professional as his opponent. Therefore, he could only stay alive, there was no hope for him to counterattack and steal the initiation from Kevin. He never made a mistake and he never repeated any of his moves, each attack of his was different from the previous one. The intense battle soon drained Ben's power; he could not concentrate hard enough to switch between his aliens. The thought of escape came into his mind many times, but he found that a cowardly way, he continued the scrimmage; however, he knew he cannot win. How could he possibly match the power of hundreds of aliens at the same time, when he's only able to mix two, or maximum of three? Maybe he should have listened to Tetrax and Lantara... They knew the outcome of this battle exactly. At least, Gwen will be okay... Hopefully...

Ben had to admit, that Kevin has already absorbed too many alien DNA to be stopped only by him. It's hopeless, even with the omnitrix. His anger was still powerful, but his body was not. Unlike his mind, his body was exhausted after the long hours of cruel fighting.

Eventually, he lied on the ground, smashed and defeated, without any hope of survival. He lost the mind control over the omnitrix, and with a red flash, he became himself again. Kevin reverted to his original shape as well.

- I want to look into your eyes and see the spark of your life burning out! But I want to see it with my own eyes! – explained Kevin calmly.

- That's... very... original... – gasped Ben.

- Any other last words? – asked Kevin with a devilish grin. A sword like crystal grew out from his palms. Ben gazed into the nothingness for a few seconds. Then he answered.

- It's not... a big deal that... you've defeated me...

- What?

- You heard it right!... It was a... child's play for you indeed... I was... very outnumbered. I could have done it... any time if millions of aliens... and lovers like Charmcaster would have been... on my side... Not to mention your... abilities... - said Ben.

- Haha! Well, since you're gonna die it's just a matter of time, let me share a little secret with you... He bent down to his knees to let Ben hear his words clearly. Then, he continued.

- I was just using everyone! Everyone!!! After I released the aliens from the Null Void, I manipulated them to help me. After I had defeated the government's forces, some allies like Vilgax and Charmcaster have joined me. But I used them as well, to do what I say anytime, without asking questions. I even played with Charmcaster. For a sorceress, she was so naive and convincible. She has become my right hand, my most powerful ally and my lover in one person, but I've only pretended my feelings. She means nothing to me. Oh, I really enjoyed playing with her though. I've made everything and everyone to obey my word! You should know me better by now... All that matters for me is !! I only care for myself! But let me tell you another thing. None of these games was as pleasurable as the moment when I killed your grandfather and saw your face! Muhahahaha!

- You! – hissed Ben and tried to stand up, but Kevin stepped on his chest, forcing him to the ground. He raised his crystalline sword.

– Now, it's time to say goodbye forever...partner! – grinned Kevin evilly.

A moment later, Ben recognized something behind Kevin's back. He began to laugh. Kevin looked at him suspiciously, and hesitated, but when he followed Ben's eye and turned around, he understood the reason of his laughter. For the first time, since he has entitled himself as Ruler of The World, he had made a mistake...

She stood nearby Kevin's back. She could hear every single word. At first, she wanted to join him, but when she heard what they were talking about, she decided to remain silent. Kevin was too busy with Ben; he was unaware of her presence at all. When he turned around, he surprised of what he saw.

- Charmcaster?! – exclaimed Kevin.

Her clothes were full of holes, her body was full of scars and her hair all messed up, but she was alive... Her face became more and more distorted as she struggled with her feelings. Her teardrops washed a clean path into her dirty cheek.

- How could you do this to me?! – shouted she. Kevin left Ben on the ground and walked to her.

- We'll discuss this later, when I see fit! First, I have an unfinished business with Tennyson! – said Kevin with a cold voice.

- No! You won't be giving orders to me no more! You'll tell me what was all this, or suffer the consequences!!!

- You're blackmailing me, Charmcaster? – Kevin asked back with a menacing tone of voice.

- Answer me! Is it all true what you have just said?!

- No... – began Kevin.

- Lies! All lies!!! – roared Charmcaster. A purple energy blast came out of her palms and unexpectedly hit Kevin. He fell down. Charmcaster approached him menacingly.

- I want to hear the truth! No! I demand to hear it!!! – exclaimed she.

- I warn you, I'm losing my patience! – replied Kevin when he stood up.

- What is the truth?! – Charmcaster questioned him again. She threw an explosive egg in front of Kevin. He fell off again and lost his mind.

- You wanna hear the truth, ha? You wanna hear it so bad? I'll tell you!!! – gasped he and began to mutate. Soon, he fully converted to his three-headed form and towered upon Charmcaster.

- The truth is: I've been using you! Moreover, I've played with you all the time! I've never loved you, muhahahahaha! Yeah, that's the truth! You're happy now? I bet you are! Now, get out of my sight! – yelled Kevin and struck down with his fiery tentacle, but Charmcaster quickly sidestepped from it.

- This is what I deserve, after I've done everything for you?! Everything!!! – shouted she.

She threw two explosive eggs at Kevin. Both of them exploded on his body, but didn't hurt him, just let a huge amount of smoke in the air. This was just merely distracting, Charmcaster knew, the small explosives won't damage Kevin at all. She has just prepared for her most complex spell ever. She floated above the smoke, where Kevin could see her.

- Brace yourself for my revenge!!! – yelled she and glanced at her opened spell book once more. Then, she mumbled a complicated spell. For a few seconds, nothing happened. Kevin laughed mockingly, he thought, her magic has failed. But, soon, Charmcaster began to transform. First, her skin went darker and darker, then her muscles began to grow larger, and her fingers changed into big claws. After that, her head elongated and her eyes became like a crocodile's. Finally, a purple aura snaked around her body and a moment later, the metamorphosis was complete. Charmcaster have transformed into a huge and muscular, black female dragon with purple contours. She looked at Kevin with contempt and hatred. She roared, then massive curtain of fire came out of her mouth, but Kevin twirled his fiery tentacle, and put the flames out. Charmcaster jumped up, and attacked from the air. She used her tail as a flail and tried to strike Kevin. But Kevin grabbed her tail and tossed her away. She turned around in the air and

then she spat pure acid at him, but to no avail, his body resisted. He fired bigger projectiles at her but they were useless. Seeing this, Kevin flew up and confronted Charmcaster in the air. All of her magic was concentrated into this form. Most of Kevin's alien skills were useless against her. But Kevin soon found a way to defeat her. He flew above her and distracted her with a wave of fire beams, projectiles and explosive seeds. Meanwhile, his tentacles coiled around Charmcaster's body and slowly captured her... The squeeze of the flourana tentacles became thicker and thicker. The sorceress couldn't free herself. She couldn't fight anymore. The tentacles were strangling her. She fell down, struggling for her life. Kevin didn't say a word, but his three heads were smiling devilishly as he tightened the squeeze with every second. Suddenly, a purple creek appeared on Charmcaster's dragon body. Soon many creeks followed it. With a purple flash, Charmcaster reverted to her original form. She fainted.

When Kevin left him alone, Ben lived with the chance and slowly crawled away from the battlefield. He looked back and saw the fight between Kevin and Charmcaster. Ironically, she saved Ben's life, with her appearance.

Ben found a safe spot behind a building; he pressed his back against the wall. He was exhausted, wounded and helpless. At least he had some time to work out a strategy. Which alien should he summon? Who can match Kevin's superior power? His most trusted ones, Fourarms, Cannonbolt and Diamondhead have failed... what should he do?

He looked at the omnitrix. It was red. He surprised. Since he had obtained the master control, this has happened to him only once. Ben remembered clearly. He and Lantara have visited a strange planet. But the inhabitants were much more weirder. He got the DNA by an accident... The omnitrix went yellow, then the ring popped up and a weird looking icon appeared on the green screen. Ben wanted to immediately try the new form, but Lantara didn't allowed him.

*"You're not ready for it, Ben. Trust me."* She said.

*"But when can I use it?"* asked Ben. He was only eleven... He knew nothing about the omnitrix and the universe.

*"You'll know."* replied Lantara shortly. Soon, they have traveled to a new galaxy and Ben forgot the alien. About a year later, he experienced new skills during a fight. He felt like he was Xlr8, but he was Eye Guy. Suddenly, the omnitrix transformed him back to himself, without any warning. By that time, he had the master code and he didn't understand. He shared the experience with Lantara.

*"Do you remember that strange alien form, which I didn't let you use?"* asked she.

Ben said yes. Then, Lantara explained to him, that this specie's power is to copy and amalgamate other alien's powers. Since the omnitrix contains hundreds of alien DNA in its database, Ben is able to use all of their powers together, at the same time, even if he's just Ben himself and if he's well trained... This might have been the first time he used mixed powers and it must have interrupted the mind contact with the omnitrix somehow. She also told him, that it requires a lot of practice and takes a very long time to master this skill. After that, Ben knowingly used his new abilities. The first was Xlr8's speed, but as the time passed by, he discovered more and more familiar, even so new skills. Heatblast's fireballs, Brainstorm's telekinesis, Diamondhead's projectiles, Benwolf's howl... He could adapt them as a human as well. He also figured it out, that if he's in a specific alien form, that form's powers are dominant, and the other abilities are inferior. Lantara said it shouldn't be like that, maybe later, he'll be able to use all of the skills together. Ben understood and hoped he'll be up to the challenge. He named the alien form Powersource, although he had never went him during the years...

A huge, purple flash dragged Ben out of the remembrance, back to the present. Lantara's words echoed in his mind.

*“You’ll know.”*

At that moment, Ben started to feel confident, and determined. He knew what to do. This recognition opened his eyes and filled his body with renewed strength. The omnitrix turned green, Ben knew the time has come. He stepped out just in time. He heard Kevin’s words as he was strangling Charmcaster with his tentacles.

- You should have never rebelled against me, Charmcaster! Now you will pay dearly for that! – hissed he.

- Leave her alone! – said Ben. His voice was commanding. Kevin surprised.

- You still feel heroic?! So be it! – He tossed Charmcaster away and first walked, then began to run towards Ben.

- Now, you’re gonna get yours, Benjie! Aaaaarrggghhhh! – roared he as he raised his hands to smash his opponent.

Ben just smiled. He thought of the transformation... and with a green flash, he transformed to Powersource for the first time. (This alien is a visomorph. Its main material is gauzy and bluish white. It has small, blue tentacles all over its body. It has two hands, but no legs; it’s floating in the air, like Ghostfreak. Physically, it’s very weak, but this specie has the most potent ability of all. It can copy, amalgamate, adapt and reproduce any other specie’s powers and abilities at will. They need physical contact to obtain powers from other species. They cannot use each other’s powers; they have to find their own power sources.)

Kevin stopped in front of Powersource.

- What is this? A jellyfish? What could it do? Tickle me to death? Muhahahaha! – mocked he.

- You’ll see, what this jellyfish is capable of! – said Powersource and raised his gauzy hands. He touched Kevin’s chest. Suddenly, Kevin felt strange. He recognized that Ben’s alien is changing. Its skin went red and one of his hands started to look like a pyronite’s. Upgrade’s green plasma stripes lit up on his back and his whole body grew bigger. Kevin didn’t know what was going on, but he sensed something wasn’t right. He grabbed Powersource’s head and tossed him away. As he flew back, two Stinkfly wings, two legs and an Xlr8 tail grew out.

Powersource didn’t fell down, he turned around in the air and flew towards Kevin. He raised his hand, and right before he struck, it became Heatblast’s. He punched Kevin on the face. He drew back. Powersource’s right arm changed into Diamondhead’s and two Wildmutt hand popped out from his body. The transformation was complete. The visomorph successfully absorbed a part of Kevin’s energy, which was enough to temporary become a full-grown amalgam of the original ten omnitrix-aliens. Kevin looked at him in fear.

- It’s not possible! You’re like... me... No! You can’t be like me! – stuttered he and attacked like a maniac. Ben stopped him with the combination of Stinkfly goo and fireballs. Kevin retreated, but he was not defeated yet. Powersource marched towards him and raised his fists, but suddenly he reverted to his original form. The energy was gone. Seeing this, Kevin’s confidence came back. He laughed and flew up striking down with his fiery tentacle. Powersource grabbed it and sucked up more energy from him. His right arm immediately changed into a long, whip-like tentacle. He counterattacked, hitting Kevin’s face, who fell off.

Ben was not capable of all of his abilities yet, however, he quickly figured out, that after absorbing energy, the transformation is not necessary. He could banish his own fiery tentacle with a thought, but he still felt its energy inside of him. Powersource slowly floated above his enemy’s three-headed body.

- I need more! – exclaimed he and grabbed two of Kevin’s thick necks. He felt the new energy filling his veins, while Kevin grew weaker and weaker. *He* realized that as well. His muscular tetramand hand suddenly struck Powersource, interrupting the physical contact. Kevin stood up rubbing the place on his

necks, where the visomorph had touched him. He recognized Ben and walked towards him. Meanwhile, Ben lived through the enlightenment he had waited for years. He discovered, something have changed inside of him. He was still Powersource, but he felt all of his alien's presence in his body. He felt all of their strength in his arms, he could see with all of their eyes at the same time. He united with his aliens. He has become invincible. When Kevin shot hundreds of projectiles at him, he blinked and thought of Brainstorm's force field. It was already around him, when he opened his eyes again. Then he made an energy blast, which tossed Kevin back. The green energy dome has disappeared, as Powersource floated up. The watch flashed, and he went Fourarms.

- I don't know what was this all about... but I know one thing: you made me real mad this time, Benjie! You're going down! – shouted Kevin. He was standing in front of Fourarms.

- Really?! Let's see about that, shall we?! – replied the tetramand and concentrated. His face distorted, as he began to mutate. His body grew even bigger and extremely muscular. One of his hands became Diamondhead's, one became Heatblast's, one changed into Frankenfreak's, one of them was like the Mummy's. He grew a Brainstorm/Xlr8 tail and two Stinkfly wings. His chest opened and Ghostfreak/Upgrade tentacles coiled out from it. Cannonbolt's yellow armor emerged on his back. Two of his eyes merged into a bigger Grey Matter eye and he had Wildmutt gills on his neck. Ben looked horrific.

- Let's get it all! – hissed he.

Kevin surprised, but he didn't have the time to think it over, Ben ran to him with Xlr8's speed and punched him on the face. Then he shot a fire beam, but Kevin put it out with his fiery tentacle. Ben jumped up and fired projectiles that have become sharp, crystal balls in the air, falling upon his opponent's heads. Kevin smashed them with his tetramand arm and with his Xlr8/Upgrade tentacle. With Grey Matter's smart, Ben could analyze and foresee the outcomes of his offensives. He grabbed the flaming skull head of Kevin with his Frankenfreak arm. A second later, the green electricity went through Kevin's body. When the heads were at the height of his chest, the Ghostfreak/Upgrade tentacles captured them. Among them, Kevin saw a green semidarkness, right before the energy beam struck the face of his left head. But his middle head howled and the purple sound waves pushed Ben backwards. When he got back to the premises, Kevin wasn't there anymore. Ben sharpened all of his senses to locate him in time.

Kevin wanted to attack from behind his back. Fortunately, Ben's Wildmutt gills opened on his neck and warned him. When his enemy jumped down from a top of a building, Ben was ready. Suddenly, all of Eye Guy's eyes opened all over his amalgam body. Three of them united and fired a green laser, which struck Kevin down. The Mummy's bandages surrounded his body, and then he felt Frankenfreak's electricity again. He ripped the bandage apart and counterattacked furiously. Despite Kevin's effort, Ben remained unharmed. He patiently sidestepped with Xlr8's speed, or changed his protoplamsa like Ghostfreak, or he used Brainstorm's telekinetic skills very often to avoid his blows. Hours passed by like this, at the end, Kevin was exhausted. Ben had enough as well. He figured out a deadly combination of attacks, that will stop his enemy once and for all. After he had punched him on the chest, Kevin rampaged towards him for the last time.

Firstly, Ben used the Mummy's bandages once more. Then his Frankenfreak arm changed into Spiderweb's. He fired a white mass, and trapped Kevin's lover body in a cocoon, but his arms and his tentacles were still free. Ben destroyed his fragile lepidopterran wing with Diamondhead projectiles. Kevin roared in pain. The crystals were followed by an enormous amount of Spitter's slime and Stinkfly's goo. The Heatblast fireballs were next. The explosion tossed Kevin backwards. Ben ran after him with Xlr8's speed and released a few Upchuck spittle and Buzzshock's electric balls. A Ghostfreak energy beam, and Eye Guy laser and an Upgrade plasma beam, struck Kevin's three heads. He was helpless against Ben's perfect moves. The final blow was devastating. Ben rapidly clapped all of his



different hands, like Shockwave. This was the end for Kevin. It was more, than a mere shockwave, it was much more destructive. The shockwave itself was blazing, because of Heatblast's powers and it was strengthened by Brainstorm's green, telekinetic aura. It also involved Benwolf's howl and Upgrade's plasma beam. All this power was concentrated into this final strike. The shockwave picked Kevin up and tossed him away. But it did not stop, it destroyed everything that was in its way; buildings, trees, aliens.... Everything.

Kevin's amalgam body slowly peeled off his human flesh. The shockwave wiped out a whole district of the former city. Ben stood there, in the middle of destruction and looked around. Then he looked at his different hands.

- Unbelievable... – He whispered to himself.

Suddenly, he comprehended the presence of Kevin's mind. He could easily locate his position. He ran there with Xlr8's velocity. He found his enemy lying on the ground. He was no longer an amalgam of creatures, only his human body remained. He was full of scars and bleeding wounds. Ben towered upon him. None of them spoke. Both knew what's going to be next. Ben's petrosapien arm elongated and formed a spear.

- For Grandpa! – said Ben quietly and raised his crystalline weapon. Before he struck down, he heard a familiar voice.

- Ben! No! – yelled Lantara.

Ben turned around.

- Lantara?

A second later, Tetrax and Gwen showed up. When he noticed Gwen, he felt relief. He thought of her many times during the battle and it disturbed him that he doesn't know if she's all right or not.

- Ben, is that really you? – asked Gwen.

- Yes.

- What have he done to you? You look like...him. – said Gwen, pointing at the helpless body of Kevin.

- Long story. I'll tell you later. I must finish this! – formed a spear on his Diamondhead arm again.

- Wait! You can't do this! – exclaimed Gwen and Lantara together. Tetrax remained silent, he knew Ben has to make a warrior's decision.

- Sure I can! – replied Ben and raised his spear once more.

- No, you don't understand... – Lantara began.

- Oh, yes I do! He killed Grandpa, then killed the Earth. Now, I'm gonna kill him! – hissed Ben.

- If you do it, you're going to regret every day in your life! – said the ectonurite.

- I'll take my chances! – answered Ben.

- If you do it, you're not better than him at all! – cried Gwen.

- He killed Grandpa! – shouted Ben and picked Kevin up. His muscular pyronite hand surrounded Kevin's upper body. Ben pointed at his head with the crystalline spear.

- I know! But you don't have to do this! – yelled Gwen.

- You know... I was wrong... you *are* like me... – stuttered Kevin on a raspy voice.

- Don't listen to him! You're not like him at all! You're a hero, not a murderer! – said Lantara.

- Go ahead! Do it... – grinned Kevin weakly.

- Ben, don't! – cried the females together.

- You're too scared to do it! Come on you big chicken! Do it! – roared Kevin.

Tetrax stepped forward.

- Listen for a second! Everyone knows what he has done with your grandfather and everyone knows what you've been going through. Although we're trying to convince you, it's pointless. It only depends on you! You have to make a decision now, and face its consequences. – explained the petrosapien.

- It only depends on you! – repeated Tetrax.

Ben's face distorted as he was struggling with his emotions. He tightened the squeeze on Kevin's neck. His teardrops rolled down on his amalgam face. He dumped Kevin down. Everyone thought it was over, but suddenly, Ben roared loudly and struck down with his crystal spear. He was kneeling over his enemy's body.

The sharp crystal on Ben's Diamondhead arm impacted in the ground right beside Kevin's head. Ben was gasping. All of his combined features disappeared; he was the original Fourarms again. With a green flash, he became himself.

He stood up and looked at Kevin.

- I'm not like you. I *can* forgive. Even if it takes a long time. – said he and walked to his friends.

- You've done the right thing. I'm very proud of you. – blest him Lantara and suddenly kissed him on the cheek.

Ben made a weird expression, because of the surprise.

- Your decision was good. You managed to ignore your feelings and think sanely. – said Tetrax.

Gwen hugged him.

- Let's go home! – She suggested.

Lantara's capsule slowly floated down from a building's roof. They all walked to it, only Ben remained behind.

- What's the matter? – asked Gwen.

- Nothing.

- Aren't you coming?

- Not yet.

- Why?

Ben replied quietly.

- I have one more thing to do...

## 17 - Chapter 17

### Chapter 17

Charmcaster came to. For a few seconds, she did not know where she was. Then, she remembered the battle with Kevin. She still couldn't understand his behavior. How many years she has spent with him? How many terrible things she has done, just because Kevin told her to? She always tried to satisfy him in every way. She was in love with him.

She loved him.

And all that for nothing? He's been using her. In his eyes, Charmcaster was nothing than a tool.

She still wanted to believe it's merely a nightmare and she'll wake up. But when she looked around the place, she knew it's all true. These thoughts were circling in her mind, as she lied on the ground, in the middle of destruction.

All of a sudden, she saw a hand in front of her. She grabbed it. The hand helped her stand up. Only then she recognized it was Ben Tennyson. He came from nowhere.

- What are you doing here? – asked Charmcaster.

- I just...

- You want to fight?

- No. I just wanted to thank you. – said Ben.

- What? – surprised she.

- Everything you've done.

- I've done it for myself, not to save you. – declared Charmcaster coldly.

- It doesn't matter. I still thank you. I felt I owe you with that. – explained Ben.

- Well, you're welcome! But don't get used to it! – replied the sorceress seriously. After a few embarrassing seconds, she made a weak smile. Ben smiled back at her.

- Maybe we aren't so different after all. – said he.

- Get real! We're just the opposites of each other. You've always been too good and heroic for me, but... maybe. – answered Charmcaster.

They looked into each other's eye for a second.

- I guess that's all I wanted to say. – Ben hesitated.

- After we have saved each other's life, we're equal. – assured him Charmcaster.

- I'll be seeing you... Nah... That sounds stupid... – stuttered Ben.

- Yes, it does.

- How do enemies say farewell? - asked Ben.

- How about a simple "bye"? – Questioned back Charmcaster.

- Well... Bye then. – smiled Ben.

- Bye! – replied Charmcaster.

Ben suddenly stormed out with Xlr8's speed, leaving the sorceress alone. Charmcaster stood there for a couple of minutes and thought over what just happened. Then she hit the road as well...

Ben returned to his friends.

- Everything okay? – asked Gwen.

- Yes. Everything at all. – sighed Ben looking at them.

- Let's go home! – suggested Tetrax.

- No wait! Look! – said Ben pointing up to the sky.

- Beautiful! – exclaimed Lantara as she recognized the breathtaking sunset above the ocean. They all stood there, at the end of everything and watched the sun slowly sinking into the sea.

Suddenly, they heard a familiar sound. Then, a squad of European planes whooshed above their heads, searching a place to land. They waved to them. Soon, more and more planes evolved from the orange clouds.

- It seems you still have life on this planet, Kevin didn't consume it all. – said Tetrax, breaking the silence.

They watched the sunset and the landing planes and Ben felt he has to say:

- I think this is just another beginning of a new era...

## 18 - Chapter 18

### Chapter 18

It was late night, only the moon's white light illuminated the area.

Kevin was still lying on the ground helplessly. He was so weak; he didn't have the strength even to stand up. The final battle with Powersource drained him. All of his energy was gone. He'd never dreamed of this outcome. If only that damned power-sucking alien wouldn't have been in the picture... Without that, Ben's nothing, just a big zero against him. However he defeated him and have taken away all his powers. He almost killed him! Who do he think he is, to humiliate The Ruler of The World like that? That's unacceptable! But he's going to die, if he can't move away from here, it's so cold! He tried to sit up, but he couldn't. He moaned and attempted repeatedly, but to no avail, his body was like a dummy.

As he pathetically struggled for his life, a shadow evolved from the darkness, like black fog.

- Who's there?! – yelled Kevin in fear. Without his powers, he felt defenceless.

- Don't be afraid of me! – replied a strange, raspy voice.

- Who said that?! Show yourself! – shouted Kevin.

- What's the matter? I thought you fear nothing. – asked the shadow.

- Where are you?!

- Right here! – laughed the voice. Suddenly, the mysterious visitor revealed himself. He was floating in front of Kevin's face. He had a horrific purple eye, sharp teeth and grey hands with black claws.

- Ghostfreak?!

- How nice of you to remember! – exclaimed Ghostfreak.

- What do you want?!

- I'll tell you what I want! An ally! I'm fed up with amateurs, I need a professional villain!– rasped the ectonurite.

- Leave me alone, freak! I have bigger problems now! – growled Kevin. He finally managed to sit up.

- You won't get rid of me that easily. We need each other!

- What are you talking about? I need nobody! Soon, I'll regain my strength and rip Ben apart! – declared Kevin.

- Ha ha, I'm afraid it's not that simple. – doubted Ghostfreak.

- Why would I want to work with you anyway? – mocked Kevin.

- Because you'll die, if you don't listen to my offer.

- Die? That's ridiculous! Okay, I've underestimated Ben and he got me big time... but I'll live.

- No you will not. Don't you feel that strange ache in your arms? – questioned Ghostfreak.

- That's only because of the battle...

- No. You're losing energy by every second. Unknowingly, Ben absorbed too much energy from you. Soon, it will be irreversible, unless you accept my help.

- Why would you help me?

- Because I'm going to suffer the same fate as you. My last confrontation with Ben nearly cost my life. Just look at me! I'm merely a shadow of my true self, I'm truly a ghost. If I can't get into a host body, I'll die as well. – explained the ectonurite.

- So you see now, how much we need each other... – continued he.

- What's in it for me, if I accept? – asked Kevin.

- Our goal is the same! I seek what you want! Think about it! With your powers and my experience, we will be unstoppable! What do you say?

Kevin touched his forehead and thought everything over. He felt the pain in his arms and it was getting more and more intense. Maybe Ghostfreak's right, he *is* going to die...

- I've made a decision. I'm in! But only to kick Ben's but for good! – agreed Kevin, looking into Ghostfreak's eye.

- That's the spirit! – exclaimed the ectonurite and merged with him. Kevin's eyes turned black, with a purple, glowing spot in the middle. Both of them felt the new power, they gave to each other. Two evil minds in one body.

GhostKevin stood up, the ache have disappeared from his arms. The moon illuminated his features.

Kevin's and Ghostfreak's voice united as they said the words together.

- This is not over yet, Ben Tennyson! Mu ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!