

Legion Divided V: Queen Takes Bishop

[05] Vanguard heavy support, perhaps.

[06] He's a Rikti raid regular, Vanguard won't back a takedown. Neither will Longbow without more to go on. And he's not dumb enough to show up where Arachnos can get him.

[02] We could ask Positron!

[06] If I have to grovel in front of the Phalanx, we can just skip to 01 nuking my brain.

[08] Could we just, kinda, ask him nicely?

"Twenty-three seconds." Alice's voice was soft but commanding, splitting the silence in the war room like an arrow as she strode in. "If you want to bring down Three, you'll have to do it in twenty-three seconds."

[02] What does she mean?

[08] She knows stuff about Three!

[06] Eight, we didn't tell her we were plotting on Three.

Five pushed back from the large planning table and shook his head with unconvincing innocence. "No one said anything about-

"Oh, don't start with me. I personally milled every component you're made of. Do not think for a second I don't know what's going on in there."

[08] She's onto us!

Elle sighed, leaning back in her chair. "Eight, just use words. What do you have, Mother?"

"A solution." Alice nodded once, with confidence. "A partial one, at least."

"Splendid!" Otu slapped the table, making it jump, and leaned forward with both his hands pressed to the tabletop. "What do you propose?"

"Mercy."

The room fell silent. Five turned his head towards Elle slowly. "Six, that word means when someone-

“Shut it, Five.” Elle narrowed her eyes at Alice, ignoring her brother. “What do you mean, mercy?”

“When you confront Three, I would have you show him mercy. He is, for all his faults, one of my children. One of you. One of the Legion.” She folded her hands in front of her, patiently.

“Promise me this, all of you, and I may be able to help.”

Otu, Eight, and Five all glanced towards Elle, either overtly or mentally through their link. None of them did it deliberately, it was a subconscious function of the new Legion arrangement. When there was doubt, the command unit made the decisions.

“Relax, Mother.” Elle let a bit of irritation leak into her voice, crossing her arms over her chest.

“However deserving of an ass-beating Three is, I’m not in the business of killing family. Not even Five here.”

“Or 01.”

Now the silence penetrated even the Lexicon. No one looked to Elle this time, they didn’t have to. The tightness in her jaw was visible across the room, grinding artificial teeth on each other as she stared daggers at her erstwhile mother.

“Do you have ANY idea what she’s-”

“Yes. I do.” Alice set her palms on the table, meeting Elle’s glare without flinching. “She’s betrayed her family. Threatened my children with servitude or death. She’s hurt them, in every way she knows how.” Her eyes drifted to Otu, to Five, and then back to Elle. “But she is still one of us, just as much as anyone at this table. And I won’t accept that she is beyond our reach.”

Anger boiled in Elle’s mind, seeping out along her links to the others. Eight cringed, placing her hands over her ears, and Five shot a sideways glance at his murderous sisters. Otu reached out physically, placing his hand on Elle’s arm, breaking the spell and forcing her to turn towards him.

They didn’t say anything, not out loud or along the mental link. They didn’t have to.

Elle turned back to Alice. “I won’t promise anything.”

Alice smiled, but it was a cold smile. “You never do.”

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“I don’t wanna do this.”

Eight spoke out loud, despite sending the message mentally to the others, and she fiddled with her laser rifle as she waited. She had never been in the line of fire herself, it was always her

creations, the little expendable robot frames, who took the bullets. Despite soaring through open skies daily, she suddenly felt exposed and vulnerable, glancing over her shoulder at every noise or sensor static.

[02] You will be fine! Be natural!

[06] And don't look suspicious.

[02] Not too natural!

[05] 08. It's going to be okay.

Her surprise at Five's tone almost kept her from realizing that the hunter had arrived.

LGN-03 dropped from an overpass to land in front of her with a thud, breaking pavement beneath his feet and using a quick blast from his left hand to keep himself upright. His visor fixed on her without expression or emotion.

"LGN-08. I am here to collect you. Re-connect to the Lexicon and-"

With a sudden cloud of dust and the scream of emergency jets, Eight took off at maximum power, her wings shaking as she pushed them to their limit in a panic, blazing an airborne trail eastward. The rush of fear took hold throughout every limb, a sense of primal terror felt only by prey at the mercy of a predator.

03 reacted without hesitation, forcing reactor power to his legs and feet and breaking into a run after her. His frame was dense and heavy with all the tools of destruction that Alice had built into him, but he had grown accustomed to overcharging his leg servos when the need arose. It would be more than enough to catch her.

Eight's flight pattern was erratic and emotional, dipping and rolling as if barricades or obstacles would slow him down. Three forced more power into his legs, kicking up a rooster's tail of debris behind him as his feet tore into the pavement, and he stretched his left arm forward, fixing his vision on her trailing foot.

She was almost in arm's reach. He could hear her screaming: a fearful, panicked yell all too reminiscent of humans and other bios. 01 would fix that, once the little LGN was back in the Legion.

Eight rolled, flicking upwards and crashing through the small window of an abandoned warehouse, disappearing from view. Between one footstep and another, he had already calculated the difficulty in reaching the same window, the thickness of the warehouse walls, and his approximate velocity and durability at speed.

03 launched into the air, tucking his knees up as he hit the warehouse wall, exploding through it in a cloud of dust and shattered metal.

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"I built Three with dual reactors that feed each other, a binary system that allows him to draw on tremendous power. This is the white light he can project, the siege engine function, if you will. But it is a system that must remain balanced, and he has certain failsafes that will shut down non-essentials if that balance is threatened."

"If, and I do mean if, you can provide enough of a shock to his chest compartment to push the reactors out of sync, it takes twenty-three seconds for them to realign. During that time, he'll have to modulate them manually, and it'll keep him from bringing his full force or attention to anything."

Though no words were spoken as Alice trailed off, a furious barrage of calculations exploded within the Lexicon. Locations were selected, attack vectors analyzed and dismissed or saved. Risks, uncertainty, and variables were mentally handed from one LGN to the next in milliseconds, each one checking the logic and adding their own inputs.

Otu finally gave it voice.

"It can be done."

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Guided by Elle's eyes from the warehouse rafters, Five's sensors from his vantage point just outside the building, and the proximity alarm from Eight, Otu's fist slammed into Three as he burst through the warehouse wall. The blow boomed within the spacious building like the shot of a cannon, and only Otu's weight and braced stance kept him from throwing himself backwards with the counterforce.

03's legs snapped out in front of him as he was struck, his head whipping forwards, and he slammed into the concrete at Otu's feet with a seismic crash. His chest plate was freshly concave, an irregular square where Otu had punched him just over Reactor-II.

Inside 03's visor, a cacophony of warnings kicked off, shunting power away from his feet, away from his hands, furiously trying to calm one reactor and force the other to respond. It flashed status effects in front of his eyes, blocking out the Lexicon with urgent alarms of a reactor imbalance.

Perched above, Elle nodded once.

[06] Twenty-three seconds. Begin.

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Smoke rose from the warehouse windows, drifting between the shattered panes of glass and evaporating into the Paragon sky. Nearly thirty seconds of absolute chaos had driven off even the most courageous of onlookers as beams of white light scythed through thin metal walls, punctuated by crashes, flashes of red, and the squeal of twisting metal.

The first reports of the incident would be very clear: there was no way any combatant had survived whatever hell on earth broke loose in that building.

Elle's feet crunched in the broken glass, the steady march of a huntress who has already downed her prey. She stopped two paces from the figure sprawled like a ragdoll in the middle of the makeshift battlefield. The light behind his visor flickered faintly, and wisps of white energy formed in his palms for the briefest moments before his reactors screamed their protests and silenced his weapons.

"You're loyal to your function, Three. To serve the Legion. I respect that."

She stood over him, arms crossed. 08 hovered over her left shoulder and Otu stood at her right, fists clenched. Five leaned on his sword to her other side, propped up and injured but standing. They stood as one, they fought as one, and piece by piece they had pulled themselves into the faintest ghost of what they were first meant to be.

"But 01 is not the Legion."

She raised her chin, defiant.

"We are the Legion."