

VOIDWALKER : 2/3

"Every lie we tell incurs a debt on the truth. Sooner or later, that debt is paid."

— **Valery Legaslov.**

ODA-3 had found a home in abandoned facilities in the past- this time, setting up shop in a decrepit and out-of-the way listening post from the war, "liberated" by members of *the Hand* prior to their arrival. The myth of "hiding in plain sight" was simply a Hollywood fairytale, especially with the government of Troy being in the state that it was. Everything was monitored and recorded, all due to fear of another attack.

If only they knew how close their fears were to being realized. Like all things, all it would take now is one more push- one more swift, violent act to sway a decision, whether it be by Parliament's choice, or the UEG itself. At the end of the day, who made the call didn't truly matter. Regardless of outcome, their mission would become a resounding success- a chance for the United Nations Space Command to once again swoop in, to be the heroes that quelled insurrection.

An endless story- Humans have been killing each other since their dawn as a species. A warrior race, without nobility, or care for consequence. They would simply live, die, and repeat the cycle, likely until another catastrophic event would cause them to unify once more.

How many more could be manufactured? How many more lives would have to be lost, before they finally understood the point?

Not enough, it seemed. It was never enough.

"What do you think, Sil?"

It took a moment for the Gammas' glare to focus, previously occupied on the cherry of the cigarette placed between her lips. She'd done well, up until this point, to be unreadable. Loyal to a fault, without regard paid to the evil she partook in. Disassociating made it easier to sleep at night, to pretend that she had no qualms with any order she followed, or plan that she enacted. This was simply a matter of rebellion, of forcing a hand from a dealer who had made their mistakes already.

The Hand could have been dealt with already, and not been cast aside as a brewing problem for later. A problem that the Office was funding, aiding, and training, mind you. It was all too akin to wars' past, with shadowy agencies training insurgencies, only for those insurgencies to flip those tactics and use them against the agencies later down the line. The stupidity of military decision making wasn't lost on her- but it wasn't for her to question. She had signed up for this, hadn't she? Volunteered, even.

If you could call it that.

"I think..." She began, taking an exhale and using the moment to carefully select the words which would leave her throat.

"...I think that arguing the semantics over what's 'too far' isn't going to get us anywhere. We have our job, let Section Two clean up the mess if it goes wrong. Won't be our problem, anyway."

The male seated in-front of her, a sandy-haired and blue eyed Ranger named Dylan, simply regarded her with the same look he always did- knowing that she had more to say, but was partially afraid to ask. It was a sentiment that most of the ODA shared. While they were aware of her background, that didn't make things any easier to digest. 'Uncanny' would be an understatement, applied to any of the old-generation Spartans. Silvia, much like the rest of Gamma Company, merely exemplified it. Too young, yet too old at the same time. Too hard.

"Of course, but... Come on, kid. The Chernobyl exclusion zone was at least a thousand--"

"--I don't need your history lesson. It won't change the outcome, anyway."

"I'm just saying. I mean, we're talking about throwing a *Havoc* at a hydrogen power-plant. Even for ONI, that's..."

"Excessive?"

The voice, belonging to a woman of similar stature and status to Silvia, cut through the exchange. Abigail Cohen, a SPARTAN-IV who had already established her presence within the ranks of the Office long before reassignment, kicked her feet up on the table the majority of the group were currently seated at. Silvia couldn't stop her eyes from rolling at the audacity of

the engineers' interruption.

"Not quite how I'd put it..."

The table fell silent again, its knights taking the time to quietly reflect, perhaps even piece together their arguments. Silvia had rehearsed hers a thousand times by now, her own justification of the acts they were duty-bound to commit. Dylan ran his hand through his beard in thought, while Abigail picked at the skin on the side of her nails. The others who had gathered each had their own tells, tells that fizzled away the moment they truly began working. This was merely a game of mindset, and the ability to shift.

It was one they had all mastered, as doctrine dictated.

"Regardless of how this shit goes, we still win."

The Gammas' words pierced through the silence, granting her own slew of raised brows and questionable expressions. It was her turn to shift, now, to force their predicament into a simple black-and-white, once again making it easier to digest. They either won, or they didn't; if they didn't win, it wouldn't be their problem, would it?

They'd just be abandoned, cast to the side.

"If we set this shit off, public outcry will be at an all-time high, for this planet. Civs will be fucking terrified, the Hand will get bold enough, and parliament will be forced into accepting our help- whether they want to or not."

Dylan slouched in his chair, his eyes covered by an indiscernible cloud, but that didn't stop Silvia from finishing;

"If we don't? Public's still gonna freak the fuck out. Method doesn't fit anything the Hand has done before, they'll know damn well any arrest made is a copout- that, and the knowledge that someone is more than willing to cause that much damage for whatever damned point they believe they have, will be enough to force a systemic collapse in trust and confidence."

With another exhale, Silvia snuffed her cigarette against an ash-tray.

"Can't keep your people safe if they don't trust you enough to let you."

