

UNSC Warlord is a fan inspired Halo Fiction created by Fishy. Inspiration comes from many members of the 343 Industries Community Forum Fans. Events can be taken into their own imagination as they wish...

~UNSC Warlord Book 3: Lan Chorus~

Prologue...

"Systems are clear. You may now exit." Dexter, an engineer who was aboard the UNSC Warlord, deactivated the Cryogenic Pods that stored some of the ODST's and Spartan's onboard from the previous mission on Ballast. A few of them had decided to stay out, mostly the medics and pilots, the others are went into Cryogenic Pods until they were needed.

Well, they were needed.

Bek and Michael J Caboose exited first, and at the same time as one another. Bek didn't have a helmet on unlike Michael. She lost this on her brink of life, back on Ballast. Osiris had tried to kill her; he beat her and kicked her until she bleed all over the face. As soon as she could, she managed to escape his grasp and head for an evac that Osiris originally had planned to arrive at the outpost where she met Michael. Osiris didn't make it with her, she remembered as she watched the Scarab obliterate him into a hot liquid.

Michael had faced something similar, where he was locked in the room, separated from the others, on Ballast's underground tunnels. He was stuck in a room with what he found out to be a Precursor AI of some sort. No idea, he just called it a Robot like all the others did. Luckily, he managed to escape out of there and run into Alex, who was later killed in the return to the tunnels by an Elite known as Lan Chorus. His brother was killed by the exact same Elite as well, whom had somehow managed to aboard the UNSC Warlord and thrown Destroyer into the reactor.

Runner and Archangel exited next. These two didn't get involved much on Ballast, but they were there. Runner, oh she was an excellent fighter when she did get involved. She was quick at the trigger and took down any enemy she saw in sight, heck she was even better than a few of the Spartan II's on their team. Not to mention her agility on foot, about as fast a Spartan III.

Archangel was a long lasted Spartan II, he was originally in Team Lord back on recruitment when he was first picked up on Reach with Bek. He was originally an ONI operative Spartan. When the situation calls for it, he'll be the sniper. Archangel has helped the team secure various hard points and extraction zones. Without him, they may have been pressured with the Covenant forces. He knew Junior's and Jackson's father's'.

Lastly, Jackson threw open the door of the Cryogenic Tube. He stood proud, not very oriented at the moment, but he looked like he could just shake it off. Jackson was the team's leader, or at least served at one at the time. Not only did he face a giant 'Robot' on his own, and use a mysterious weapon, which vanished after use, to destroy it. He also managed to get his team alive, by the use of Junior's Warthog with upgrades that saved them from Covenant attack.

"Good, glad to see you're all here. Now as we go through configurations and other warm ups to get you guy's oriented, I'd like to tell you a few things of why I awoke you from your slumber." Dexter said as he went over to the shield console to ensure each one of their shields functioned correctly, except Runners.

"Good, there better be. I don't like being awoken for no reason. I enjoy my sleep when I can get it. Right now. I can't get it." Runner said as she stood back and watched each one of them alternatively took turns to get into position on the green marked tile.

"Alright, that's that." Dexter said as he turned off the console and Jackson got out. He headed over to the focus ring console, to test how well each of them could focus on a certain area; if they could. "Commander Samantha wants us to go meet her. She sent a few other teams to do some recon while we took a break. She says she may have found Lan Chorus, but she's not sure. They said there's some clues on Installation 07 that may lead to other clues, and that we're going to have to board the surface of that muck ring. It'll be hell alright. At least UNSC Firestorm will be alongside to help us out. Heard they got a crew onboard we can get to meet. Just mostly some damn Helljumpers, and the others are Spartans. How they get along so damn well without another type of soldier beats me." Dexter finished up the exercise.

"Really? We're going to Installation 07? I thought that was restricted and unable to land on? I guess I might be wrong, things could change over the course of the years." Jackson stepped into the elevator with the others. They were all headed to the top floor to regroup with the others, then head up the stairway that took them into a door. The door lead to the UNSC Warlord Operation Deck. Which is where Captain Samantha Magarnold and Commander Moth were at. Where they waited.

Frank and Junior were over in the corner at a dating table, they had a game of chess out in front of them. Frank was at the advantage, he still had his Commander on the board alongside two Marines who were soon to be able to transferred into ODST's.

Everyone approached their table, where they were interrupted. "Ah, I see it's time to go then? No worries, didn't care about the bloody game anyways." Junior stood up and knocked the pieces over and out of place. Frank laughed in amusement, he was guaranteed to win anyways.

Frank was a jolly fellow, he didn't partake much. He just stood back and helped with what he could do, follow orders and what not. Although Jackson hated him because he was a pilot, he held no grudge or anger towards him. Jackson's always been that way. Without him, they

wouldn't have got far. He was the main support on Ballast before UNSC Warlord arrived. He piloted his vehicle, which was a Hornet, took care of any threats that approached. Mostly hunters and Wraith's. Both of which had trouble when it came against the mighty Hornet.

Junior was a solid brick. Of course, his father died and he couldn't have been there for him. Despite his father did kill Jackson's own father, before he was killed himself. Junior did what was needed done. He took care of the team and made sure everyone was operational. No injuries, no losses. He did his best. Although his help in battle wasn't much, he made sure everyone was on their feet.

"Captain's waiting, don't think we want to upset her. At least I don't, hehe." Frank was happy they were on their way to see Samantha for their assignment. Actually, he was just happy he could see Samantha in general. The last time he saw her, he felt like he was in love.

"Crud, I need to quit thinking about her. It's getting old really quick." Frank snapped out of his thoughts and ran up the steps to everyone who just started to enter the doorway to the Observation Deck.

"Glad you could all make it. I'm going to make this quick and simple so you know what you're doing." Moth walked over towards the center of where they all stood. "We're going to Installation 07. Now, we'll need to be very careful. The flood still inhabit the installation. However, we will be accompanied by a fellow UNSC Frigate, known as UNSC Firestorm."

"Sounds interesting. I'd like to know more about them." Jackson was ready to hunt down the Elite who killed Heli, a brave ODST that stood behind to fight the second Robot that they first encountered.

"UNSC Firestorm may be a Frigate, but they will be helping with deployment and anything we need without wasting very much of Warlord's resources. Firestorm has a few soldiers on board who have volunteered to join us. Just Spartans and ODST's. However, you will have to board their ship before you can deploy on the surface of the Installation. Just be careful, Installation 07's flood are unpredictable. There's more in remote areas, then there are in others. You all need to watch you back." Moth explained vigilantly. He just followed orders.

"Now, that this is over with. You all need to return to your barracks and get ready for the jump. We should be there within two weeks. You all should get some practice in War Games and in the target range. I'll let you know when we're in view of the Installation. You are all dismissed." Samantha told them as she walked back to her Headquarters. Frank watched her as she walked away. What a beautiful sight for him.

"Well we heard the Captain, let's go do some War Games. First maps on me, we're going to play some Infection on Ragnarok with our loadouts we'll be using on the field." Jackson lead the team to the War Games room, where he set up the simulation.

They felt the ship jump, it was time to get things done. War Games began. Junior and Michael started out as the first infected. The others were survivors.

~End of Prologue~

~Chapter 1: FireStorm~

Runner just reached Blue Team's base. How convenient, they just had to play capture the flag on Ragnarok. The most overplayed map, and the most played objective game mode. Why couldn't it have been Ricochet on Chiron TI-34? Whatever. The teams were an even Three versus Three. Red team consisted of Archangel, Runner, and Michael. Blue Team consisted of Jackson, Junior, and Frank. Of course, Dexter was the spectator and was in charge of the simulation. Bek, well she went to take a nap.

Whatever I guess. Runner sprinted into Blue Team's base. The flag was settle conveniently on the pedestal above her. "Well. Here goes nothing." She noticed Junior was on top with the Sniper Rifle. She watched as an indicated flashed on her screen that Junior just sniped Michael. "Hehe. Only if that were for real." Runner jumped on top of the base, she walked up to Junior. Surprised he didn't notice, or maybe it was her ultra ninja stealth mode? Oh well, she took her Carbine and, from behind, put it in both her hands and put the Carbine over Juniors head. She took the Carbine and slammed it up against his neck. He mumbled something but she couldn't understand. She used her advantage and twisted the Carbine, which snapped his neck. He fell on the floor.

"Well that was that, time to get this baby home." Runner took their flag. The announcer announced that their team had the flag. "Well, they probably know now to. Better get back quick." Runner went into the air vent on top of their base, it flung her high in the air. She was supposed to land around near those inclines that were split between the river bed. "Alright, now to just..."

Splat.

Frank ran into her with the Banshee.

Runner was thrown out of the simulation, as well as everyone else. "Okay, what the Hell? I was in the middle of winning and you just stop the simulation? C'mon Dexter." Michael said. Even though he was terrible on that last match. He died forty-three times and only had two kills. He didn't even get a capture. One of those being a betrayal against Archangel.

"Sorry guys. It's time for you to go, we're here. UNSC Firestorm is about five kilometers away from us. You all need to get in the Pelican, which is on the deck below us, and have Frank pilot

you over.” Dexter said in an urgent manner. This mission must be a really go-getter and the Commander must not want to waste time.

All six of them huddled in the small elevator. Junior quietly jammed out to the elevator music, it was one of his favorites. He remembered it used to play all the time in the elevators when he and his father were in New Alexandria. Oh how he missed his father. A tear skimmed down his cheek.

Frank was next to him and noticed the tear; he put his hand on Juniors shoulder and told him “Cheer up big guy, we’re your family now. You don’t gotta worry about losing us.” Frank patted him on the shoulder twice, then gently shook it once before he dropped his arm.

“Thanks. That means a lot to me. I have no one.” Junior wiped the tear off his face. He meant what he said too.

Archangel heard them talk. He was a hundred percent agreed on that. They stuck together through thick and thin, no one gets left behind. Everyone stays alive. It was the unsaid rule of the team.

The elevator door opened up. Looks like they were just in time, a Pelican was just being lowered down into the Hangar in front of the shield door. Frank walked ahead of everyone, obviously he was the pilot. He wanted to make sure the thing was safe and ready for immediate launch. Someone walked over to them, “Hello guys. Pelican’s ready. You can leave as soon as you like. Be safe, and have fun. We’re all counting on you. I want Lan Chorus dead as everyone else does.”

“Wait. Biggles? Is that you Biggles? What happened? Why are you now working on the vehicle deck? Where’s Jack at? You two used to be together side by side.” Archangel just unloaded questions on him.

“Hehe. Yep it’s me, Biggles. I got too old to fight and command had nothing for me to do anymore. Which brings me to Jack of Harts. He and I were on a mission to track down some insurrectionists who were messing with a Communications Outpost. Well, we got the Outpost secured, but on the way back Jack was taken out by a Spartan Insurrectionist, who took him away and left me all on my own as the Pelican took off. God knows where he is now.” Biggles looked down in silence. Jeez, those two really were best friends to the end.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know...” Archangel said.

“It’s fine, just go ahead and get in. Firestorm is waiting for you, don’t want to waste your time. Bek’s already in the Pelican waiting for all of you.” Biggles said, then walked back where he came from. Everyone else loaded into the pelican. Frank took off to UNSC Firestorm.

----5 Minutes Later----

Frank approached UNSC Firestorm's deck, it's deck was small. However, I guess it was a Frigate. Probably why it was selected best for the job. Could get up close, and wouldn't cost much if it was destroyed. They landed the pelican, as they exited they were greeted by a marine. Another one familiar to both Bek and Archangel.

"Hello guys, they're in the cafeteria getting some... some food. I hope you know how to get there. It's just through those, um, those first few doors. Yes. They're right through those first few doors. Mhm." The marine said, he was really shaky and probably was insane.

"Wait a minute, you're Zen! Hi Zen!" Bek yelled.

"Hrrrrmm!!" Was all that Zen said. "Just go through those doors, leave me alone!" Zen took off in a different direction through a few other doors.

"I wonder what's his problem." Runner said as she took her helmet off.

Jackson lead the team, through the first two doors. Then through another door. He didn't see the cafeteria. He decided to turn back, but heard a noise. It sounded like a beat of some sort. Jackson pushed open the door.

"Err'body say "Warlord" KEEP IT GOING,
Tanks, Hornets, Warthogs, Warlord!
Let the Covenant come over here, get a taste of my Warlord!
Taste a bit of lead that I got from my ship, Warlord!
Covenant might stand a chance against our Warlord!
Boy, now I know you ain't talking about our Warlord!
My mother's captain of the ship Warlord!
WaWaWaWaWaWa Warlord!"

Then all six of them sat down and ate some sausage.

"Um, okay. If that is literally them. I will seriously just take Caboose and get in the nearest drop pod; take it down to the Ring or Installation whatever. Then, I will search for the clue or even Lan Chorus himself down there. Than to put up with those cheerful chatterboxes. It's too annoying, and I just want to call them all stupid right now." Runner hyperventilated.

"Relax, C'mon let's go. They seem nice, that's a thing. We'll just introduce ourselves..." Jackson said before he was interrupted.

"Hello Team Lord, glad you made it. Go ahead and take the elevator in the room where you landed the Pelican, and meet the Commander upstairs. You'll be able to meet your new

teammates up here shortly after they're done eating breakfast. See you soon!" Someone said to them before they had the chance to meet their crew right now. They followed orders and took the elevator up. Runner noticed one of them was a girl, hopefully she wasn't as bad as Bek.

They all got in the clunky elevator, which slowly raised them upwards.

Well here goes nothing. The elevator stopped and the shackles slowly raised in front of them. An ODST awaited in front of them, a huge grin on his face. "Follow me." was all he said before he lead them.

They did as they were told.

~End of Chapter 1~

~Chapter 2: Her name is Ash~

"So do you mind telling us who you are? You don't look familiar." Jackson said. He walked through a couple doors, the command room on this ship was in the other room. However, he won't go untold of the escorts name. The last time he was escorted, previously before he joined the UNSC Warlord, the escort was a fake. Jackson walked into a meeting with the Captain and higher staff members. As a result, he was punished. If he would have had the name, he would have been free.

The ODST turned around, that big smile was still there. "My name is Fauz. Now, right through these doors you will run into Captain Mike Lespane. Good luck you guys." Fauz walked away. He still had a smile. Only a few of the crew managed to give a question look about it. They then entered the room.

"Ah. So you must be the newly patched up Team Lord? Not to worry, you're other crew members will be joining up with you soon. Things will be explained nice and tidy." Mike didn't properly introduce himself, however he was right to the conversation. He obviously wanted this over quick and them on the surface. Er, ring? Whatever the word is, he wanted them there.

"Now. Things will go simple. Your comrade, Dexter will be in charge of equipment and everything you need. If you need a transport. He'll give you it. If you need a weapon he'll give you it." Mike said.

Wow. So Dexter is here to help all along? Thought he would have stayed behind, but I guess not. That's all Archangel could think.

"With that little issue cleared. Here's your crew. I'll call them one-by-one so you get to know them better." Mike said. Dang, this guy was organized. Samantha just sent them in. How could this captain be captain of a Frigate? Unless the requirement was to not introduce new crew, but

to just throw them together. Well no, that still doesn't make sense. That'd make him in charge of the missile pod turret. Which is probably the lowest job to have.

Mike introduced a Spartan that walked in with the CQB Mjolnir variant, "This is Reaper. He's a Spartan Two. He's an oddball, I'll tell you that. Thinks he's comical and hilarious. Which he's definitely not. The odd part about him is he doesn't like to work together. He likes to go his way, on his own. Lone Wolf. Now, I've told him to leave that crap behind but he won't listen."

He then waved another soldier to come in, this one was an ODST he was silent like his weapons, unlike Reaper who was having a laugh, "This here is Magnus Dreyar. He's your silent type, doesn't like to talk much. He too is a lone wolf. However, will work in groups. Lone wolf is just a preference of his. He's a nice guy once you get to know him. Just doesn't tolerate sarcasm. So keep it to yourself if you throw any in his direction."

A Spartan walked in without being told to do so, notably a Spartan IV in Recon armor, helmet in hand. "Oh, uh. Yes, this is Zeff. Be careful around this one. He likes to tell lies and manipulate you. So if he tries to attack you when you're weak. Don't give in. He'll also try to get you to join his side, usually to win an argument. He is smart though, I'll give him that. Just tries to get what he wants all the time. Hell, he managed to manipulate two marines to turn against each other and kill one another. Traded bullets is how, to clear up any questions." Zeff walked over and respectfully stood beside Magnus and Reaper.

Fauz appeared once again, with that smile on his face. He escorted an ODST out to everyone. "Ahh, yes. This here is our good member Joseph. You need him on your team to butt heads against Zeff. Joseph here can tell when you're lying, he knows how to work his way around situations. Not just arguments. However, he is easy to get along with. You'll become friends with him shortly, I'm sure. He's even managed to become friends with Magnus." Joseph rose two fingers in the air, showing a peace sign. Then quietly went over to stand with the crew.

Mike looked over to see who was left. "Huh, just one left. Wonder where the other went. Well then, we'll carry on." A Spartan III walked into the room. "Now this one's a keeper. That you can't keep. He's only here for this mission and leaves afterwards. However, he'll make sure the job gets done. His name is Eric Magarnold. Son of the Captain of UNSC Warlord actually, yes surprising he's here. UNSC sent him over since no one else wanted to tag along. He's quiet and won't talk at all. However, he'll get the job done. He's fast and smart. No need to worry about losing him." Mike patted Eric on the back, which was a motion for him to go stand over with the others.

"Well you guys. I'm sorry the other one is not here. Hopefully you'll run into her sooner or later. Hopefully sooner. Anyways, you should all meet downstairs. Dexter is waiting for you. Time for me to go." The 65 year-old man walked out of the room. Happy to be of assistance.

They all walked out of the room. "He was such a nice man. Introducing everyone and stuff. Great we get teammates and Dexter is actually coming along!" Archangel said.

"Yes, but let's go." Jackson lead everyone into the elevator. He pushed the button for the launch bay.

"You know, I hope this goes well. Would be nice to get to know you all a little better." Joseph said with enthusiasm. He held his hand out to Michael. "Hi."

Michael shook his hand, "Hello. I'm Michael Caboose."

Joseph gave a smile, "Well it's nice to meet you Caboose."

Michael gave him a confused look, "Oh, people just usually call me Michael. Caboose is fine though!" He smiled.

"Thanks." Joseph replied.

The elevator door opened, they all stepped out. They spotted Dexter over near three pelicans. He seemed to be in a conversation with someone. Everyone walked over.

"Hello Dexter, glad you're here to help." Jackson said as he walked up to him. The person, who turned out to be a Spartan looked at them. Jackson could only make out that it was a female. He couldn't get anything else.

"Oh, hey guys. Sorry, I was busy here talking to Ash. One of your squad members." Dexter noticed that the new recruits were with them. "Oh, Ash I think you missed your introduction with Mike. Dang it, why did you have to bother me?" Dexter walked over to talk to the other engineers.

"Well, okay then. Be that way." She looked away from Dexter and at her new team. "Hello, guys and gals. I'm Ash. To cut the exaggerated details that Mike probably has to say, I'm just the one you'll look at for helping get the job done. Nothing more, nothing less. I'll care for each one of you. Yep, that's about it. Now let's go, shall we?" Ash walked over to join them.

Dexter approached them. "Well everything is ready. This job is dangerous. However, you'll be split up into teams of three. The teams are already made. We're not drawing sticks or seeing who can skip a rock the farthest. Plus Paper, Rock, Scissors would just take too long." Dexter looked for the paper on his clipboard.

"Ah here we go," Dexter started to name off the teams. "Joseph, Bek, Frank, Caboose, and Reaper will be in Pelican 1; on the left. You can't miss it, there's a tank attached for transport. Archangel, Jackson, Eric, and Magnus are Pelican 2; this one's in the middle. Attached to it is a

Gauss Warthog, with a Gungoose sitting on the inside. Runner, Junior, Zeff, and Ash will be in Pelican 3, on your right. Attached to it is a modified transport warthog. Included is a machine gun turret on both sides, flamethrower facing backwards, and the passenger gets a simple mounted shotgun turret on the dash. Improved for durability as well, that way you won't be taken out so easily if you encounter flood." Dexter's mouth ran dry from the read-off.

A glimmer shined in Runner's eyes.

"Alright, well mount up everyone. Let's go." The teams split off into their three sections and boarded the pelicans.

"The pelicans have preset destinations. We're going to sweep the landscape. Hence why you're split up into three teams. As far as we're concerned. Only one of these areas has the message, as far as we're concerned. We're not sure which one does. We have Covenant traces on the battlenet saying they were in each of the three. Anyways, good luck to all of you. I'll be here if you need anything." Dexter said, then flickered off their HUD's. The pelicans all lifted up and took off. Each of the three broke off in separate destinations as they reached the surface.

One was to search a cave.

One was to search a desert.

One was to search an island.

As the pelicans grew near the installation, a green-musky look appeared in the air. This gave everyone an unsensational feel. Each of them knew, if they were to die from these creatures. It would use them to turn them against one another.

Dexter saw in one of the Pelican's cameras, a large figure ran across the ground. Then the camera went out and a Pelican came up missing on the screen. Only two remained.

~End of Chapter 2~

~Chapter 3: Epilogue~

"Alright. I'm ready to kill whatever I see. Even if it's just a worm." Runner hopped out of the Pelican. Feet first.

Runner, Junior, Zeff, and Ash were assigned to the desert. Their compass pointed to an enclave of a building of some sort, about forty-clicks from their current position. The reason for the so distant landing was because it was in the dark zone. Plus, if there was any Covenant around, they didn't want to get caught.

“Alright, since I’m driving. I’ll let you know who’s going where.” Junior got out of the Pelican after he turned the thrusters off and shut it down. “I’m going to be driving, of course. Zeff takes shotgun, literally. Runner gets flamethrower. Ash, you’ll use both turrets. However, stick to the one you prefer. If we get engaged. We’ll need you to switch back and forth as needed. Is that clear?”

They all nodded their head yes.

“Dexter do you come in?” Ash opened up the communications with Firestorm.

“Yes, loud and clear. What’s up?” Dexter replied.

“We’re in the desert. Pelican’s landed, and ready to head out.” Ash told him.

“That’s great. Look, we have bad news.” Dexter said.

“What is it?” Ash was concerned.

Dexter flipped through some things. “Umm. Pelican 2, whom was supposed to reach the island, has gone off the map. It seems they have crashed or something has happened. We’re going to have to pull you out of the desert and sense you all over to investigate.” Dexter finally found the file, he pulled it up on Pelican 3’s visors. They saw Pelican 1 land at their destination, a few clicks from their destination, the cave. “So, we’re going to need you to go to the island. We believe it’s the Installation’s Silent Cartographer, so that’ll be fun.”

“Alright, Dexter. We’ll go. Only because their vital to this team and we need them with us.” Ash said. She looked at the others. Junior already had the Warthog reattached to the Pelican. Everyone else was loaded. Ash loaded up.

“Alright. Here are the coordinates. Let me know how things go. If you need anything, we’ll be here for orbital support. UNSC Warlord has MAC rounds if anything gets too out of hand. Dexter out.” Dexter broke off the communications.

“Well, you heard the man. Let’s go check on our friends.” Zeff said. The Pelican rose.

A bunch of something came right after them, they ran at full speed. They were too far for any of them to see what they were. Covenant or Flood? No matter, plasma rounds were being shot at them.

Junior punched the thrusters. ETA was one hour.

"You know. This cave doesn't look too bad after all." Bek said. She walked in the entrance. "Hello!" She yelled. The only reply she got was an echo, followed by a screech of some sort she had never heard before. "Looks like we're good to go in. Nothing's in there."

"Uh, no. I heard a screech. I don't feel safe going in there." Caboose said.

"Nah, that's just my tummy." Bek said. "I'm kinda hungry."

Caboose looked out her like she was an idiot. "That makes no sense." Was all he had to say.

"Look guys. Let's just take the tank; mount up, then go look for any clues." Joseph said. Reaper unmounted the tank.

Joseph got in the pilot seat, Caboose took the machine gun turret. Bek rode on the side; a rocket launcher and ammunitions laid there for her if she needed it.

"Hey guys, hold on just one sec. There's something in front of the Pelican. I want to check it out." Reaper walked over to the front of the pelican.

"Hey, guys. Wanna come here for a sec?" Reaper said, fright in his voice.

Joseph moved the cannon of the tank over to Reaper. Who faced the other side of the Pelican; out of range. "Reaper, I can't see what you're looking at from here. What is it?"

"I don't know, let me check." Reaper disappeared behind the Pelican.

"What is it?' Bek asked, impatiently.

Nothing.

A few seconds later, they heard a frightened yell. "Ahh! Get it off me! Get it off me!" Reaper came from the other side of the Pelican. Two flood combat forms jumped on top of him, they broke his visor and lashed at him.

Joseph and Caboose revved up their machine gun turrets and took out the flood.

"Ah, thanks you guys. Although, I know longer have a helmet. I should be fine." Reaper stood up, he walked over and bent down to pick up his gun which laid in front of the Pelicans mounted nose gun.

Reaper went to turn around and walked over to the Scorpion. Except, instead his head started to get bigger and bigger really fast.

“Reaper. What’s wrong with your face? It’s getting....” That was all Bek could say before Reaper’s head was in Bek’s lap. She screamed. Joseph shot the cannon.

“Woah. What happened? Bek’s over here screaming like a twelve year old girl.” Caboose asked Joseph.

“Well it appears there was a flood tank form on the other side of the pelican. Reaper was stupid and didn’t pay attention, so it swung its scythe looking arm thing at Reaper’s head, and cut it clean off.” Joseph explained to them.

“Huh. That’s weird.” Caboose said.

“Anyways. We need to move. We can’t keep getting stalled like Reaper did. We need to push forward.” Joseph said. The Scorpion entered the massive cave. It was dark outside, but boy was it dark inside. Joseph kicked up the extra set of lights, which included the one that was mounted underneath Michael’s turret. They pushed through the cave. No flood in site nor Covenant.

~End of Chapter 3~

~Chapter 4: The flood~

The Scorpion swung its barrel around the corner. Still nothing in site. Which was odd. Michael watched their three and nine. Bek had an eye on their six. The cave seemed to go on for quite a while.

Green mist was in the air, everywhere to be precise. Yellow spores were clung to the wall. They moved as if they could breathe. Bek pulled up her magnum and shot one because it started to annoy her. A few flood spores fell out and scrambled around the room. Other than that, no other flood came into contact.

“Michael, do you feel as if our every movement is being watched by someone. By something?” Joseph asked through the open hatch of the Scorpion. He kept watch at the ceiling. All that was there were some stalactites covered from the flood.

“Nope. I just feel as if this is going to be an awesome adventure I get to spend with my best friends.” Michael said. He swung the flashlight over to the other side of the tank, he saw nothing still.

“I feel as if we’re almost there. Like. I don’t see anywhere else to go. There’s a wall in front of us, this is a dead end.” Bek said. She was right, there was no where else to go. This was a dead end. Just a giant wall covered in flood tile.

Joseph looked up at the wall. She was right. There was nothing here it was just a false route. He stopped the tank. “Michael and Bek, cover me. I’m going to get on a channel with Dexter to

let him know this isn't the right area. Then see what happens next." Joseph reached over and turned on the radio. "Dexter, come in. Dexter, can you hear me?" There was nothing.

A few minutes later, "Yes. I can hear you. Sorry about that. Was tracking to see where the signal was coming from. Anyways, what's up?" Dexter put down his BLT Sandwich he grabbed for lunch. It was the first one he's had in a long time. Boy, was it delicious. That bacon was just so fine and good. The right amount of grease and crisp. It was heaven for him.

"We reached the end of the cave. There's nothing in here. We haven't seen anything, not even flood. I think the routes a fault. Must have been for Lan Chorus as well. What do you suggest?" Joseph looked up at the other two, they were on the lookout like he asked. Bek had the rocket launcher strapped to her back.

"Well." Dexter took a bite out of the sandwich. "Something happened with one of the other Pelicans. So the other team is going to investigate. However, just go ahead and regroup at the desert. Should be fine there. They'll be back once they find out what's wrong." Dexter took another bite. He reached over and put the bacon he had on a tray and just put it in his mouth. "Oh, and take the tank with you too; if you can. Anyways, that's about it. Have fun!" Dexter was off the radio.

A loud scream erupted.

Several loud screams erupted.

"Oh no this isn't good. We've been ambushed." Joseph said as a flood combat form appeared up on the ledge in front of them. It pointed at them with its tentacle like fingers. Michael shot it down.

Another scream erupted.

"I think it's time we punch it and get out of here!" Joseph said, he pushed on the pedals. The Scorpion moved as fast as he could push it. Flood tanks and combat forms appeared all around them. All they could do was fight their way out and hope they make it.

Bek pulled up the rocket launcher and fire it at a flood carrier. It didn't do much good, it exploded into a bunch of flood spores. Which then Michael took out for her. "Uh, I need to reload. Hold on a second." Bek reached over and grabbed ammunition on the side of the tank.

Joseph aimed the cannon at the tanks in front of them. They were basically hunters, just without their fuel rods. Their tough like hide made up for the armor. Joseph fired and killed one of them. The other started to sprint at them, he took it out too.

“Ah, there we go!” Bek said, she pulled up the rocket launcher. Which was a tad bit late on her part. A flood stalker ran up and jumped at her. Pinned her on the ground.

“Bek!” Joseph yelled. He turned his cannon around. It was too late. A flood spore jumped on her face and crawled into her mouth. All that was heard were groans and the sound of choking. Joseph couldn’t stop now, he moved forward.

Michael watched as Bek’s legs kicked and she screamed. After a few seconds, the noise stopped and the flood pursued. One of them looked like a Spartan infection form. In Bek’s armor. Michael shot it down along with the others.

Joseph approached the exit where the stalactites hung from the entrance. He moved the cannon up and shot them as they just drove under. They fell down and destroyed any flood forms there. “Well, entrance is closed. Not long before more show up. Come on. Let’s go, into the Pelican!” Joseph said. He got the flight controls while Michael got the Scorpion on attached.

“We might wanna go. They’re here!” Michael yelled. Flood forms of all type crawled at them from every direction.

“Just a second.” Joseph got the systems online and functional. He slammed the thrusters and took off for the new waypoint.

“Whew. That was a close one. Thought we weren’t going to make it.” Michael said. He crashed into the copilot’s seat. Tired as he was, he decided to rest.

“Not all of us, just half.” Joseph said, then pushed forward. The ETA clock suggested three hours until arrival at the desert.

~End of Chapter 4~

~Chapter 5: First Floor~

Pelican 3 arrived at the landing zone. Ash noticed there was a pelican there, but no sign of the team. The pelican was wrapped by the flood. It was immobile. However, the warthog was gone as well as the gungoose. No matter, Ash didn’t want to take any chances. “Runner. You mind coming up here?”

“Whatcha need?” Runner said? She was in there in a jiff.

“See those controls over there? I want you to use them and fire the spartan laser at that pelican. I don’t want to take any chances of the flood taking our ride; with them being so close. Don’t wanna have to have Pelican 1 come over here and grab us. Won’t have a ride by then. Junior won’t be able to use his special warthog. Which will drive him insane.” Ash told her, although

she thought that was a little too much information to say. Nonetheless, she's just getting her thoughts out there. No big deal.

"Hey, no problem. All you had to do was say fire and I'm on it." Runner grabbed the controls and aimed at the pelican. She held the trigger to charge the spartan laser, then fired.

The pelican's massive laser cut through the pelican and forced an explosion. It was loud, but didn't seem to attract any attention. The pelican laid in fire. Runner had a smile on her face. "Alright, what's next to set on fire?"

"We'll see. As of now, unload the Warthog and let's go find them." Ash commanded.

"Alrighty, will do!" Runner said and then did as she was told.

~End of Chapter 5~

~Chapter 6: Vortex~

"Dexter." Fauz approached him. Dexter just finished his lunch, really good sandwich if you want to know.

"What is it Fauz? Kinda busy here." Dexter wasn't, but he didn't want to leave his post just in case something happened down on Installation 07.

"We just got news back from UNSC Vortex. They deployed a ground team and found the clues we're looking for." Fauz introduced the topic. "Paladin, Biggles, Zen, and Gregor deployed and found them. We are deciphering the script now. We should have it in a matter of hours. Heracles is on it."

"Alright, that sounds great. I'll get to the teams and let them know that the other ground parties have found it." Dexter radioed in. "Pelican One, do you hear me? Pelican One, do you copy?" All that remained of Pelican One was Frank, Joseph, and Caboose.

"Roger, this is Joseph. What is it?" Joseph answered the comms. He halted the other two to stop and stand watch. They were about half a kilometer from the pelican.

Dexter slid his pistol away from him. Unloaded but was there for safety measures. "Pelican Nine found the clue. You guys are clear to head back. I advise you have Frank pilot, since he hasn't done much for the task."

"Roger that, will do sir. Headed back to Firestorm. Pelican One out." Joseph turned the tank around and headed back to the pelican so they could return to the frigate.

"Jackson." A voice was heard. "Jackson! Are you alright!" The voice asked again.

Jackson opened his eyes, Ash stood above him. Junior helped Archangel and Magnus off their feet. Eric was missing. Nowhere to be seen. All he could remember was flying for one second, then he was knocked out the next. He saw Junior offered him his hand. Runner checked up on Magnus and Archangel, she ensured they were alright and fully functional until Junior could make it over and check for himself.

"Jackson You okay?" Ash asked.

"Yeah. Just out in the cold. All those thoughts rushing me at once, I just couldn't remember. Now I do." Jackson trailed off. "Why are you here? I thought you were in the desert searching for the clue?"

"No, we got transferred over here by Dexter to figure out what was wrong since your pelican went out. We saw the ship, and decided to search. Hoping for the best, we found you eight hundred meters away. Lucky me." Ash stated. The pelican was booted up behind them, Zeff was on the side turret, he was on watch for any flood that may sneak up on them. The rest of the crew was headed there. It was just Ash and Jackson that had yet to move.

"Alright, let's go. Hopefully we'll find Eric later." Jackson lead Ash back to the pelican, ironically.

A figure showed up on the hillside. It appeared to be a spartan.

"Ash do you see that?" Jackson pointed at the figure.

"Yes, who is that? Is that Eric? We should go check out what's up." Ash said. She transmitted to Runner to meet them over there. She agreed, and Ash watched as she ran over there.

The figure fell. Runner was close by. Ash noticed Zeff aimed at Runner, just in case. Magnus had out his sniper. "Alright, let's get up there.

Another figure suddenly appeared behind Eric. A giant orange beam ripped through his neck, he was decapitated. The other figure charged something and aimed at Runner. Another orange beam hit her in the chest, she flew back from the sudden force. Yet, she was still alive. Medical assistance was needed as soon as possible.

Zeff fired the cannon and Magnus unloaded the sniper. It didn't matter. They all missed, the figure disappeared.

"Junior, get to Runner asap. We'll be there soon." Ash helped Jackson get to the pelican. They eventually broke into a run.

Between breathes, Jackson asked Ash, "What. What was that?" He inhaled and exhaled quickly. "Where did it go?"

"I don't know what that was, but we need to get going. Eric is gone, Runner will be too if we don't hurry. Junior can't get her back on her feet without the med bay on UNSC Ambient." Ash was close to the pelican.

The figure popped up in Jackson's face, pinning him to the ground. It's armor peeled back to reveal a glowing orange skull. It screamed in his face. Ash ran up to kick it off, but it disappeared.

"Time to go." Ash helped Jackson up and into the pelican.

"Punch it Magnus. Let's go." Ash commanded. Zeff and Archangel were on the turrets, it seemed like all of the flood on the Installation swarmed at them. They opened fire.

"Alright, we're in the clear. Heading back to UNSC Firestorm." Ash told everyone with reassurance. She sat in the copilot seat and transmitted to Dexter, to let him know of their approach.

~End of Chapter 6~

~Chapter 7: Give me a Kiss Goodbye~

"Alright, we are aboard the UNSC Ambient. Runner has been taken to the med bay. Junior is attending Runner along with other medical attendees. Her recovery is unknown at this time." Archangel confronted Moth. Who was on the machine, his goal set to make sure the code for the next location, would be deciphered here soon enough.

The others were aboard the UNSC Ambient as well, Archangel was the only one who went to UNSC Warlord. As ordered to inform the Captain as what happened and to do so, he did such.

"Hm." Moth said, no concern was in his voice. He directed one of the operatives to step out so another would step in, one more advanced in the subject. "Seems as things are good. Sad to hear that Eric was killed. Hopefully this doesn't affect the mission. He was Samantha's second son. Second best son, to be precise. He went mute after a rivalry in the past with crew members. Easy to say, they were insurrectionists aboard the ship. Last one got a bullet on his throat before he was killed." Moth went over and stepped in to help.

"So you're saying to just continue as we normally do with all our past crew deaths and MIA?" Archangel sounded confused, unknown about the subject.

"Yes." Was all Moth said, Archangel was then dismissed.

Red alert was going off, he headed to the observation deck.

Jack reached over and gave Ash a kiss, who returned it.

“Yuck. You two disgust me, take that crap elsewhere. Not in the med bay.” Junior said, he grabbed a syringe.

Ash and Jack were irritated by that response. They walked into the other room and continued where they left off.

Runner looked at Junior before he knocked her out, “Please Junior. Pull through. I don’t want you guys to miss me and I don’t want to miss all of you.” A tear rolled down her both of her cheeks in unison.

“I’ll do my best.” Junior injected the syringe.

Dexter, Frank, and Joseph all stood around and discussed what was needed. The red alert was going off, and they needed to get this done fast.

“Covenant in bound. We have a whole fleet. I’m estimating around nine ships total.” Dexter read the radar.

“This can’t be good. We won’t be able to last. Valkyrie II is a UNSC Destroyer, Warlord is a Phoenix Colony, FireStorm is a Charon Frigate, Vortex is a Jericho Carrier, Ambient being a Stalwart Frigate and all we have for ships at this location. We may as well say our prayer.” Joseph said, fear deep in his voice. He knew there was no match. Even if we called for help we were screwed.

“Well, was good fighting with you lads. Nice getting to know ya.” Frank said, he turned around and walked right into the blade of a Promethean Knight.

“Oh my god. We’re under attack by the Prometheans as well.” Dexter grabbed his pistol and shot the Promethean right in the face as it revealed its face, after he pinned Joseph to the ground. “That’s enough of you.”

“Thanks.” Joseph grabbed Dexters hand and pulled himself up off the floor. Just to find out a Promethean Battlewagon stabbed Dexter in the torso and Joseph just pulled himself on to it as well.

The Knight took his other arm and decapitated them. It's Watcher came over and pulled them off its sword as so.

Zeff looked at Magnus, who stared out the window with him. Vortex and FireStorm were shredded to hot metal pieces. Warlord was head to head with the flagship Cruiser. Valkyrie took out three corvettes, before it was taken out by a Covenant Supercarrier.

"This is terrible, we're losing this battle as fast as it's started. We're next." Zeff said. He watched Warlord take down the flagship and engaged the other cruisers.

"No kidding. This is the end of us. Why did Lan Chorus all of a sudden decided to attack after we found the message? It just doesn't make any sense. I highly doubt he's even on one of those ships. He's probably watching the fight from somewhere nearby." Magnus said. He started to walk over to the hangar bay, to help do his best. Instead, he was stopped by the sheer terror of UNSC Warlord being splattered by the supercarrier. Blown to millions of pieces, explosions everywhere.

"Well there's only one option left." Zeff said, he watched as a Promethean crawler and Watcher killed Junior and all the other medics. A Promethean Commander shot a binary rifle at Jack, which incinerated him to nothing. Ash started to cry, she grabbed her knife and killed the Promethean. She grabbed Jack's battle rifle and shot down the Watcher then took out the Crawler. She looked over at Zeff, directly in his eyes. Tears streamed down her cheeks. She was taken out by an Incineration Cannon.

Magnus put his hand on Zeff's shoulder, he turned around to look at him to see what he needed. Instead, he turned to a headless body. Promethean in front of him. The Battlegwagon knocked him down, and pinned him to the ground while a grunt ran over and mauled his face. Piece by piece, the grunt ate Zeff's face until nothing was left. He screamed in pain, but there was nothing he could do.

Michael ran into the launch bay, he entered a drop pod and fled to the surface of the Installation. As soon as he landed, he ran towards the cave. This part of the Installation was cleared of flood, for some weird particular reason.

He looked back up and watched as Ambient was destroyed with the rest of the fleet.

The UNSC Fleet of Ajustic was destroyed. He was the only survivor that lasted the longest. He was deemed to die on the surface of the Installation here soon. He knew it, there was no one to reach. A distress beacon wouldn't matter since there was no cryo tubes on the surface.

Michael walked into the cave. A bronze floor appeared as he ventured deeper. Strange, has he seen this before?

The room cleared out and started to open wider, the bronze metal grew up the walls and onto the ceiling. He went forward. "I could have sworn I've been here before. This is the weirdest moment of Deja Vu I've ever had." Michael went into the other room. Maybe there was something here that could help him?

A loud metallic roar was heard.

"Son of a gun. I have been here before." Michael watched as a Precursor Robot entered the room.

Its body resembled the one on Ballast.

It raised all five of its tentacles and charged them up. Michael had nowhere to run.

They fired.

Michael screamed in pain as he fell to the floor, and incinerated.

Team Lord was dead, there was no one left. All survivors now joined the ranks of those who have been killed in action. Michael joined his brother, Caboose. All that remained were the survivors of whom were Missing in Action. That's if they survived.

Runner turned in her sleep, she opened her eyes and saw Junior.

"Good morning, sleeping beauty. How was your rest? You should be up and going again here in a few days. You're recovered, we managed to save you. Glad you're back to reassure. I'll let the others know. Until then, I advise you just sleep while you can. Enjoy." Junior walked out of Runner's room, she shared it with Junior as of now since no one else was advised to enter the patient's room except for the medical expertise.

Runner fell back to sleep, hopefully this time without the nightmare she had before. A smile appeared on her face.

~End of Chapter 7~

~Chapter 8: Bloodshot~

"You guy's ready?" Moth walked into the room, smile on his face.

They were aboard the UNSC Warlord, once again. Ash, Runner, and Junior were stationed on UNSC Ambient. Runner had previously went through a nightmare, where they were attacked by the Covenant and lost. Everyone died, she remembered Ash's the most. It was the one part that she laughed at before she could spill the beans.

"Not yet, we're just now packing our bags. Give us about 5 minutes." Zeff lied to Moth.

"Well then hurry your guys's asses up. We don't have all day. It's time to get ready. The location has been deciphered. We're on route as we speak. Get your crap and let's go." Moth didn't put up with people who thought they were being funny. "Dexter and Frank. Follow me, Zeff. You're behind them." Moth marched out of the room. They couldn't do anything but as told.

"Where are we headed?" Frank asked in a respectful manner.

"South hangar. Hasn't been used very much, but we need to get things up and running for any upcoming problems." Moth cleared his throat and looked over to make sure they were in follow up unison right behind him. "If this it the right place, we're expecting a heavy resistance. We're going to need you to do your very best. Chances are, they'll send everything they got. Hell, fellow UNSC crew ran into one of his ships. Damn Covenant tore them a new one. Sent a couple locust after their outposts and they even decided to hot drop hunters in some of the strongest fortresses on the damn planet, with just Spirit's. Bloody mess. However, they were pushed back. It was just one ship after all. They fled, unknown location. We think we have it." Moth turned over and looked at them. "We think." He pushed open the doors to the South Hangar.

"Sounds like they're going to give us hell as well. I understand we won't be the only troops with our feet firm on the ground but I'm certain that most, if not all, of us will either die or end up wounded. Lan Chorus isn't someone to mess with. He himself has taken out about eight of our own fellow teammates. That was just on his own. Now that this is his entire fleet, we might not stand a chance." Dexter said, he sounded worried. He remembered when Lan Chorus killed Alex. Damn freak jaw followed him the whole way to rescue them, just to get stabbed. He also remembered Heli, being torn to pieces. As Michael described the tragic encounter he saw at the base. Poor Heli. He was so quiet and helpful. He belonged. That's over with now, they need to forget about the dead and go on. That was only going to drag them down.

Moth looked at Frank. "Now this is what you'll be going down in. We can't risk Pelican's after Installation 07, and we don't wanna use drop pods. You need to use some sort of aerial vehicle to maneuver the land." He motioned another engineer to lower the vehicle into the bay, to prepare for loading then departure.

Frank's eyes lightened up. "That's... That's... I can't believe it, that's... I haven't seen one of those in years! I... I don't... I don't know what to say... Being able to pilot one of those is going to

be like cleaning up rust off a 23rd century car. It's been that long." Frank's heart beat raised up, around 212 BPM.

Zeff looked at Frank, "You alright? You look like you're about to have a heart attack! Bahahaha!"

Moth scorned at Zeff, "Knock it off. Frank, she's all yours."

Frank couldn't breathe, it was too much. He didn't know what to do... It... It was... His heartbeat reached 225 BPM.

"Uh Frank? Bud you alright?" Dexter looked at him in concern. Frank had sweat roll down his cheeks. His face was red.

Frank collapsed on the floor, fainted.

Moth was quick to action, a med team was in here in less than fifteen seconds. They grabbed Frank and took him to the med bay. Hopefully to recover him.

"Alright, well that's all I got for you guy's today. Grab the team and meet back here next time." Moth looked over his shoulder at Zeff. "And no funny business. I will hit you hard enough, you're going to be as bad as when we first got Zen." Moth snickered and walked away.

A confused look overcame Zeff's face. "What the hell was Zen like when they first got him?" He looked at the others for clues. They just shrugged, neither of them were there. They'd have to ask Archangel. Paladin was the only one on this ship who knew, but they weren't going to bother him. His assignments differed from there's. Not someone they would want to go up and question, without getting a dish served cold.

"You heard the man. Let's get the others. However, let's split up among the ships and tell the others. Everyone on this ship, we can just tell on our way out." Dexter took the leadership role again. "Zeff. You get Ash, Runner, Junior. They're on UNSC Ambient. Frank. You get Magnus, Joseph, and Michael. They're on UNSC FireStorm. Last but not least, I will get Jackson and Archangel. Whom are on UNSC Valkyrie II with Commander Jessica Naeir. Alright. Let's get going." Dexter headed towards the East Hangar. They had twenty minutes before jump. They had to get this done fast and neat. Dexter and the other two walked into the hangar. They each took their own individual Longsword and headed to their destinations.

~End of Chapter 8~

~Chapter 9: Aerial Assault~

"How's it going? Look we need to get back to the Longsword. Moth gave us orders. I'm here to fetch you guys. The other two are getting the others. I'll explain everything on the way." Frank said. He headed back to the hangar, with a limp every few steps.

"Alright, whatever you say." Michael followed up behind him. Along with Magnus and Joseph.

"Mind asking what the mission is? Pretty sure it might have to do with those. But I could be second guessing myself and it's something else." Joseph pointed outside.

A group of Covenant ships arrived out of SlipSpace. Weapons fired.

"Well shoot. Looks like we're ready for combat, fellows. Get in. This Longsword should get us back to Warlord and take out a few covenant on the way. Not sure if this is equipped with a nuke. Otherwise we'd take out one of those ships. Just gonna stick to the plan. Let's hold tight." Frank said, he hopped in the Pilot seat and started up the engines. Joseph took copilot. The others stood.

"Strange. This is just like Runner's dream. Except it's happening for real this time. Just different scenario." Magnus pointed out.

"Let's hope not." Frank said. He punched the thrusters. "Except I admit, the whole Ash kissing Jackson thing was hilarious. Let's hope it doesn't happen, or at least she doesn't die."

They exited FireStorm. Whom engaged the Covenant Corvette. MAC gun and cannons firing.

They headed back to UNSC Warlord.

Zeff approached the hangar of UNSC Ambient. He slowly lowered himself in and let the engineers finish the job.

He proceeded to exit the Longsword where he was greeted by Ash, Runner, and Junior. He waved at the engineers. Giving them the go ahead to continue up what they could before he launched back out.

"What is it you need, Zeff?" Junior walked up in front of the two girls. "We got your message to meet you here, that it was an emergency. We've come. Now tell us."

Zeff looked at Ash in the eyes, then over to Runners. Stress overcame his face. "It's not an emergency. I just needed you in the hangar so we can get back to UNSC Warlord. We're all grouping up for something. Not quite sure yet."

Ash looked at him in disgrace.

“Alright. I guess I’ll be able to go. Just let me on board when you’re ready to take us.” Runner said. She stood up. She looked a lot better. Healthy too. Only notice was a spring in her knee. Which messed with her walkability.

“Good. Let’s get in and headed back now. Moth and Dexter’s orders.” Zeff said. He waved the engineers to leave and headed inside the ship.

The other three followed from behind. Junior took the copilot seat. Ash sat in Navigator, while Runner laid down in the back.

“Alright, let’s go.” Junior said.

They exited the hangar and started to head towards UNSC Warlord. As they grew closer, a group of Covenant ships exited from SlipSpace. Weapons fired at us. UNSC Ambient immediately engaged. MAC Rounds and other armaments deployed. Troops were dispatched immediately.

Runner sat in the back. She saw the ships. Deemed to remember her nightmare. She passed out from thought.

Nobody noticed, they just kept going.

Frank waited for the door to open. He had a hard time getting his Longsword in here. The ship’s not fit for them. However, he had managed to get it inside. He looked up at the door. There was a switch on it. So, he decided to go over and press it.

The door opened. Jackson and Archangel sat there, waiting.

“About time you get here, we’re ready to go.” Archangel said. He grabbed his weapons and headed towards the Longsword.

“We need to get going as fast as we can. This is going to be a tight slip. We don’t wanna risk any chances.” Jackson said, he followed Archangel. Frank followed them.

“Sir, there’s a Covenant Seraph right outside. What’s going on?” Archangel asked Frank.

“Good question. I wouldn’t know. Either way, we must get to going here now. Moth expects us. We’re ready to go fight Lan Chorus.” Frank walked over and sat in the pilot seat. Jackson took Navigator. Archangel took Copilot.

They exited the ship. There was a Super Carrier, two Corvettes, and two Cruisers. Our Fleet didn't stand a chance.

"So Runner's dream was true after all. We are going to die. Not yet, but we will. I presume." Archangel said.

"Well, it was nice knowing you guy's while it lasted." Frank said. "Honor to work with you, even if you hated me because I was a pilot. I just want to let you know, thanks. Thanks for the experience. All I ever wanted." Frank said. A tear rolled down his eye as he looked back at Jackson. He whispered, "Thank you."

"Frank lookout!" Archangel yelled.

Frank immediately turned around. It was too late. A Seraph shot them in the wings. They were going down.

"Ugh." Archangel said.

"Here, Frank. Aim towards the planet below us. Hopefully we'll be able to survive the crash. Set Up a distress beacon, and be picked up." Jackson said.

Frank did as such.

They crashed downwards towards an earth-like planet.

Fear spread over Archangel's face. "Oh no, not this crap again. I don't want to die this way. I'd rather be killed up here by another Seraph!" He screamed.

The Longsword exited the battle and headed towards the surface of the planet.

~End of Chapter 9~

~Chapter 11: He's here~

Lan Chorus approached beside the Longsword.

Dexter was the only survivor seen on the field. The ship was crashed, on fire. Smothered to bits, you name it. That ship was no longer stable. Its cargo and everything fell out. Nothing was left for use.

Lan looked at his fellow Elite soldiers beside him. He motioned the others to stand still as he approached the survivor.

Dexter looked up at the Elite, his face was in utter disgust. This couldn't be. He couldn't die this way, not now. They had to kill him. He scrambled to get up, but was proven otherwise.

Dexter looked behind him. His legs were gone, crushed by the Longsword. The bleeding has stopped from the flames that scorched them closed. He was hopeless. His magnum was five feet away from him. That may be his only chance. He reached for it.

Lan smiled down at him, with that ugly disgusting face of his. The left side of his face looked like it was burned, just a little. Enough to leave such a scar. One of his eyes.

Oh shoot, Dexter couldn't tell, he was losing focus. He was bound to die anyways, he might as well do this now. His hand was just about there...

Lan Chorus stepped on his hand, Dexter screamed in pain, but that didn't stop him. He had to at least try. There was nothing else he could do. He was bound to die.

Lan Chorus was quick to Dexter before he could do anything silly. He reach for an energy dagger and cut off the arm he stood on.

Dexter howled in pain, he felt even weaker than before. As if his last breathe was moments away. Now was his chance, he slowly moved his other arm over and grabbed the weapon. Lan Chorus was in the midst of communication with the other Elites.

"Now you see brothers. This is where we will win and they will lose. If they wish to scout us out and follow us, it will be their grave. We will not run in retreat, we will face them. Unlike those cowards who fled our battle. Taking out our Supercarrier. Fear not, we will have our victory." Lan Chorus said, his voice was of pure hatred towards the UNSC, specifically UNSC Warlord as it seems. Lan Chorus heard the gun click. He looked down immediately at Dexter.

"You will pay for this." Was all he said.

"Yeah, well it's worth it. As long as you're dead." Dexter pulled the trigger. He felt relaxed when he did it. A little too relaxed. He opened his eyes and see where he went wrong. He pulled the trigger too late. The relaxation, or I don't even think it was relaxation to begin with, wasn't what he thought. He lost his energy. His arm dropped and he didn't even know it. He couldn't hold it up. When he pulled the trigger he had missed Lan Chorus and instead, shot one of the other Elites.

Tears rolled down his eyes. Dexter sniffled, and his whimper was silent. He had failed. He was so close, and he failed. He screwed it up, he let down his guard. He just couldn't take it anymore. "I. I can't..." Was all he could mumble out of him. His voice was weak and he didn't have any energy left in him.

“As I promised, you will pay. Your body will lay here for the Brutes, but you yourself. Will not be here when it happens.” Lan Chorus was angrier than ever. It was absolutely livid.

Lan Chorus grabbed his energy sword and withdrew it, he pulled Dexter up as he slammed his sword down. Cutting a deep penetration all the way through his body.

Dexter’s face had a shocked look on it, but that’s all that was left for it. He was dead, he couldn’t move his muscles anymore.

The anger ventilated through Lan Chorus, he ripped the energy sword out of his side. Laying the body in a bunch of torn up pieces.

“We are done here. We must move on before the Brutes catch up to us.” Lan Chorus said, and at that exact moment, a Covenant Spirit flew over them, and lifted them up inside through the gravity lift on the back side, on the bottom.

It headed back to the Cruiser that awaited them, floating in space.

Jackson fought to open his eyes, he heard something. But maybe he was sleeping, he couldn’t tell. Maybe it was a dream. Damn, it was hot out here though.

Jackson managed to keep them open. He saw something in the distance. There was a crashed Longsword, must have been the one he was on.

Of course, why wouldn’t it be?

There was a group of people nearby it, all with their heads on the ground. “What in the Sam Hell are those guys doing? I’m over here. Damn it Frank. Always managing to do something to upset me.” He looked through his binoculars at them, just to make sure.

He was wrong. It was a group of Brutes, they feasted upon something. Someone.

Jackson’s heart beat rose. He saw the remains of the body. “Oh my god...”

A howl broke out behind him.

~End of Chapter 11~

~Chapter 12: Impact~

The Longsword was coming in heavy, the heat shield was down and it started to smolder. Pieces flew off, engines were cut out. They were going to crash. Not crash land, crash. Jackson

was at the controls with Dexter. Archangel tried his best to do what he could in the back. He wasn't of much use.

Jackson and Dexter both tried their best. They knew they wouldn't land, but maybe if they could angle it right and be able to slide on the ground. It would at least give them a chance to survive.

"Jackson, the back end of the Longsword has torn off. I'm not sure if that makes a difference, but I don't think flight controls are much use anymore. We're going to have to wish for the best." Archangel said.

"Understood. Dexter, hold on tight. We don't want to lose you. You too, Archangel." Jackson said. He turned around.

Archangel wasn't there, one of the seats flew and knocked him out of the hole in the Longsword.

"Well crap. We lost Archangel. Dexter, let's try our best." Jackson stated.

"Will do sir, I suggest we hold on to something other than the seats. Maybe up against the wall behind us? That way impact doesn't kill us, if we hit nose first?" Dexter suggested.

"Good idea." They did as suggested and braced for impact.

Archangel's fall wasn't too high, just about a mile off from the surface. He saw what appeared to be infantry on the ground. Sure to be hostile, it was unknown. He activated his thrusters and aimed it at the ground, to lessen his fall damage, by slowing himself down in speed.

His impact was hard on him, but it could have been worse. His armor was locked up, immobile. He looked around before he passed out, a group of Elites walked in front of him. No more than three of them.

They were a distance away, but they seem to have spotted them. They grew closer to the spartan.

"Demon." The leader said. He withdrew his energy sword.

"No Verite, we must leave now. The Brutes will feast upon him, let's not waste our time with this foolish one." The Elite on the left said, Beam Rifle in one hand. Plasma Rifle strapped to his leg.

"Yes, but if I see this one again. I will destroy him. Fools should never have come here." Verite put his Energy Sword away. Anger was shown on his face, but he walked away. There was some Banshees they were headed towards, four of them in total. It seems one of them was killed or lost.

Archangel watched the Banshees take off, he heard an explosion afterwards. The Longsword must have crashed.

“Well, this is it for me.” Archangel passed out.

~End of Chapter 12~

~Chapter 13: Squeaky Chew Toys~

Ash, Zeff, Runner, and Junior landed down their longsword. Frank, Magnus, Joseph, and Michael landed nearby. Ash reared the Longsword so they were back to back.

“Alright, we’re going to open the hatch door. Joseph, send someone down your Longsword to do an all clear, we’ll do the same. Alright? Good.” Ash said over the ship communications.

“Roger that Ash, I’m sending down Magnus. On you.” Joseph replied back.

“Alrighty, Runner is at the door. Opening the hatch now.” Ash said.

Runner, rifle in hand, watched for anything suspicious as the hatch opened. She saw Magnus doing the same. Wherever they looked, their weapon was there.

Runner saw something move over on the right. Magnus was already there. Looking. Runner made her way to the side as well, one eye watching her back just in case.

“You guys see anything out there? We have friendly troops landing. Pelicans, Longswords, and Falcons. One of them is on the ships left side.” Ash said over the headset.

“Yes, we’re all good. Didn’t see anything unusual.” Runner lowered her Carbine and took turned off the headset. “Glad that’s all settled.” Runner turned around to head up the ramp.

Something jumped on her and slammed her to the ground, it was some sort of bird like creature. It had a plasma pistol, aimed at her face. “God damn it!” Runner yelled, she tried to push the bird off. It fought back, and overcharged the plasma pistol.

A single shot was heard.

The bird creature fell on top of Runner, who shoved it off her. She looked up to see who it was. Magnus just nodded his head and returned up inside his ship with his team.

“What was that?” Runner said to herself. It looked like a jackal, but it wasn’t. She returned up the ship as well.

"Runner, we clear?" Ash asked.

"Yes, there was a jackal of some sort but it's gone now. Didn't see anything else." Runner said.

"Hm." Was all Ash said.

She motioned for Zeff and Junior to stock up and resupply for just in case measures. She asked Joseph and the others on his Longsword to do so as well.

"Wait a second you guys." Ash said after a long moment of readying up. "Where's Archangel, Dexter, and Jackson? They haven't landed with us, for certain. I remember their Longsword being on fire. Do you think they might have made it?" Ash was worried a bit.

"One second Ash, I'll get on it for you." Frank said. They boarded from the other ship, partying up.

"Alright, give me just a moment. I should be able to ping their Longsword, distress beacon or not. I'm just looking for one out of commission but still with power." Frank said, he pulled up their Longsword.

It was listed as 'Destroyed.'

"What... I can't believe it..." Frank said. "I'm sorry you guys. I tried."

"Well, there's still hope. Let's do a search and rescue party." Ash suggested. She was looking for a vote of hands in agreement.

"Or at least a search party." Junior said. His voice dark and cold.

"Not now, Junior." Ash said, then turned over, "Frank, you think you can get those troopers to let us borrow one of their pelicans?"

"Only if they can come with." Frank stated. "This is a new place, new area. They're vulnerable here. They'll want to be safe. Seeing as your Spartans and ODSs, they'll think they're safe." Frank looked at Junior. "This is the only option we have them."

"Or, we shoot them and take the bloody Pelican. I don't know about you, but I don't want extra luggage. I don't have enough body bags for all of them, nor do I have the supplies." Junior said, in retaliation.

"Junior stop. We're doing this. There'll be no more than 5, I'm sure of it. Now let's go." Ash said.

Junior was irritated but did as he was told.

“Frank, we’re gonna need someone in a Falcon. You’ll have to drive it, we’ll use the Pelican and the Cargo or Carrier. Your pick of the name, but we’re taking both vehicles.” Ash said. They walked over to the landing area.

“You sir, we’re taking your Pelican. Any objections?” Zeff said to the pilot.

“No, but what are you using it for? And I’m going to have to come with, you’ll need a pilot.” She said. “That’s if I’m comfortable with the situation.”

“Search and rescue party, we lost a Longsword, there may be survivors.” Zeff responded, as nicely as he could.

“Well then. I guess there’s nothing else to do here, since we’re abandoned to die. Why don’t we do such? Not going to make much of a difference anyways.” The girl giggled. Her hair was bright blonde, with a chignon style.

“Well then that’s that. Anybody else with you?” Michael asked.

The pilot looked over at him, “No, I’m alone on this Pelican. Now that you all are here, that’s changed.” She waved them on board, “After you guys.” Ash, Joseph, Zeff, Michael, and Junior boarded the Pelican.

“We’re all set, mam. We have a Falcon flying with us, for support. These marines, they aren’t with us. But they want to come to.” Ash said.

“Call me Caelin.” The pilot said.

“Caelin, we’re good to go.” Ash said, she waved at Frank to follow. Magnus and Runner were on the mounted turrets.

“Alright, let’s do this. Any idea where they could be?” Caelin asked.

“We think they’re 20 kilometers northeast of here. Let’s check their first. That’s where we go the latest ping.” Ash said.

“Alrighty, will do mam.” Caelin punched the thrusters. Frank kept up right behind them.

~End of Chapter 13~

~Chapter 14: Chieftain~

"We're not far from the crash site, it seems we have about seven kilometers." Caelin said, she was focused on both the distance and the sky. The desert seemed so vast and felt like it would never end. It was incredibly beautiful, yet it felt so empty at the same time.

Caelin heard Ash yell, "Defensive procedures, use whatever you can!" then she started to hear what was going on on the outside of the Pelican. The Falcon's nose gun was being heard, with its loud three shots. The machine gun turrets had opened fire.

She looked to her side. Three phantoms and seven banshees were on to them. All full of big hairy monkeys. "You have gotta be kidding me right now." Caelin activated the Pelican's weapons. Two heavy machine gun turrets swung down in the back, and a missile pod launcher lowered down in between them. The nose gun opened out of its canopy and mounted itself on the nose, exposed. "Ash, get up here and take point."

"Will do." Ash walked over and took the nose gun. While Zeff and Michael took the machine gun turrets, and Joseph was on the missile pod.

"Suppressive fire, suppressive fire!" Joseph yelled at the marines and Junior. Who were all stuck with DMR's.

Junior watched Frank, Magnus, and Runner got caught behind. Engaged with six banshees. More of them en route. They appeared to be stripped of their fuel rod cannons. However, their twin cannons were still effective.

"Ash, your friends are falling behind. If we do not help them, they will die. The falcons chances of winning are 80%, but do you want to take those chances?" Caelin asked her, she kept the pelican focused on the objective.

Ash was in despair over what Caelin just said. "Caelin..." Ash knew she was going to have to add a few extra minutes to the clock. She didn't want to take any chances.

"Turn around and lets help them out." Ash said.

Caelin turned the Pelican around. Ash engaged the phantoms with the forward nose turret. She destroyed two of the phantoms almost instantly. Caelin smiled at her.

The brutes weren't putting up with any of this. Choppers and Prowlers were headed towards them on the ground. Cannons blazed and fired at the pelican, while the pelican took out the banshee's.

"Let's go Frank, we need to get out of here. Anymore time and everything's lost." Ash said.

“Got it.” Frank pushed on the thrusters and flew above the pelican, which moved back towards the route of the objective.

Michael and Zeff engaged the ground forces. Which put up a really good fight on this desert terrain.

One of the choppers seemed to be going off route towards the pelican. Most likely retreating. “Should we engage it Zeff?” Michael asked.

“No, it appears to be retreating. Leave it for now. It’ll tell its friends to fear us.” Zeff said, completely unaware of how the Brute’s worked.

“Alrighty.” Michael said. He engaged a couple banshee’s and more prowler’s. Even some ghosts that showed up.

“Sir, we have a problem.” Junior told Ash.

“What is it?” Ash asked him.

“Well you see, there’s a lich right behind us, and well you see. Our machine guns aren’t capable of breaching the shields on their own. Plus, we have no idea what these Brutes plan on doing.” Junior said.

“Understood.” Ash said. “Joseph, come up here.”

Joseph walked through the entryway, “Yes mam?”

“We need you on the cannon.” Ash said.

“Yes mam.” Joseph said. He reached over and climbed up the ladder to the controls. He took the controls and activated the cannon. “Alright Ash, I’m ready.”

“Good, I need you to help Zeff and Michael with that Lich. They need all the firepower they can get.” Ash said. Banshees and Phantoms swarmed at them from the front.

Joseph turned the cannon around and fired at the Lich. A Scorpion-like shell fired at the Lich, and was absorbed in the shields. He fired a few more. All which did the same thing. “Ash, I’m going to need some assistance.” he asked. Firing another shell, which did the same thing.

“I’m sorry, I can’t at the moment. We’re dead if I have to stop what I’m doing.” Ash said. Everything got closer and closer. She fired up the laser cannon and wiped out as much Banshees she could in a single charge.

Joseph fired at the Lich again. The shields went down. "Michael and Zeff. We're good to go. Destroy this thing."

"You got it!" Zeff said. They both engaged the infantry, some of them ran for the plasma turrets, but were killed before hand.

"Watch out you guys, this area seems to have a few desert mountains." Caelin said. She watched where she flew. Wasn't too bad of an area, not many mountains. It was just better to be safe than sorry.

"Caelin, this is a Brute stronghold. We're taking fire from Spikers and Maulers from down below." One of the marines said.

Junior looked at the soldier. Where have I seen this man before? His face looked familiar...

"Watch out!" Caelin yelled.

The Brute Chopper returned on the mountain. Headed straight towards the Pelican. Michael engaged the Chopper, but it kept coming.

At last, the Chopper applied its boost and flew straight at Michael's cannon on the side of the Pelican.

"Oh you have got to be kidding me." Michael disengaged the turret. Which was too late on his part.

The Chopper slammed right into the turret, and destroyed it to pieces. The collision was enough to throw Michael out of the bay of the Pelican.

Luckily he grabbed ahold of the center piece between the two thrusters on the tail.

"Michael, whatever you do. Do not let go." Junior said. "I'm going to try my best to see if there's anything we can do to get you, and fast before that Lich takes you down." Junior looked into the bay to see what he could find.

Zeff destroyed the Chopper that almost killed Michael. "Don't worry Michael, I got your back on this." Zeff fired as fast as he could and as much as he could at the Lich before he noticed something.

It was the power core.

Zeff engaged the power core, almost instantly destroying it before Joseph saw it and took the credit for the destruction of the Lich.

The Lich swirled around in circles, just barely missing the Pelican. "Michael we're coming to get you, stay put!" Joseph said. He left the cannon's seat and headed on the roof of the Pelican.

It was too late. Two Brutes were already up there after him.

"Michael! Don't let go!" Junior yelled. He fired his magnum at one of the Brutes who were equipped with a Beam Rifle. Headshot, just enough to kill him.

"Don't you even dare." Joseph said. He slammed into one of the Brutes, throwing him off to his death. Joseph pulled up his DMR and fired everything he had into the Brute.

He reached his hand down and pulled Michael up. "Thanks, you saved me. I really thought I was going to die so quickly and suddenly like everyone else has before me. Thank you, I appreciate it." Michael said. "For an ODST, you did pretty good. I owe you one."

Michael and Joseph headed back to the inside of the Pelican.

Ash spoke to them, "Hey, get down here. We're literally three kilometers away from the destination."

"Roger that, we're coming." Joseph said, he looked at Michael. "Why don't we get you down there and have Junior look at you. What do you say?"

"Sounds good to me." Michael headed down first.

"That's good. Didn't wanna lose someone valuable on this team." Joseph said, he headed down the ladder, but something stopped him.

He was moving away from the ladder now, he saw Michael's head pop up with his Sniper Rifle in hand. He fired it right above Joseph. Who realized what was going on now. He completely disregarded his surroundings. They were still engaged with Brute forces.

Joseph watched the Pelican fly away as the dead Brute that grabbed him weighed him down to his death.

"Sometimes we save each other, sometimes we don't." Joseph hit the ground. He didn't die, but he did have a Brute on top of him. He watched as Brutes all surrounded him, and their Chieftain approached him. He roared incredibly loud and swung his hammer.

~End of Chapter 14~

~Chapter 15: Touchdown~

Caelin and Frank approached the landing zone, where a crashed Longsword laid broken in the sand. Black smoke trailed off from behind and into the sky. Ash noticed blood stain in the sand, as well as a trooper who laid over on a dune. Passed out.

Caelin landed the Pelican first. The thrusters stirred the sand up and paved out a nice area to land on.

Frank followed up and landed the Falcon a few hundred feet away from the Pelican. However, he stayed inside the Falcon. As well as Magnus and Runner stayed on their turrets.

Ash, Junior, and Michael exited the Pelican and headed over to the soldier, he didn't appear wounded but he was unconscious. Ash and Junior picked him up and carried him back to the Pelican. Michael took point, just in case of any threats that hid in the crashed Longsword.

Ash and Junior set Jackson in one of the Pelican's seats. Junior took over and began to do his best. Hopefully Jackson would recover and wake up. "He has a pulse, but I don't know for how long." Junior said as he cleaned up an infectious wound on his left cheek. Appeared to be a cut from a Brute spiker.

Ash sat there and watched as Junior cleaned him, everyone else was on the lookout for enemy movement. So-far, there was none.

"Any idea where the others are?" Junior asked Ash without looking over as he continued to clean up Jackson's wounds.

"No, but one of them must've been killed or even ate by the Brutes. With all that blood out there, I'm guessing they were ate. The third one? No clue, I'm as clueless as you are. Maybe Jackson will know when he wakes up." Ash responded to Junior, with a little worrisome in her voice. She cared for these guys as much as they all did. They were like family to her, since she had none left. They were all killed by insurrectionists. Her desire to find those Innies and kill them, was unbelievable. She couldn't do it yet, not now when her friend's were missing and they were trying to find the murderer who lead them through all of this. Ash heard a cough, she looked over.

Jackson was awake, he had troubles with having them keep open. Dehydration nonetheless. She watched as Junior gave him some water, not too much. He was going to ease him on little by little.

Jackson breathed with relief, "Thanks Junior, I thought I was done for." Jackson coughed after that, must have been because of the water.

"No problem sir, we came to find you after all. UNSC Warlord and the others are out of orbit. However we're expecting them to hopefully be back in three to four days." Junior responded as he put his supplies away.

"They took Archangel." Jackson said.

"Who did?" Ash jumped quickly with her question, concerned. That also means Dexter was the one who was killed, and if they didn't take him. Then that must have meant he was ate.

"The Brutes. An Elite was going to kill him, but they decided against it and used him as bait for the Brutes. All I know is they called the one Verite. He's next in command with Lan Chorus, except he wasn't here. Only Verite was, but he was soon to flee. His Banshees were nearly two hundred meters away." Jackson said, he paused to take a deep breath.

"So if the Brute's took Archangel, would that have meant they could have taken Joseph as well?" Ash questioned. "We need to find them."

"I watched the Brutes eat Dexter. It was a horrible sight, and I watched them take Archangel. If what you think is true about Joseph, then that can only mean one thing. They are baiting us into coming to rescue them. To take us all in." Jackson stated, this was only just his theory. He didn't really know. He was too exhausted to remember.

"If that's true, we have to save them. We need them. We have nothing else to do, we're stranded. We all might die here, even the troopers at the LZ camp. We're short on food. Our time isn't long, it's already been almost two days since we've been here." Ash said.

"Well we can go get them, but just be careful. They do have Vampire's. Probably not very many overall, but they brought four of them here when the Chieftain arrived. I suppose this Chieftain is the Brute tribe leader of all the Brutes in the area. We have to be careful if we want to do this. Now tell me, what do we have that we can use against the Brutes back at the camp?" Jackson asked, thinking about a plan.

"We have everything we would need. Combat wise, that is." Ash told him.

"Is there a Mammoth and heavy vehicles we could use?" Jackson started to put his plan together.

"Yes, but only one. There are a few Scorpions. No more than five in total though." Ash said.

The Falcon's turrets shot for about five seconds outside before they went silent again. They listened as two banshee's rammed into the ground and exploded.

“As I was saying before we were interrupted, UNSC Warlord was forced to leave so they sent down as much as they could before they left. Which was almost nothing. Surviving fighters fled here. Surprisingly, none were chased by Lan Chorus’s troops. Those who didn’t flee, died.” Ash said.

“Well in that case, we got a small military. Enough to take back our troops. We’ll need all the air support we can get, but that Mammoth will be our one way ticket to giving the final push. The MAC gun and the rocket turrets will support us against any aerial vehicle as well as take out any Vampires that come after our Falcon or any other air support we need.” Jackson said, his plan sounded pretty good to everyone.

“I can probably talk a few of the others into helping out.” Caelin said.

“And who are you?” Jackson said, not knowing about the new pilot that joined their team.

“My name is Caelin, and this is my Pelican you are sitting in.” Caelin said, a smile on her face.

“Well Caelin, hopefully you can do your best. We’ll need you.” Jackson said. He stood up and waved at Frank to get his Falcon back and up into the air.

“Good, I sure hope we can as well.” Caelin said. “Anything you need at the moment?”

“Yes, take us back to the camp.” Jackson said. He stood up and walked towards the back of the door and stopped at the edge.

“Alrighty sir. Will do.” Caelin said, she headed up and started the thrusters.

“Jackson, I like what you’re doing but I don’t know how this is going to workout for us. We’re going to lose some of our friends.” Ash told him, she stood beside him on the edge. Looking at him through her visor.

“Don’t worry, I have it all planned out.” Jackson said. He pulled down the machine gun turret and destroyed a Ghost that was headed their way, probably a scout.

“Sure, whatever you say.” Ash said, then walked into the cockpit.

Caelin had the Pelican up in the air, she punched the thrusters.

Frank followed up.

~End of Chapter 15~

~Chapter 16: Give me some of it~

Ash was at the controls while Caelin rested with a few of the others. Frank's Falcon flew close by, although gun chatter was heard every once in awhile. Other than a few Banshees, nothing much was seen at night on their return. It gave off an ominous feeling to it. Which is why they rested in shifts.

Junior managed to patch up Jackson, despite critical problems and the loss of his helmet; he was back to normal on his feet. However, at this particular time, he rested. They didn't know what would come next, but they needed to be ready.

Ash called back to those who were awake. Which was Caboose and Zen. The Pelican would arrive to land in about 5 minutes, and they were in charge of waking up the crew by then. Caboose started at his crew, he woke everyone up slowly but woke Jackson and Junior last. Zen had his marines up and ready to go pronto.

Caboose had troubles waking Junior, it got to the point he had to pick the ODST up and set him on his feet, in order to wake him up. His eyes opened, and his legs kicked in fear of what happened before he realized he was woke up. Caboose left it to Junior to wake up Jackson, then proceeded to let Ash know they were ready.

Frank flew his Falcon in first, the Mammoth sat out in the open. It was unbelievable nobody was here already. It was just this giant boulder, and the vast desert. The Mammoth was ten minutes away from the camp.

The real question was, how did this get here?

The Falcon touched the ground, the two were departed; in charge of securing the Mammoth. Eliminating any Brutes or Covenant that were inside, if any. After the Mammoth was secured, they were to restore power. If there was no power, this was all for nothing.

They approached the entrance on the left side of the Mammoth. Runner went first, she kicked the door open. Magnus was right behind her, he shined his flashlight in the room, ready to motion for it to be clear. Runner moved up and scanned the stairs with the light on the nose of her gun. Magnus did the same on the other side. It was clear. They moved up to the second floor, which overlooked the first floor. Nothing seemed to be out of the normal. Magnus motioned for Runner to stack up on the door that led to the top of the Mammoth. He motioned, and she kicked the door open. Magnus was on the spot. Clear on the walkway.

They split up. Runner took the right, and Magnus swung around the left side that would take him to the front overlook and to the opposing walkway. It was clear there. He met up with Runner on the top, a dead Brute and a few dead Marines laid on the top. Blood stained on the floor. He motioned to Runner to grab the Marines and throw them over the side, Magnus grabbed the Brute and threw it over the walkway. Where everyone else awaited them, awaiting their signal.

Magnus waved to let them know it was clear and motioned to Runner to run down and switch on the power.

“Glad we can actually use something with force. Something big and armored, and with firepower.” Frank said as he walked in through the side-door Runner kicked open.

“Yeah well, this will do for now. We have aerial support, but I don’t know how long that’s going to last us if we can’t take out any incoming Vampires.” Michael said. He directed Junior and Zeff as they carried in ammunition crates. Stacked up with DMR’s, Battle Rifles, Rocket Launchers, Sniper Rifles, Magnums, Assault Rifles, Sticky Detonators, and anything with power they could get their hands on.

Jackson and Ash loaded a Scorpion, Gauss Warthog, and a Rocket Warthog through the back hatch that was lowered down for the vehicles. After that, they brought in two Gungooses and parked them in between the Warthog’s. Barely leaving any room.

“Alright, I think we should be good.” Ash said, she motioned for Caelin and the marines to come aboard. They left the Pelican behind, due to damaged beyond repairs at this time; so Caelin offered to come with and help support them. The marines were under her command, so they were forced to come as well. Caelin did have a higher rank than almost everyone on board the Mammoth, except Jackson, Magnus, Ash, and Frank.

Caelin made arrangements with a bunch of the Longswords, Shortswords, and Broadswords for extra firepower support when they needed it. However, when they ran dry, they ran dry. UNSC Warlord wasn’t here to help them with a resupply like they normally would.

Jackson directed Frank to drive the Mammoth; that way he was below deck and out of the way. Zeff was in Charge of the MAC Gun; and Runner and Magnus took the Rocket turrets that were placed on both side of the Mammoth.

Ash motioned for the supportive Pelican’s that drove out to where the wreckage was, and the Mammoth laid in one piece surprisingly, to return back the camp as for they were no longer needed.

The engines started up and they were ready to move out on their journey. They had no idea where they were headed, but assuming from the direction Jackson saw them come. This was going to be an 18 hour trip, in the Mammoth. An evac Pelican would be waiting for them after Joseph and Archangel had been rescued or they needed a retreat. They were hoping a retreat wouldn’t be something they needed.

“Jackson. Come here.” Zeff broke the silence with his voice.

"Yes, what is it Zeff?" Jackson asked, he looked over from the screen that laid the directional waypoint to where they thought was their objective.

"This MAC Cannon doesn't work without the target designator. Everything else is automatic for the weapon." Zeff said. He showed Jackson what he was going on about with what showed on his screen. He was right, all it showed was the gun's status and a picture of the target designator.

"Well it seems you are right there Zeff. We're going to need a target designator." Jackson turned his attention away from him and onto Caelin. "Caelin, is there a target designator onboard?"

"Uh." Caelin let Zen take over the controls. "Not that I know of, we might have one back at the base that we can drop pod in with a Longsword. Do we need it right now?" Caelin questioned, about to head back to the controls.

"Yes, seeing as how if we get it now; it'll help us out later. Especially since we're still close to the camp." Jackson motioned for Zeff to head up to the top walkway. That was he wasn't pointless.

"Alright, I'll contact someone and see what we can do. However, don't expect one to drop in for at least 2 minutes." Caelin walked down the stairs to the communications and got on with one of her friends.

"Zeff, take this." Ash shoved a Spartan Laser into Zeff's hands. "If we don't have an AA Gun for you to shoot, you'll be the AA Gun that shoots. Is that clear?" She looked at him, eyes expecting a smart response.

"Yes mam, I can shoot all day." Zeff said, he bit back on his remark. What he really wanted to say was 'Yes mam, I can shoot all day; as long as I think of the enemy as you.' Luckily he didn't, otherwise he'd find his spike grenade stuck to his face.

Ash walked back inside the mammoth.

"Yo Magnus, wanna help out over here bud?" Runner yelled as loud as she could. Magnus was on the clear other side, knowing she could use her helmet to contact him, she'd rather yell.

Magnus just let out a grumble, "Hmm?" Before he noticed what she was talking about. Six banshees and a vampire were headed their way. Banshees in front. He heard Runner fire before the lock on, he did the same.

Plasma rounds hit the front of the ship. They didn't do much, but soon enough it would burn its way through. The banshees were close enough now, they surrounded the Mammoth from all sides. The Vampire stayed in the distance as the Mammoth drove its way towards it.

“Ah, god damn. A MAC Gun would be nice right now!” Zeff yelled, he lasered one of the Banshees that dodged six of the rocket turrets missiles.

He looked over at Magnus, and thought of an amazing idea. “Hey Magnus.”

Magnus didn’t look over, instead he replied “What do you need now? I’m sort of busy as you can see. I’d appreciate it if you would help instead of chatter.”

“Yes I know, that’s what I’m trying to do. There’s five of these things, but we’re going to have trouble taking them out. I want to know if you can use your stealth drone to camouflage me while I jetpack and hijack one of these banshees.” Zeff lasered another Banshee. “Then we can focus on that Vampire.”

Magnus said nothing, instead he rose his hand up and summoned his drone and guided it to Zeff. Zeff had ten seconds before the drone was forced to return for a recharge. Enough time for him to jack a Banshee.

Zeff’s jetpack fuel lasted him quite a bit, and just long enough to grab a hold of a Banshee. The drone left his side, and the Banshee was spinning out of control, trying to knock him off the wing, but he held on. He saw the Vampire shoot its needlers, they missed his Banshee and all stacked up on another.

Magnus watched as that Banshee crashed to the ground, impaled in needles, and then exploded from the supercombine. Leaving nothing but a black marking of the blast area of the supercombine.

Zeff had control of the Banshee, he threw a Brute out, then engaged the other Banshee. He noticed the Banshees fuel rod cannon was removed. With two Banshees remaining, He shot the wings down on one, leaving it exposed to Runner’s rocket turret. He heard her exclaim from the fire in the explosion. Last, but not least he rammed his Banshee into the last one. It ripped the wings off of the Brutes Banshee, and Zeff lost a wing.

His last target was the Vampire. Which was not going to happen. Six large needles came flying at Zeff. He noticed his vehicle was stationary in the air.

“Zeff, get out. You’re in a stasis field!” Frank yelled out, he knew what that was. It’s not something to mess with, he learned that in training and on the field.

Zeff ejected out of the Banshee, right before the needles impaled. He watched as the stasis caused the explosion to stay in place, then drop the Banshee remains like it was nothing.

As he used the jet pack to soften his return on the Mammoth, he heard the Vampire fire full blast. Right after that, a large roar was heard by all of them. Caelin was on top of the vehicle as well.

A drop pod crushed through the Vampire, causing it to almost instantly crash to the ground with it.

Caelin and the others looked up at where it came from. Above was a Longsword, presumably the one Caelin called for a target designator drop. It flew away, then circled around, doing loops. She smiled, the pilot was being a show off.

“Oh my god.” Junior said, everyone on board turned his attention to him. “Look.” He pointed at the Longsword. It all made sense now.

Caelin’s smile faded. There, in the Longsword, was about thirty needles from the Vampire. The Longsword was not being piloted, as the pilots were dead.

They all watched as the Longsword trailed off and finally crash into the ground. The explosion was enormous, the needles were responsible for that no doubt.

“Alright, let’s just move on and get Archangel and Joseph.” Jackson said, he motioned everyone to take back their places. “Caelin, take us to the drop pod. We’re going to need that target designator. Now.” She nodded his head at him, and headed down to the controls and took it over from Zen.

The Mammoth moved forward. Jackson and Zeff stood at the overwatch of the vehicle. They weren’t that far away from the drop pod, a minute drive and no more.

Zeff holstered the Spartan Laser back up on one of the racks outside, just in case he needed it again. He then resumed to jump off the side of the Mammoth, and down to the wreckage to grab the target designator. It was still intact. He looked unevenly at the two dead Brutes that laid there. Scorched from the fire. Zeff looked over as he heard a call from his name.

As his eyes looked up. He already knew what was going on. He saw it in the distance on the sand. Behind a large sand dune, two Scarabs and three Vampires emerged.

They were not ready for this fight yet, Zeff still had to connect the target designator to the MAC Gun. He jetpacked onto the Mammoth again, and ran down and inside to the MAC Gun screen.

“Guys, the Scarabs are onto us now. What are we going to do? All we have is a Scorpion and a few hogs inside, plus the rocket turrets. We’ll never hold out. The MAC Gun won’t be ready for at least another five minutes.” Caelin said, as she looked for ways around or to avoid them. There was none.

"We'll make sure we buy the time." Jackson said, he grabbed Ash and headed towards the walkway to find something for support. Right before they reached the opening, a bright purple beam spliced through Caboose's helmet.

"Damn it! There goes my plan! Ash, Frank, and Zen, follow me. I'm getting sick of this crap." Jackson walked down the stairs and opened the back gate of the Mammoth.

Junior walked over to Caboose's body. He grabbed his dog tags, then sat on his knees and prayed for him. The marines walked over and grabbed his body and headed up the stairs to the walkway. As Junior said the prayers while he followed them, they threw Caboose over the back end of the Mammoth.

Junior opened his eyes, they were bloodshot. He grabbed his knife and slit the throat of one marine, then grabbed his silenced magnum and shot the other two in the face.

With the same respect they gave Caboose. He grabbed their tags, then kicked them over board. He looked over his shoulder, nobody saw this but him. He tucked the tags in with the others, then proceeded back inside the Mammoth.

Jackson had the Scorpion out while Ash took Zen and Frank in the Gauss Warthog.

The Scarabs were in range.

This was going to be a long cold night.

~End of Chapter 16~

~Chapter 17: Railgun~

Ash had the pedal pushed all the way down to the floorboard. The Scarabs engaged her first, the giant greenish blue plasma beams soared her way. Zen ws on the Gauss turret, while Frank sat in the passenger seat with a Spartan Laser. Zen's orders was to engage the Vampires, and attempt to try to take them down. If they could take down the Vampires, air support would be able to clear their way. That is, if the MAC Gun wasn't online by then. While Zen did that, Frank would shoot the Scarab's in their joints. In attempt to slow it down.

"Jackson, these Vampires will be an easy fix as long as you can give us some cover support. I assume they'll have infantry vehicles and light vehicles in route here soon. If these Scarabs get in range of the Mammoth. We lose, you know that right?" Ash took a risky move and pushed the Warthog underneath one of the Scarabs. The legs swung around like crazy, one of them almost pierced through the vehicle. That would not have been good for them.

"Yes I can, I'll be there in a sec." Jackson was only five hundred feet away right now, going as fast as he could. "You know, I'd take any tank we had back at war with the Covenant we had when we were on Earth, but these new upgrades for more armor and less speed." Jackson sighed, Ash could hear it in her ear. "I just don't think it equals out, especially against a Scarab. I'm almost a sitting duck, plus the engine on this thing is loud." Jackson targeted a Prowler, as soon as he had the measurements setup. He fired, the canister smacked the seat the Brute driver was in, launching the Prowler to oblivion.

"Yes I know. Just, deal with it for now. As soon as Warlord and the others get back, you can ditch that thing. It's all that we have." Ash said. Jackson noticed the tone in her voice, it's as if she had given up hope. He couldn't let her believe that, he needed to prove there still was. They needed to get Archangel and Joseph, not now was the time to give up.

Jackson looked up at one of the Vampires, Zen managed to destroy one but the other two stood above them and just sort of hovered there. Small plasma cannons opened fire. Jackson knew this was crazy, and risky at the same time, he needed to try it.

The Scorpion rolled up on the side of a sand dune, front of it up in the air. Jackson aimed the cannon at the Vampire closest, Zen was engaged with it. If he could support him and get this done faster, air support could be en route while Zen destroyed the last Vampire.

Jackson aimed at the Vampire, and fired.

The canister missed the first wing, but hit the bottom of the second. The Vampire spun out of control, it didn't destroy the Vampire but it did knock out the wing. Which is what it needed to stay up and fly.

Zen fired the Gauss cannon a few more times into the the Vampire, this time he hit the pilot canopy. The rounds pierced through it, and soon after that the Vampire caught fire; blue flames emerged from the aircraft. While ever so slowly, the Vampire crashed into the back of one of the Scarabs, the Vampire burst into even more flames. The Scarabs back end fell off, and the Scarab fell forward off its feet. However, it was quick to get back up.

The AA turret on the Scarab was disabled, but the other Scarab was still intact so that didn't make a difference as much. A Brute captain and Brute infantry came up top of the Scarab. The Captain with a fuel rod gun, and the infantry with spikers and plasma rifles.

Jackson looked back and noticed Ash and the others were being followed by two Choppers and a Prowler. The Prowler was stacked full of Brutes, two on the sides with spikers. Jackson pushed forward as fast as he could go, and fired canisters. Hoping to get lucky and hit the Brutes.

Magnus and Runner sat silently on the rocket turrets. If they got involved now, they would be swarmed with Brutes. Zeff finally got the MAC Gun and target designator online, although using it right now would be dangerous with the Scarabs.

“Caelin, get us a carpet bomb. I’ll take out the Vampire.” Zeff said. He pointed the target designator straight at the Vampire.

“We already have one on the way, they’re just waiting on a confirm. Are you sure this will work? We need to warn Ash and Jackson. So they’re out of the way.” Caelin looked over at him, grimly.

“I’ll let them know, you contact the Shortsword.” Zeff said, he walked up to the top walkway. He then remembered the beam rifle. Over on the side was a jackal, bright purple weapon in his hand and a bright purple glow on his face. He seemed distracted by the fight going on at the Scarabs.

Zeff grabbed a sniper rifle in his hand, setup the bipod on the side of the Mammoth. As soon as the jackal was in his sights he fired.

The sniper sent off a loud echo. It was now or never. He raised the target designator at the Vampire, and charged the lockon.

The enemy Scarab, the fully functional one, saw the Mammoth. It was basically on a full sprint towards the Mammoth.

Ash heard a loud roar in the distance, “Jackson, we need to move. Now! There’s a Shortsword in bound and if we’re in it’s way when that Vampire shoots it down. We are dead.” Ash tried to punch the gas as far down as she could, to get the hell away from the Scarab. She saw Jackson doing the same, he shot ghosts that were behind him. He was slow, but they slowed him down.

A loud ear piercing sound was made. Ash didn’t look, instead she relied on the other two to give her a recap on what happened.

“Dear god.” Zen said.

“Wow, that was amazing. The MAC Gun destroyed that Vampire as if it was putting paper in a paper shredder.” Frank said.

That was good to hear, but now what about those Scarabs? Ash saw the one headed straight towards the Mammoth. She drove that way, but stopped.

The Shortsword came in, fast and low. Guns blazed, it fired rounds into the Scarab like none other. It sort of looked like one of those targets that were shot on the target range with all those bullets.

The Scarab took a second to realize what had happened, as the Shortsword fled away and headed back to base, the AA turret opened fire on the Shortsword. Soon after, the carpet bomb activated. All those holes in the Scarab, were actually explosive rounds which detonated as soon as the Shortsword was out of range. Brutes tried to flee out of the vehicle, only to have the Scarab self destruct and burn them all to their death.

All that remained was the last Scarab. Jackson and the others boarded the Mammoth. Last thing they heard was the sound of the MAC Gun fire, it shook the Mammoth for a couple seconds. Soon after they departed their vehicles to head back up top, a loud explosion was heard, and they were on the move again. They only had seven hours left before they arrived at the said coordinates.

Archangel looked over at Joseph, "Ah. I see they got you here too. Bummer. Oh well, we'll end up like the rest of them no less." Archangel joked around.

"I'm sorry, I don't know what you mean." Well you see, the Chieftain is hungry and these Brutes are in the middle of a famine. Each meal one of us is taken to be ate. He eats twice a day, y'know." Archangel and Joseph were in a holding cell inside a Covenant Cruiser. It seemed to be owned by the Brutes, and the Brutes only. There were other survivors in here, mostly Marines. All were taken captive just like them and placed in different rooms.

They were free to move however they wish inside the room. A Brute stood outside the only door, knowing that he was all that was needed to take them out. Anymore would be unnecessary. These Brutes starved to, they knew they wouldn't last a chance against him. Especially since this Brute was a Captain.

"You know, it's weird seeing you without any armor. It sorta makes me feel like you're vulnerable. One of us." Joseph and Archangel were stripped of their weapons, and the Brutes removed their armor. Joseph lost his ODST gear, which was used to forge the Brutes weapons and ammo, and Archangel's Mjolnir armor had been torn off him and destroyed. The Brutes didn't want them to have any chances of hope. They were doomed, but also used as bait for people who thought they could rescue them.

"Yeah I know, and without my armor anything the Brutes fire at me will most likely result in death. Even UNSC standard issue weapons will deal damage to me." Archangel said, grief covered his face.

"Yeah I hear ya. Say, I thought Jackson's dad, Sarge or whatever, was killed by Junior's dad, Doc? And didn't he use a pistol?" Joseph looked over at him. Confused about that.

“Yes, but Sarge wasn’t a Spartan like his son. He was an ODST.” Joseph suddenly felt embarrassed after that. “And to keep it between you and I. Sarge wasn’t killed by Doc, Architect was. Sarge was killed by one of Lan Chorus’s men. Which I believe I have now come to realize is this Elite who spared me and left me for the Brutes. His name is Verite.” Archangel said, his facial expression didn’t change. He stared deeply into Joseph’s eyes.

Joseph looked down at his feet, “Oh. So...”

Joseph was cut off by a scream right outside their door. They both looked up, and the door turned from its red glow to a light pinkish purple. The Brute Captain stood there with an ODST in one arm, he ripped the armor off the soldier and through them in with Archangel and Joseph. Two Brutes scavenged the armor, and left the room. The Captain left after they did. He stood at the door, staring them down until the door closed and went back to its red glow.

Joseph and Archangel looked over at the ODST, it was a female. Her arms were banded together. Blood came out of scars on the back of her arms and on her legs. She was in pretty bad shape after that dismantle. Tears streamed out of her eyes.

Archangel walked over there and took the bands off her arms. She just laid there. After a few seconds, she finally said “Thank you.”

“Your welcome, is there anything we can do to help you, um, mam?” Archangel said, he kneeled down in front of her.

“My name is Anne Knight. Do you have anything to drink?” Was all she said.

Archangel looked over at Joseph, who had a little bit of water left over from what the Brutes gave them. The Chieftain didn’t want his food near-death dead, he wanted a good meal.

Joseph walked over to Anne and gave her what was left. He carefully grabbed her head and lifted it up, then poured what was left into her mouth. After she swallowed it, he carefully lowered her head back down on the floor.

“Thank you.” Was all she said.

They let her rest.

Archangel and Joseph needed to work on a plan, the only thing they could think of was to escape through the vents, but there was only one vent in the room. It was their only hope, they just had to be careful of drones.

They looked over at Anne, she had a knife tucked inside one of her socks.

~End of Chapter 17~

~Chapter 18: Arrival~

It was early, the sun casted a bright white glow before it revealed itself. A cool breeze picked up, and few clouds were overhead. Morning dew appeared on the grass. Runner had no idea what time it was, but she took a good nap. Zeff said he'd use the rocket turret if it was needed, hopefully by then she would be up.

Runner stood up and stretched her arms. "Ooh, that felt good." Now that she started to regain conscious, she could spectate the world around them. Surprisingly, she just noticed they were no longer in the desert, but in a grassland with something laying over the hill. "Wait a second..." Runner trailed off, before she could think of what it was, it came into view.

There it was, the Brute's Keep. It was smaller than a citadel, but that didn't mean anything. These were Brutes. With the resources available with such little troops back at the camp, they might have been able to stand a chance and just waited out for the return of Warlord and the others.

They couldn't do that, not with their friends inside. Hell, if any of the other Spartan's were sent in to do this. This would've been a hell of alot easier. Except a few of those were at the camp to defend the troops. All the others were onboard the Fleet.

"Alright you guys, I doubt all their troops are here. Especially if they're out on the look for more stragglers. This will be their weakest point, and a surprise to them. After a while, reinforcements will start to arrive. We'll need to get out of here once that happens, and quick. As stated earlier, we will have our retreat covered, thanks to Caelin." Jackson said, she put her hand up in a 'Hello' sort of matter for acknowledgement. Jackson proceeded to turn off the lights on the Mammoth, they didn't want to get spotted easily now.

"Alright now, stick to the shadows and try not to make too much noise." Jackson grabbed a sniper rifle and placed a silencer on it. "You know what to do when we need it." He handed the rifle to Ash. "Everyone else, stack up on the vehicles. Except Zeff, you stay up on the overwatch." Jackson proceeded down to the vehicles.

Jackson felt off. Were they missing somebody? "Hey, where are the others?" He asked, unsure of whom they were.

"Who? Michael and the Marines? They're dead. beam rifle got them. The Marines disposed of the bodies off the side of the Mammoth. Last one got shot, and fell off." Junior answered. He held up the dog tags for proof.

“How did you get the last one’s dog tags if he fell off? Also, I don’t remember there being more than one beam rifle shot at the Mammoth.” Jackson asked? He counted the dog tags while they were held.

“Mammoth was stopped sir. I climbed down. You were also on the field with the tank. There’s no way you could have heard any of the beam rifle shots, only the roar of the engine.” Junior replied, his voice was stern.

“Alright then, that’s a settled recap. Wish you would’ve said something earlier though.” Jackson directed everyone to a vehicle. Magnus hopped on the turret of the Rocket Warthog, Frank took the driver seat, and Runner snatched a rocket launcher before she sat in the passenger seat. Junior hopped in the driver’s seat of the Gauss Warthog while Zen loaded himself on the turret. Jackson, again, took the Scorpion.

“Rocket ‘hog? Are we good to go?”

“Yes, we’re ready.”

“Gauss ‘hog? Are you?”

“Affirmative.”

“Roger that, waiting on Caelin for the go. Front hatch will drop open and we will be dispersed. Remember, lights off and keep quiet. If there are any Brutes on patrol, signal Ash. She’ll take them out if she already hasn’t. There shouldn’t be anything big this early. So we’re in the clear for now. As soon as we can get inside, the faster we can get this done.” Jackson said, his plan sounded pretty solid in his mind. Even though he wasn’t done with the explanation.

Frank’s Warthog moved in first, the sound of it was quiet from the distance. A rough noise could be heard every so often from the tires churning up dry grass. Magnus gave his motion to Runner, who instantly gave the motion to Frank to stop the Warthog.

Up ahead Magnus detected two Brute signatures on the rocket turrets sensor. He motioned in the distance where they were at, Runner forwarded the message to Frank. Who turned off the Warthog and turned on COMMs.

“Ash, do you read me?” Frank said, quietly. His voice wasn’t mute like the other two’s would have been, no thanks to him not equipped with a helmet.

A voice came back, softly, after a few seconds, “Yes. What is it you need? I got eyes on your Warthog. You seem to be clear as far as I can see, anything new?” Ash was focused on the Warthog like none other, sniper rifle in hand. Finger on the trigger.

“We have two. I repeat, two Brutes ahead of us. Location is unclear, but they’re shown on the turrets sensor. Distance is approximately two hundred yards ahead. Over.” Frank kept his best at being quite, pretty good since the wind started to pick up. Nice breeze every so many seconds. It’s as if nature wanted them to save their friends.

A few minutes passed by as they sat in the dark, they saw Junior close to the entrance in the distance. Lucky him, got the easy route it seems. Jackson wasn’t anywhere near in sight yet. Runner looked over at Frank, as soon as she did Ash responded back with the softness in her voice. “Roger that, I got them. There’s three of them.”

Frank sat there and waited, as did the other two. A ghost whispered in Frank’s ear, although he couldn’t hear what he said. So he responded quietly, “What?” Runner looked at him, concerned. The whisper came back, still faint and unable to hear.

Frank looked at Runner, “Did you hear that?” he kept quiet as he said that and the wind picked up once again. A third whisper was heard. Still undetectable. “Alright, now this is freaking me out.” Frank looked around cautiously.

“Alright, targets have been eliminated. You should be able to proceed.” Ash said, her voice kept that soft-tone. Something about it offset Frank.

“Those were the sniper rounds, you dolt.” Runner said after Ash got off the COMMs.

Frank’s face was covered in embarrassment. He should have known better what that sound was. ‘Of course those were sniper rounds. Not some ghost. What was he thinking?’ he turned on the Warthog and proceeded towards the entrance, at his best to be undetected. Magnus was on the rocket sensor once again. He turned it around ever-so-slowly as to see if they missed anyone or were being ambushed.

In front of them was the entrance to the Brute’s Keep, guards stood outside. The door seemed accessible, but they couldn’t see what was inside. “Ash, the entrance to the Keep has about four Brutes guarding it. Could you give us a hand?” Runner asked.

“Copy that, waiting for alignment.” Ash bolted off the top of the mammoth, she landed in a crouched position. One hand on the ground, sniper rifle held up in the other.

“Ash, we have arrived at the entrance over. We see about four Brutes standing guard. Three of them huddled in a pack, the fourth one in front of the door.” Junior spoke up from. He was at a further angle than the others, they had already departed from their vehicle.

“Copy that, already on it. Standby.” Ash managed to sprint across the open field in fifteen seconds. Up ahead she could see the entrance, as well as the Brutes. First up, the Brute on its own. Shot fired.

Junior watched and heard as the Brute collapsed to the ground. One of the other Brutes heard it, and decided to go investigate. The other two watched him as he did.

Ash fired a round at the left Brute, she watched Magnus stab and takedown the second Brute. Now all that was left was the wandering Brute. Ash reloaded the clip, and fired. The bullet impaled his head, and exited out the other end and hit the door. The door opened briefly, it allowed her to see what was inside before it was closed.

"All targets eliminated. Entrance is clear, nobody is inside the first door. Have at it and have fun. We'll see you when you get out." Ash returned to the Elephant, but was stopped in her tracks.

A Brute Chieftain stood over her, hammer raised.

"Wilco. Thanks for the assist Ash. Couldn't of done it without you." Runner said, she motioned for the others to form up, while she took lead at the door. As Ash had said, there was no one inside the first door.

She proceeded to the second door, the others stacked up ready for what was on the other side. Runner motioned for Magnus and Zen to take point. The door opened.

Ash dropped her sniper rifle and jumped away from the Chieftains swing. She grabbed her silenced pistol as fast as she could, then activated her thruster pack. The Chieftain didn't have time to react.

Ash fired the entire clip into the Brute's armor. His shields just flickered, her bullets were consumed. That didn't stop her, she kept at it. The Brute just laughed. He went for a hammer spin, which forced Ash to activate her thruster pack and jump back.

This was no use, she had to find something better. The Chieftain swung his hammer at her in a chop-like maneuver. Ash grabbed her sniper rifle and held it up as a defense. The Chieftain's hammer hit. Ash let go of the Sniper and made a dash for her knife. The Chieftain scraped the sniper rifle off the hammer in disgust. He let out a roar at her to know how angry he was.

"You dare defy me, I will have your head and feast upon every last one of you." The Chieftain raised his hammer again, to be stopped by a loud sound in the distance. Ash was caught off-guard as well by it.

A Covenant Cruiser flew in from above, and then two Corvettes came down with it in support.

The Chieftain let out a loud roar, then looked back at Ash. Who returned the look to him. "I will kill you." She said, she went for the neck.

The Chieftain slammed the backside of the hammer against her side and launched her across the field. "You are lucky this time. I'll have you soon again." The Chieftain said.

A Phantom came in at an incredibly fast speed, the Chieftain walked into the lift and then the Phantom was gone as fast as it had come in.

Ash just laid there in the open, the Cruiser and Corvettes positioned themselves over the Keep. They didn't fire, they were just stationary. She thought to herself, What was the Chieftain doing that he had to leave so suddenly? It didn't make sense.

She reached down to where the hammer had hit, it breached her armor. She was bleeding. "No..." Ash now knew what the Chieftain meant when he said "I'll have you soon again." He planned this, that damn Brute planned this!

She could prevent it, the Mammoth wasn't far. Only five hundred feet, she could try to walk it. Caelin could help her the best she could.

She started to walk, but it didn't work. So she tried again. There was no way she could make it back, not like this.

Tears rolled down her eyes as she laid there.

Helpless.

A loud noise was heard, all she saw before her eyes closed were bright headlights from above. Next thing she knew, someone carried her. She heard chatter, but couldn't make it out. Finally, Ash had fainted. Everything went as black as the night sky.

The second room was clear. Sort of suspicious, you would think there would be Brutes everywhere. Especially after the many they encountered. Unless that's where they were at now.

"Wow these Brutes aren't smart are they? They have more on patrol than they do on defense." Runner said, she laughed at the thought.

"Yes, I don't think the Brutes are smart to begin with. They're just there for the money and the food, they could care less. However, I believe their leader is the highest priority. Which is the Brute Chieftain. We need to eliminate him, an outrage will breakout. They will feast upon another." Zen said.

"Wow really, that's all that these guy's have that are keeping them in line?" Runner asked, curious even more at their stupidity.

"Yes, er well I don't know. It's just a theory. I would assume so though, you have eliminated their alpha and now all the betas do not know who to follow. Thus encouraging an outrage until someone claims alpha." Zen said. He peered around the room, and motioned to Magnus to engage the two Brutes.

Magnus fired his silenced SMG and Zen fired his silenced Magnum. The two Brutes fell to the floor. They weren't wearing any armor. It's as if they didn't even expect anyone to come, it's as if this wasn't a trap at all. They just captured them for food. That was it.

"Runner, we're clear. Although none of these Brutes have armor. Should we split-up, that would make it easier to reach the target. Just a suggestion, sir." Zen asked.

"No. We stick together. Move forward." Runner said. She took point this time, and the others stacked up on the door. There was seven Brutes without armor, they all fired at the Brutes.

"Drop dead." Junior said.

Runner stacked up on the next door with the others, she motioned at Magnus and Junior to take point. Zen and Frank stood at the side, ready.

The door opened. A Brute Captain stood in their way, plasma rifle in hand. Everyone opened fire.

"Come on you guys." Runner said, she reloaded her weapon then fired. The Captain didn't stand a chance.

"We're clear here. Move forward, find out what that Captain was guarding." Runner ordered. Magnus and Frank volunteered, everyone else stood aside.

The door opened.

"It's them." Magnus said, he lowered his weapon and motioned for Junior to assist. The others followed inside while Magnus and Zen stood guard at the door.

"Haha, you guys are alright!" Runner exclaimed. "Marines, you guys hurt? If not, load up. We're here to save you. We'll have you three catch a ride on the tank with Jackson outside and... and... and who is she?" Runner trailed off as she noticed the ODST that was next to Joseph and Archangel, she seemed wounded and hurt.

"Yeah we are, thanks for coming. We didn't think you guys were going to shut up. We had a plan to attempt to kill the Captain, but our chances of winning would have been zero." Archangel said.

"Yeah, that fall didn't help any. Luckily I didn't break my back. Hehe." Joseph said, "Speaking of which. Where's Michael?" He looked around curiously at everyone, "Or Jackson, Ash, Zeff, and Caelin?"

"Caelin, Zeff, and Ash are on the Mammoth, they should be waiting for us at the evac zone by now. Jackson is in a Scorpion, he is providing covering fire as we leave. Our Warthogs are outside, one of you can ride with Junior and Zen. The others will have to hitch a ride with Jackson." Runner said, in her rough command voice.

"Sounds fair to me. Archangel and I will ride with Jackson. Anne can take the Warthog, she needs it the most. She's in a bad condition." Joseph said, he looked over at Archangel. Whom nodded his head in agreement.

"Alrighty then, once Junior is ready. We can do this." Runner said. She looked at Junior for confirmation.

"She's patched up, but I don't know how long it will last." Junior said. Anne stood up, she acted as if she could handle the pain.

"Alrighty, Zen. You support Anne while she walking, she's going to need the assist so we aren't slowed down. I know you want out of here more than anything and that's the way it's going to happen." Runner said. Her voice still had the command in it.

"Alright, let's go." Zen said, as He lifted his shoulder from up underneath Anne's arm.

The team exited the structure the same way they entered it. No Brutes were in sight, except the ones they killed. However, the outside was different than when they entered. Way different.

First off, the sun was out. Secondly, Banshees flew around everywhere, shooting other Banshees. Assumed to be Brutes vs the Elites, as it would seem. There was a Cruiser this time, with Corvettes. Which is where they got the assumption that Lan Chorus came back. Then there were mysterious aircrafts flying around, they shot, only assuming, at the Brute Banshees. Prometheans were on the ground as they fought in one-on-one combat with Brutes. It was a slaughterhouse right now.

"Come on, we need to go." Runner said, she hopped in the passenger seat. Frank took the driver seat, and Magnus on the rocket turret. Junior took the driver seat of the other warthog, Zen sat Anne in the passenger seat, then hopped on the gauss cannon. Archangel and Joseph ran across the field at full speed, then hopped on Jackson's tank. They then proceeded to the evac zone.

"Welcome back you guys, hop on." Jackson said. Which is what they did, Archangel jumped on the machine gun turret, and Joseph seated himself on the tread covers. Jackson then turned

around and headed to the evac zone. He fired rounds at a few of the mysterious aircrafts headed their way as he headed back.

“Caelin, this is Jackson. Package has been received. Ready for that evac.” Jackson said, he pushed on the pedals to go as fast as he could. The Warthogs came up fast from behind, and were soon in front of him. Jackson felt a little bit more embarrassed, then remembered he was in a tank. So it didn’t matter right now. Except he could do for a little more speed...

“We’re almost there! Five hundred meters out!” Runner yelled. She saw two Pelicans fly in, thrusters at their maximum. Then they made an incredible stop, and landed in a vertical motion. The hatch opened as they did so, and the landing gear pulled out.

They arrived at the Pelicans, everyone hurried as fast as they could to board the ships. Jackson pulled up quick afterwards, and they did the same as the rest. They boarded the Pelicans at an incredible speed.

“Alright, we’re all here. Let’s go!” Caelin yelled at the pilots. Both of them pulled up and thrust out of their. They watched as they left, the Cruiser fired its cleansing beam, destroyed the Brute Keep and everything around it. Banshees and the mysterious aircrafts scattered about. Headed in all directions. Afterwards, the air got really hot.

That’s when Jackson looked over and noticed Ash, she was out. “Junior, get over here now!” He yelled. His voice was a little saddened and concerned. As if he actually had feelings for Ash. Did he have feelings for Ash? No, no he didn’t He didn’t have feelings those were gone. He lost those back when he decided to join. That was his choice after all, he decided to kill that girl and run away. He decided to get on that Pelican that day... Oh how the memories hurt. Forget the girl, Jackson said. He should keep focused.

Junior didn’t see it at first, but then he saw the wound. Blood was still there. So, he did what he could. It was a Spartan after all, he didn’t know much in the medical field about how to care for them. They were just going to have to wait.

Junior looked outside of the hatch, which was now closed. The pilots insisted on it being closed for safety procedures and so they wouldn’t get burned from the Cruisers cleansing beams blast. Which he didn’t need to worry about anymore.

Six MAC rounds pierced the Cruiser and the Corvettes from above. The Covenant ships fell to the ground, engulfed in flames. The Brutes Keep was gone. All of it was gone. Those mysterious vehicles, the prometheans, the Elites, the Brutes, everything. They were all gone. Burned to death. There was no other way they could have died.

Now, they just needed to get back to the camp. See what’s going on and what they could do, and to find out where those MAC Rounds came from. But first, Ash needed to be taken care of.

They couldn't lose her, not now. He managed to stop the bleeding for the time being, but that's only for about an hour. After that it'll be back and possibly worse.

"Hm." Was all Junior could say. He didn't really know what to say. All he knew was that he wanted to be back. Now.

~End of Chapter 18~

~Chapter 19: The End~

Jackson opened the Pelican's door, Banshees swarmed the sky. Every so often the sunlight was blocked by the aircraft's. His vision turned to the side, there; a Covenant Supercarrier drifted in the distance, plasma cannons fired upon the ground and the sky.

"Jackson, close that door. We can't risk Ash getting hit at all. She'll die. I've managed to get her body into some kind of hibernation, but like I said. She can't get hit, otherwise she's done for." Junior said, he stood up against Jackson. Almost all of their teammates were dead, killed, or injured because of this Spartan. Junior started to think they would've been better off without him.

"I know." Jackson said. He pulled down the Machine gun turret. It sort of just hanged there from the roof. He took one last look over at Ash, before he ripped the turret off and shut the Pelican's doors, as then he proceeded to the top of the Pelican. Where he would meet his fate.

The first thing he saw as the hatch opened, were eighteen Banshees. They all zoomed past him, none turned around and none stopped.

"Caelin. How long before arrival?" Jackson asked as he stood on the hatch. The sky was full of Covenant, but they were all headed in one direction.

"I presume twenty minutes, sir. That's if no firefight's are engaged, as well as this Pelican keeps up at this speed. This one wasn't designed to go this fast, sir." Caelin replied back. She maneuvered the Pelican underneath two Phantoms headed straight at them. Yet, they didn't engage. They just continued on their path.

Jackson turned around and headed to a seat in the Pelican as the hatch closed.

"Archangel, anything new on the battlenet?" Frank asked. Seeing as how he was not capable of receiving anything.

"Yes, it seems the fleet has arrived. Warlord is back, but they're up in the atmosphere. I've managed to briefly contact them. We'll need to use a Longsword back at the camp to get back, if not, we'll look for the next closest thing." Archangel said, as he remembered himself try to contact whoever shot the MAC rounds.

“That makes more sense...” Junior spoke up. He turned and looked directly at Runner. “So, sweet cheeks. How’s it feel to no longer be the only female ODST, now that Anne has joined the team?”

“I really do not care.” Runner replied, disgrace in her eyes.

Junior just laughed.

“Alright you guys, we are approaching camp. It’s under attack at the moment, so if we want out of here, we’re going to have to push through.” Caelin yelled from the cockpit doorway.

Jackson, Archangel, Magnus, Runner, and Joseph stood at the doorway. Weapons ready, pointed out the hatch as it started to open. “Alrighty guys, you’re good to go. Secure us a Longsword.”

Caelin and the pilot landed the Pelican, just as the five opened fire when they jumped out. Grunts and Jackals were everywhere. An occasional Elite showed his face for every 50 Grunts. “We stick together, covering fire in all directions. Let that be in front of us, or behind. You will open fire on the target.” Jackson ordered, he held his knife and ran it through an unsuspecting Jackals throat.

The Longsword wasn’t very far away from where they landed. It was just swarmed in Covenant, and whatever remained of UNSC troops.

Joseph ran up to an Elite, he pulled the trigger on his M60 as fast as he could before he had to swap magazines. The Elite was shieldless, but reached for his energy sword. Joseph noticed instantly. His thruster pack activated, and Joseph slammed right into the Elite. Knocking it on the ground and out cold.

“Caelin, we’re at the Longsword. Archangel is inside, setting up the controls. Runner is in there with him, for cover protection against any unseen enemies. Magnus, Joseph, and I are all eliminating what threats are left. I advise you head here now.” Caelin could hear the rapid gunfire in the conversation with Jackson.

She turned and looked at the others. “They’re ready.” Junior and Zeff looked at her. “Frank, help cover fire with Junior and lead the way for Zeff and me while we carry Ash. Anne, cover our backs please.” They all looked at her, but none of them argued. They couldn’t lose their leader right now, and this plan seemed pretty solid for a two minute walk.

They pushed through the wreckage. Vehicles were on fire, damaged, or unharmed. All in variety, Covenant and UNSC. A ghost laid underneath a hornet, and a Phantom’s ruins were crashed on top of a Scorpion.

"What happened here, happened fast." Junior spoke to the group, he aimed his shotgun at every corner.

"Yeah, no kidding. This place is a complete mess compared to what was here yesterday. I never thought something like this could've happened the very next morning. It's unbelievable." Zeff was saying as he carried Ash over his shoulder. He looked at everything. It was like one of those horror scenes of a wreckage.

An ear-piercing scream was heard from their left. Which distracted everyone and made them turn to look. A Marine ran through the wreckage, engulfed in flames, the smell of his burnt flesh immediately filled the air. "You gotta, you guys gotta help me! The... They're destroying everything, they're coming for you next! They're... They're... They appear out of nowhere! You gotta run while you still can!"

Junior shot the Marine.

"Good call, corporal. I would've done the same if it was you." Zeff sounded astonished.

"There it is, the Longsword awaits us." Caelin pointed at it. Two Phantoms flew overhead and dispersed troops. Jackals, Grunts, and an Elite. The other one let out two Hunters. "We need to move fast, and now." Caelin helped Zeff run with Ash, ensuring her safety.

Jackson, Magnus, and Joseph ran up and shot the Covenant as they ran to cover Ash. Frank and Anne stopped to help. Jackson deployed a Drop Shield just as the Hunters fired their charged assault beam. Allowing Frank to pull the trigger on the sticky detonator that was attached to one of them. As the shield dropped, he fired another and instantly detonated it upon impact.

"All clear!" Frank exclaimed and headed towards the Longsword, just before he noticed a Spirit come in at a ludicrous speed. He looked up in horror. The Brute Chieftain was the only one on deployment.

"Everyone, stand clear of the targets drop zone!" Jackson barked the order, then jumped back about ten feet away from the zone.

The Chieftain jumped out, and swung his hammer, to see who was close. Which was no one. Everyone opened fire, as it ran. Archangel came out of the Longsword bay on the exit strip. Jackson lowered his Battle Rifle, and looked up in horror. He screamed, but no words came out. He only heard Archangel's.

"Zeff! Look out!"

Zeff turned around to look, dropping Ash on Caelin. Which did some damage to both of the two. The Chieftain swung his hammer at the left side, where Ash was, and hit Zeff in the same area Ash was hit. Except a lot worse, since this was the other side of the hammer.

Zeff looked up at the Brute. There was nothing he could do at this point. This was his grave. His teammates rounds did nothing. The Brutes shields still flickered. They couldn't kill him in time to save him. There was only one thing he could do. Finish his mission, which was to protect Ash.

His arm fell to his belt, he remembered his one and only spike grenade. This was to be used on Lan Chorus as an alternate plan to kill him, if they were to ever find him. There was no choice now. He wouldn't be there to see that damn wretched Elite fall.

With little will to do so, Zeff grabbed the grenade. His body screamed not to do it, but he must. It was his duty. The Brute held the hammer over his head now, going in for the swing. Zeff looked up at him, and activated the spike grenade and slammed it into the Brute's chest.

The Chieftain startled backwards, fear showed on his face. He swung his hammer, but the grenade detonated. Spikes cleared open the Brutes chest and armor, and a few blew into Zeff's head. It killed both of them.

"Zeff!" Jackson yelled as he ran over to him, he saw the slots where the spike went inside his head. It was done, Zeff was gone. So was the Chieftain. Jackson grabbed Zeff's tags, with sorrow, and slowly stood up.

"Jackson, let's go now! Prometheans are starting to show up!" Archangel ran over to him and yelled at him.

Jackson heard the Prometheans, and ran back inside the Longsword where everyone was waiting. Caelin had her right arm broke and the wrist. Ash was buckled up safely, and all who didn't have a place to sit, stood and held on tight.

"Sir, shall we go?" Frank asked.

"Yes. Take us to UNSC Ambient. They need the medical attention." Jackson grumbled, Archangel could tell he was not happy with this recent event of Zeff. He was a good soldier, and died doing his job. He respected that, but there was no way he could ever repay him.

Frank pulled them into the atmosphere where all their fleets ships laid out, opening fire on opposed Covenant ships. UNSC Ambient was the furthest away, but out of range of the battle. That was their target, and that's where they are going to head.

They all sat in silence as Frank guided the ship towards their safety, and away from this vicious Brute world. First Dexter, then Michael, now it's Zeff.

Jackson was ready to say his motivational speech when they got back. More than ready. He looked over at Ash, who was still unconscious but miraculously still alive. She was like a sister to him. They were all like brothers and sisters to him. They were his family. From where he comes, his duty is to protect his family. Which is exactly what Zeff had done for them.

~End of Chapter 19~

~Chapter 20: Preparation~

UNSC Ambient engulfed their vision upon arrival. Few Covenant were in the area, but were eliminated upon range of the vicinity. Longswords and Broadsword's circled the ship, ready for the fight to come to them.

"Alright, Commander. Precautions will be advised. We're beginning to dock now." Caelin sounded smart and very authoritative with the Ambient's Captain, and she was very friendly about it too.

"Good job Caelin, now to get Ash to the medical bay asap. I would like to see her see another day. As would the others." Archangel complimented on her skills, but was still worried for Ash. She was his friend, afterall. So were the others.

The Longsword approached the dock, Operators were on the ground to ensure they docked safe, and the entry was clear of hostiles. Incase there was any Covenant that tried to sneak by their defenses.

As the hatch opened, a medical team ran up the ramp, with a spartan alongside them for support. Another team boarded after Ash was taken off off and rushed to the medical bay, these guy's were here to do checkup and ensure everyone was alright. Turns out the Marine's had it worse, all except for Zen, with just a few minor bruises and cuts was all.

As everyone exited the ship, they were greeted by the ship's Commander. Where she stood tall and firm, hands behind her back in a criss cross manner. Her black hair was up in a ponytail, that laid just above her green uniform. Her face, empty as the void of the space abyss, laid in a firm manner, but representable for someone of her stature.

"Commander Maria Leouff, sir." Jackson stood tall, and saluted her; as did the rest of team and the marines.

"At ease." Maria said, only her mouth moved as she spoke. If felt as if her blue eyes pierced right through their skin and could see and predict everything they were thinking.

"We are thankful for the medical attention you are providing to our wounded. Can we provide assistance in any way?" Jackson decided to take the role of the group's spokesperson. Even though he was the leader.

"No, but I do recommend you returning to your ship. UNSC Warlord? However, that isn't an option at this current state as she is under heavy attack. On the front lines with UNSC Firestorm and UNSC Valkyrie at this moment. So I suggest you stay here and provide any necessary assistance to UNSC Ambient. That is, unless you want to risk your chances of being killed in a ship." Maria's voice was monotone, Jackson had just noticed this now.

"Yes, sir. Team Lord will assist you as much as we can. We're smaller than we started out as, but we can do what it takes to get the job done." Jackson stared into her eyes as he spoke, although he immediately regretted it.

"Good, then in time, you'll be the one's ready to carry out the dirty deed to the Covenant. Lan Chorus and his new known Elite Zealot, Verite, will fall." Maria smiled at this thought, Jackson was pretty sure her smile was extremely rare, from his judgement of the ODST's faces that showed shock from that facial gesture of hers.

As Jackson walked away, the team approached him. None of them spoke, but they all knew they should head up to the overwatch deck and check on what needed done. Junior, however, headed to the medical bay. To keep up tabs on Ash.

As they approached the overwatch, Marine's scattered around along the ODST's. None of them were equipped with weapons, even if there was to be a Covenant boarding. However, if one were to happen. This ship would fall easily, none of them would be able to matchup against the horde. They'd all be dead.

"Archangel, what do you got?" Jackson spoke amongst the crowd. That or it was the channel frequency he was picking up in his helmet.

"Uh, we got Covenant ships inbound. Actually, we got a lot of Covenant ships in bound. These one's look like they're made for boarding, they're also being accompanied by Spirits and Phantom's. However, those are probably just the meatshields of what's on the spear." Archangel looked at a hologram mapping of what was all out there. UNSC Warlord seemed to be in terrible condition, whereas Firestorm didn't have much damage, what was there could be fixed in a couple hours.

"That's not good, we need to prepare for any boarding actions, while this ship and its crew defends itself." Jackson said. "Oh, and Joseph? Open up a channel with Junior. Let him know to stay on alert, and you're headed his way."

“Aye aye.” Joseph accepted, he pulled up his wrist gear and did as such, whilst he walked towards the medical bay where Ash and Junior were at.

“For the rest of you, follow me. We’re not splitting up into teams this time around, we’re sticking together.” Jackson waved his arm up to ensure there weren’t going to be any loose ends.

“Jackson, please come to the Command deck, please”

Jackson shook his head in disgust as he put his hand up against his head, “Alright, you guys head down to level two, and hallway three’s elbow. Expect any Covenant, even if they aren’t boarded yet. Play it safe, I’ll catch up to you guys when I see what Command wants.” Jackson headed off to the Command deck as the others did as they were told. Runner took point, as always.

Jackson entered the Command deck where Maria stood with her second-in-command and a hologram figure displayed Commander Samantha. “Yes, sir?” Was Jackson’s first impression as he entered the room.

“Jackson, we need you to do something to get rid of Verite and his ships. Lan Chorus isn’t in the area, but at this point we’re losing hope. UNSC Warlord is going to fall, but we need your help. Only you.” Samantha said. Jackson noticed all the other ship commanders were portrayed through holograms as well. They were just in the distance standing.

“What is it you need done?” Jackson asked, knowing he was in no place to ask questions but to only accept orders.

“Glad you have asked, see... We need you to deliver a havoc to their flagship. Take it out, and probably any of their other ships nearby or smaller units... Anyways, we’ve pierced a hole through their ship when we broke their shield, however it’s only in the rear part of the ship. You’re going to have to fly by all the defenses and enter it through the back. Which is good, because the havoc we are deploying with you will take out the engines, completely faulting the ship, and eventually destroying it. Their only escape will be through drop pods, which lead to the Brute’s below.” Samantha seemed to have this all thought through, she just needed someone ready to send off and take a score for the team. Even if that meant risking the person’s life.

“And it’s just me going?” Jackson was concerned.

“Yes, of course. We don’t see any other reason to send more troops. That just raises our... casualties. Since all you’re doing is flying a Broadsword under their flagship, and then inside. Plan sounds simple, and easy. We’ll do our best to eliminate threats headed your way, and you should be able to eliminate any threats as well. The Broadsword is our fastest ship we can send at the moment, since that’s all UNSC Ambient has sitting in their bay, and the payload is already ready for delivery. We just need you to head out now.” Samantha said, she sounded a bit

impatient about this. Maria's eyes just pierced through Jackson's skin, waiting for him to say okay.

"Alright Commander, I'll do it. For the team and to delay my squad from death for now." Jackson didn't want to do this, but he knew if he didn't Warlord would fall and the fight would definitely come to them. "Just, if I don't make it..."

"Goodluck, Jackson." As soon as she said that, all the holograms disappeared and he was left alone with Maria and her second-in-command.

"You should head down now, Jackson. I have a team of Air Assault troopers waiting for you, everything is ready and prepped to go. Except you." Maria sounded stern. She left the room through an exit you couldn't really tell was an exit. It was like just a regular wall, except the doors opened up for her when her second-in-command pushed the security key in.

Nevermind that, he had a job to do.

Jackson went down to the hangar, he looked outside from the ship. He felt as if it was destined to probably be his last glance. All he saw was an abruption of fire and chaos among the Covenant and their ships, except he noticed something.

UNSC Warlord was the cause.

The ship was abrupt in flames as it slowly, yet fast, split into a bunch of pieces of which will be later called 'debris'.

This... This area of space above this Brute homeworld, would soon become known as a shipyard... and he was going to become part of it.

Jackson sat down in the cockpit as the team of Air Assault cleared for takeoff.

It was up to him now. He lost his home. All he had left was his family.

Oh how he hoped Ash would eventually recover from her injuries. He didn't want to lose something else anymore. Which is what he needed to do, destroy Verite and his ships and he could finally takedown Lan Chorus and avenge all of those he had lost.

Jackson pushed down on the thrusters and headed straight for the flagship. He had one shot he needed to take. Even if that meant sacrifice.

Jackson put on his helmet, he was ready to end this now.

~End of Chapter 20~

~Chapter 21: Invasion - Offense~

Runner and the others watched in horror as they witnessed the destruction of their ship. That was their home. Gone. Obliterated to millions of pieces and counting. Their friends and everything were gone. Paladin, Moth, Biggles... Gone. Commander Samantha... Gone.

"What will we do without *our* flagship?" was all Anne could make out. The others looked at her with concern as well, but none with an answer. Just sympathy.

"Well, all we *can* do is hope. Maybe they have a plan, or maybe we will retreat." Archangel didn't like this feeling he had... Wait, what did he just say!? "God I hope we don't retreat! We're here to kill Lan Chorus. The Elite responsible for everything. The death and slaughter of majority of us, even this team original Commander's. Sarge and Alex." He didn't dare to mention any of the others, such as Dumby, Gregor, Fauz, or...

"Hey guys!" He seemed to be cut off from shock. "Archangel... Is that you old friend?" It sounded as if the man was going to cry.

Archangel was upset that he was interrupted during mid thought, he turned around to look at the man. "Uh... Uh..." it was the name he was just about to come across in his thoughts, before interruption. "Uh... Phoenix... Is that really you?" Archangel couldn't have been more happier to himself.

"Yes, yes it is." A smile spread across his face.

"Why are you here? I thought you were among the UNSC Warlord and engulfed in the ship's flames as it was destroyed." Archangel was happy that at least one of his old friends had made it.

"Guys, there's a broadsword leaving the bay right now. I think it might be Jackson leaving us." Runner called out to get everyone's attention. Which it did, resulting in everyone to approach the window and watch it as it flew away in the distance.

"You know Runner, you may just be right. I wonder what might just have made him leave. I'm sure we'll get results sooner or later." Frank commented on her, unlike everyone else. Who watched without much care.

"Anyways, as I was going to say before interruption from your girl over there... You guys might want to saddle up and prepare for Covenant ships. Turns out they brought a bomb to Warlord, and we're pretty sure they're going to try bringing one here and possibly the other ships. Covenant will arrive soon." Phoenix powered up his assault rifle, as if to trigger them to do the same. "Archangel, it was nice to see you but I'm headed to the medical bay. I heard there was a

Spartan in there going through some recovery. Managed to get her awake right now, but she's still injured... If we're still alive and this is over with. I'll be back to see you, but I gotta... Bye." Phoenix rushed down the hallway towards the direction of the medical bay.

Hopefully the spartan he hinted at was Ash. She definitely needed recovery, and an entire medical team operating on her definitely meant that there should be by all means a bad recovery. Even if Covenant are on board; Joseph, Junior, and Phoenix would be there to put the Medical bay entrances on lockdown. Unless the doctors or surgeons ran away from panic.

"Jackson... Jackson, are you there?" It was Maria trying to contact him. He had no other choice but to answer the video feed she was trying to establish with him, or risk the possibility of her removing any aid to Ash and letting the others die.

"I'm here, go ahead." Jackson switched on the video feed to his helmet.

"Ah, I see the helmet we left there for you fits. That is good." She seemed to not care about anything but wanting to talk about the mission. How he hated her, she needed to realize he had feelings to. Not just her. "It seems that you are right on course, Covenant aren't here yet and they aren't to you; but if you don't mind if I suggest, I insist hiding in the shipyard of the ruins of Warlord and using it for cover. It could help you out to reach the Covenant faster."

"As I had already planned, but thanks for informing you think I should do the same." Jackson wanted this call to end. Not only was the mission stressful, but he couldn't stand her face; especially the eyes.

"Good, we'll keep you updated." Was all she had to say before she ended the video feed transmission.

Jackson rolled his eyes, the women literally acted just like a naggy baby sister. "Honestly, if we didn't need her medical resources, I would tell the woman how much of a bitch I think she really is." Jackson thought to himself. It sounded mean, but that's what he thought.

"Jackson... Jackson... Are you there...?" This audio feed sounded bad with the static, but it was clear to read. Maybe it was just some sort of interference. He answered the call.

"Yes, I'm here."

"Good, I just wanted to update you on the progress with Ash." the static was gone, and Jackson realized that it was Junior who contacted him. "They're going to be operating on her for another 2 hours, after that they're going to let her lay down and recover, they think it should take 14 hours in total before she's on her feet again."

"That's great to hear! I can't wait for her to be back with us, kinda needed her back there on the ground..." Jackson trailed off.

"Yeah I know, I know..." Junior kinda sounded a little emotional in that tone. "Anyways, how are things going over there for you guys?"

"Ah, nothing yet. Don't see any Covenant boarding ships." Jackson didn't want to inform him that he was on his way to destroy the Covenant flagship and a few other ships, with a Havoc Nuke.

"That's good. I heard Warlord has been destroyed, is that true?" Junior's voice indicated he didn't believe it.

Jackson took a deep breath, and then released it. "Yes, it's true."

"No, you've gotta be pulling my leg. Don't do this to me Jackson, I'm concerned." Junior, feelings? Didn't sound possible to put those two words together and make them into something physically possible.

"No, Junior. I'm not pulling your leg. See for yourself." Jackson sent a photo from his VISR to Junior's of Warlord.

"..." Junior was speechless.

"It's terrible, I know." Jackson didn't want to talk any longer than he had to, he wanted to hurry up and finish his mission and get back.

"That's not just terrible, that's a nightmare... Dude, what the hell are we going to do now? We don't have a home anymore... I... I only transferred to that ship because I wanted to replace the model of my father... Make him not look as bad as he did... Now the place to do that, is no longer there. How fantastic!" Junior hid his emotions very well, but this subject was literally the key to Davy Jones chest. The man poured his heart out over something unneeded... Then again, he didn't know what Jackson was doing at this very moment. So he gave the trooper that.

"Um, Junior. Sorry to ruin the fun and stuff, but I really gotta go. Sorry man, bye." Yep, Jackson was done with the conversation.

"Fun? This isn't. fu..." was the last of the audio feed from Junior before he cut the transmission off.

"Alright, now to sit here and focus my approach." Jackson activated the thrusters to full speed upon exiting the horrifying shipyard of bodies from Warlord.

Covenant Phantoms, Lich's, Spirits, and boarding platforms all headed towards UNSC Ambient and the other ships. None of them stopped nor cared, (or probably didn't see), to go and deal with Jackson.

Afterall, if he did engage them. His chances of making it out alive were less than one percent. There were way too many Covenant ships above him, if he just stayed half of a kilometer below the ships, like he was currently doing, he could make it to his target.

~End of Chapter 21~

~Chapter 22: Boarded~

UNSC Ambient was under attack, Covenant ships breached from all sides. Hangars, Entryways, Armories, Windows... You name it, they came from there. Team Lord held a defensive position, but in no way would they be able to defend themselves in hopes to survive. Not in this elbow they wouldn't. They needed to push forward and get to a secure room. If a pod were to breach that window, they'd all be sucked out from the vacuum.

Joseph and Junior had arrived from the medical bay about five minutes before the event, to give them news up on Ash. Even if it was poor timing on their part, they would now need to push their way back and make it to her, in hopes of her recovery to continue.

"Joseph and Magnus. Push forward on me. I feel like you will be needed in the med bay here soon enough." Junior pleaded, an insidious tone on his tongue.

"Sir, will do." Joseph and Magnus fired upon the enemies that crawled into the room until there was a brief clear space.

Joseph was daring and went first, shooting any of the arrogant Covenant that stood in his way. Let it be an Elite or Jackals. He took them down.

Magnus stacked next. He made sure their backs stayed clear as they moved to the next room. Though not much of them followed, only a few minor grunts.

"Good thinking Junior." Runner modulated, "We need to secure an open area, yet enough cover provided for us. If we could just find the place to do so..." Runner's voice was strangled by Junior's interruption.

"We're going to the medical bay, despite orders. I'm sure we'll be needed there soon enough anyways. Plus we can't let them get to Ash." Junior was gruff explaining his plan.

"If that's what you really think, Junior. Then we should. However, if you're wrong in any case... I will hurt you for what you have done." Runner's voice sounded of the dead.

"If that's what it takes, then sure." he replied roughly.

They all headed down the next entryway. Archangel and Anne covered the rear as they moved forward. Frank messed around with one of the security doors, and managed to get it closed. Sealing off any Covenant that followed them from behind.

"You know, having Jackson here right now would be a lot of help." Frank whined.

"Well he's not going to, so you're going to have to suck it up for once and do your job as a soldier. Even if you are a damn pilot. I don't care, we're doing what we need to and it'd be nice if you would do the same." Junior was intense. All Runner could do was glare, as if he knew something came up or was about to happen. All he told them about Ash was that they were almost finished with the procedures and all they would have left to do was just wait until she woke up.

The next room seemed safe, however they still had six more to go before they arrived at the medical bay. Who knows what laid between them and there now...

"Alright guys, whatever's in these hallways are what's there. Let it be Grunts or Jackals. Maybe even Elite's. We need to eliminate them and proceed to Ash, understood?" Runner worried.

They nodded their head in agreement, weapons faced at the door.

Jackson had finally arrived at Lan Chorus's capital ship. The hole was still there, enough room for him to land the Broadsword.

As he safely ejected himself from the ship, he caught something with his eyes, but he didn't know what. He continued to the nuke and armed it. The timer was set for five minutes. He needed to get moving.

A door was over in the corner, although it was closed he would have to make his way through it and fast. This was a round trip afterall, he needed to make it to his objective in two minutes max, otherwise he would be done for.

"Watch it Anne! Crawler behind you!" Archangel yelled, he fired his DMR just in time to stop the thing from getting her.

"You know Runner, I remember you saying that these were Covenant that would have to be worried about. I see you were wrong." Junior shot a Knight in the back, then turned around to quickly take out a Watcher from resurrecting it.

"Now's not the best time Junior!" Runner cocked her Carbine and fired it rapidly until she took down the Elite and nearby Jackals.

There wasn't much of them, but they were a resistance that stalled them from reaching their objective for a few minutes.

"Come on, next room is the medical bay. Let's go!" Archangel seemed to be upset in the length of time this mission seemed to take. The walk was literally thirty seconds, the enemies made it ten minutes.

As they entered the room, there seemed to be no enemies in sight. They spread out and held a defense as Junior and Runner went for the door. As they got closer, they saw two Knight's warp into the room, that's where the lights went dark.

"Magnus on me for breach!" Runner yelled. She could hear Ash in the other room. She seemed to be gasping for air and having troubles to breathe. The Knight's were still visible as they glowed in the dark. Yet, she and the others were forced to activate their flashlights for their safety.

The gasping was louder as they opened the door and eliminated the Knight's. As the lights flicked back on, Ash's eyes opened. She coughed, but seemed alright.

"Ash, are you alright?" Runner ran up and asked.

"I'm fine, I feel better now that I've been brought here. Thank you guy's, we've made it. I made it. I actually thought that planet was the last for me." Ash managed to get a smile on her left side.

She looked around, they all seemed to be focused on her. "What's wrong?"

Archangel took a stand in front of the others. "You might not believe this if they told you, but UNSC Warlord has been destroyed and Jackson was sent to take out Lan Chorus's ship with a nuke."

"Wait, they sent Jackson on a suicide mission in intent to kill someone who isn't even there?" Ash sounded more baffled by that than the fact her ship was destroyed.

"Uh... Yes, I guess. What makes you think Lan Chorus isn't there?" Archangel was confused.

“Because Verite is, not Lan Chorus. Verite went to the ship back on the planet after they killed the Brute’s. Lan Chorus stayed to take out any of the remaining survivors if you don’t mind, especially in those one aerial vehicles they had assisting them.”

“Should we tell Maria? Get Jackson out of their and back to safety?” Runner was confused on what to do. She didn’t quite understand, all she remembers is that she was almost dead until that happened. That anti-air Wraith had its cannon focused on the pelican like the sitting duck it was.

At that very moment Frank teleported in front of them, and he appeared to be in the hands of some type of Knight. All that was heard were loud gasping sounds, which explained their worry earlier when they thought it was Ash, it was Frank.

“I knew something was different, I just didn’t say anything or notice what.” Magnus stated.

The Knight stared at them, soon Frank’s back was a bright orange. The Knight fired in an incineration cannon into his back and blasted him with it, his body was gone.

They all raised their weapons, Magnus threw his pistol to Ash who caught it. The Knight opened its face to scream at them, which called more Promethean’s to help out. All of them a new kind that they didn’t know about.

“Fireteam Lord, be cautious. There is a Knight Stratego on the ship. If you spot him, bring him down at all costs. He’s the equivalent as a Covenant Field Marshall. Except worse when it comes to combat. Oh, and be careful of his friends, Soldier’s. Don’t drop your focus off them for more than one second.” Maria said, and that was it of the conversation.

The Knight summoned a Watcher, then proceeded to charge his cannon.

~End of Chapter 22~

~Chapter 23: Finish~

Ash watched as Junior and Joseph were eliminated by the Stratego within seconds. Marines and ODSTs ran in to assist, but were killed by the two soldiers that remained. The team had to move quick, they knew if they eliminated those soldiers, the Stratego would just bring in more.

If they didn’t, they’d get killed bringing down the Stratego. There was no other options. They were in a tough situation right now, one they wouldn’t win but they wouldn’t lose.

Magnus was at the face of the Night right now, his bullets did no harm to it. Only the armor. Ash watched as the knight knocked the weapon out of his hand, then use the incineration cannon to dispose of him and everything he had.

Runner ran over to Ash and got behind the cover where she was hiding. Tears streamed down her face, the same thought was in her mind as it was Ash's. They were going to die. They knew there was no other way.

Ash looked Runner in her eyes, "It's just you and me now. Everyone else is dead. Archangel, Anne, Jackson... They're dead. I know we both will meet our fate here soon. But let's not go down without a fight, see if we can save this ship even if we can't save ourselves." Ash forced a smile on her face.

"A..Alright. I..Guess we can do that." Runner looked at her with hope, "I wish things went differently. I wish I would've got to know you better."

Ash looked at Runner, in attempt to keep tears from rolling down her eyes. "Here, take this. I'll be right behind you." Ash handed her a shotgun. "If it doesn't work, I'll be behind you to do the rest. I promise." Ash gave her a pat on the back.

As Runner ran towards the Knight, Ash pulled the pin off one of the grenades on Runner's belt. She stood back, a tear rolled down the cheek of her left eye.

"Ash?" Runner called out, terror in her voice. "Ash!?" Runner was face to face with the Knight Stratego. It was too late to go anywhere, the Knight went to swing.

The grenade exploded, as well did the others. Blowing the Knight Stratego to bits. Leaving the two Soldiers.

Ash wiped the tears from her face and stood up with the pistol Magnus had given her. She made sure it was ready, and that these two Prometheans would be the end.

Jackson ran up to Verite. Sword in hand, he swung while Verite blocked. Verite swung while he blocked. This battle would go on for awhile, unless they stepped things up. Either way, the timer on the bomb kept ticking.

"Y'know, for an Elite. You're pretty good. I've killed about as many of your kind as much as you use grunt's for cannon fodder." Jackson smirked at the Elite.

Verite grunted in hatred, "I've killed many of your kind as well. With my hand, and in the destruction of your planets."

Jackson didn't like that response. He unleashed the anger in him with the movement of his swings.

Verite hated this demon, his anger was triggered more by the fact that he could have killed him, but decided against it. The damn demon was supposed to just die and rot in the wasteland of the Brute's.

"Not bad yourself, but you still got what's coming for you." Jackson taunted the Elite.

"You'll see!" Verite swung his sword as Jackson blocked it, then kicked the demon in the chest, he swung his sword again. Removing Jackson's arm with a clean swipe.

Jackson stared at the Elite, hatred in his eyes. "You cheated. That is not fair."

"I will determine what is fair and what is not fair, demon. Now you will die an undesiring and unrespectful death. You'll have what's coming to you." Verite went to swing, but Jackson jumped out of the way.

"Well, all I needed to do was buy myself some time." Verite seemed confused at what Jackson was saying. "This was supposed to be a round trip, but it seems my time has come to an end." Verite just stared at him, confused... Wait.

The bomb.

Verite screamed right before it detonated, which is exactly what the last thing Jackson wanted to hear.

Ash walked up towards the Soldier's. Weapon at the ready, the two Soldiers stared at her with their weapons lowered. "Human!"

As Ash went to quickdraw, she was stopped. Penetrated by a hot, warm, sharp object. "Ughnuhuhuh..." Ash couldn't move, it didn't feel right. What happened?

"You think you could just run away, come back, blow up one of my ships, and then think you could leave? Well I'll have you know I do not take this sort of behavior in an acceptable manner. Your death is just a matter of the correlation. Soon will be your ship and the rest of your friends." Lan Chorus said in a hasty matter, pure hatred rushed through him as he drug the sword out of Ash and through her on the ground.

She watched as more Elite's came in and killed the Soldiers and pushed for the command deck. Ash laid there in a pool of her own blood. Waiting for the last seconds to pass...

Ash opened her eyes. A bright light was in her field of vision as were three other people standing over her, two of them were in a lab coat one was in an ONI Jacket.

“The simulation is incomplete, and she has failed her objective. What makes you think she’s worthy of joining our Spartan team, Doctor Halsey?” Must have been the ONI Jacket guy.

“The simulation is meant for them to fail, but she has by far made it even further than most Spartan’s have. For the exception of a few of them, regarding Blue and Red team. I think she’ll fit in nicely.” Halsey responded.

“But what if she fails like she did her objective? We’ve had other Spartan’s make it as far as her, such as T-031 Jackson and S-034 Archangel, but they were a loss on the frontlines a couple days after.” The ONI seemed like he wanted to discard of her into the waste can.

“It’s alright, Thomas. This one is special. I know she’ll make it far. You just have to trust me. I’ll work with her, and hopefully she can be one of the best soldiers out there you’ll need her to be.”

“Very well, do what you must. We believe the Covenant are headed to Reach within the next few days. I hope she’ll be ready by then.”

The door slammed shut and everyone left, the lights went out leaving her in the dark.

“It... It was all a simulation...” Ash cried.

~End of Chapter 23~

~Book 3: Complete~