



HIPPOCRATICA



A HALO WAYPOINT CHRONICLE

HIPPOCRATICA

A HALO WAYPOINT CHRONICLE

HISTORIAN'S NOTE

This account is primarily based on excerpts taken from “Not Far from the Tree: The Autobiography of Adam Andrews,” currently slated for eventual publication by Singer-Edwards Ink in late 2561.

[<<<ADVANCING MANUSCRIPT TO CHAPTER 3>>>]

I wish I could say it had been the first time I'd wandered off alone. Our family had been coming to Arcadia for as long as I could remember, so I'd come to view the central city as my own sort of playground. It was heaven for an eight-year-old, and I took every opportunity to sneak off and find some sort of adventure whenever I could. Sometimes I'd pop into a museum to gawk at fossils or chase drymanders through the local gardens, sometimes I'd sit at the edge of the port wall, legs dangling over the water and watching the luxury *Bantas* ferry waves of tourists in and out of orbit.

All that peace. All that innocence. All those memories.

Gone in an instant.

At first, I didn't quite know what was going on—there were explosions and flashes of blues, greens, and purples, all light from unknown sources. I think my kid brain went straight to the assumption that it was one of the

regular fireworks displays that rained over the central city courtyards... but that didn't make sense for the time of day.

And then came the screaming and the scattering of people. Citizens scrambling en masse like schools of baitfish evading a predator. To this day it's hard to even process it all—sometimes I struggle to recount it because I'm no longer sure what elements are actually valid recollections and what's just fragments of news blips and docu-vid replays invading my thoughts and manifesting as memory.

I remember running into the transit station to find a train that would take me away from it all, but of course there were none to be found.

I remember wishing I had just stayed with my parents instead of adventuring alone.

I remember sudden blasts of heat and metal men.

I remember the magician.

[<<<ADVANCING MANUSCRIPT TO CHAPTER 5>>>]

To be fair, most of the other kids were pretty nice to me. For almost a year I heard basically nothing but kind words and condolences, was cooked hot meals and taken to theme parks. A well-meaning prescription of patience and pity. Of course, eventually it went away, and I can't blame them. It had to have taken a toll on my aunt and uncle. They had never intended to have any kids of their own, but just the same found their nephew converted into a son when the wrong ferry came crashing back down on Arcadia's surface, Covenant plasma still boiling away the spacecraft's seething skin.

In an instant I'd inherited the Optican empire, but it couldn't save the lives I wanted it to most.

Sometimes, I would wonder what those final moments were like for them. At first it was easy to just be angry—did they even try to look for me? Come back to get me? That frustration then always inevitably turned to guilt and self-loathing—it was *my* fault. I was the one who had wandered off, the one that created the sudden separation in search of frivolous recreation.

In the following years as I pieced together more about the attack itself, it became obvious that there was no “coming back to get me.” Colonists were herded like cattle onto any transport possible, and any attempt to swim upstream the sea of terrified people would have been its own death wish.

Despite the fact that my wandering off had ultimately led to my own survival, it would create a gravity well of guilt that remains almost inescapable to this day. Because of me, their last moments weren’t just full of dread—it was also full of loss.

[<<<ADVANCING MANUSCRIPT TO CHAPTER 8>>>]

...no really, I was obsessed. I didn’t necessarily have a favorite team to root for per se, at least not in the ’41 season, but I still made sure to catch the broadcasts whenever they were on. It wasn’t just about the competition itself—it was the fact that these people leveraged that competition to make leaps in engineering, particularly within the realm of health and safety. They were pioneering advancements that went beyond the sport itself, and I quickly realized that maybe a sponsorship deal of some sort would make sense in the near future. But that, of course, would require a future to be there in the first place.

[<<<ADVANCING MANUSCRIPT TO CHAPTER 11>>>]

It wasn’t that I hadn’t thought about it before—I certainly had. But it really took me until the final years of my university program to understand how much that experience had shaped my own goals and focuses.

In the midst of wrapping up my degree certifications, I was also still trying to learn how to help run a massive company that serviced more colonies than I'd dared to count. Needless to say, there were members of the board that weren't exactly over the moon about giving a twenty-two-year-old any sort of decision-making autonomy, but they also didn't have a lot of say in the matter.

I was only in that position in the first place because of what the Covenant did—if we had found better ways to handle that problem years ago then we wouldn't be in this situation in the first place. And hell, I was only alive because of the efforts of well-trained and well-equipped soldiers. I didn't care if an increased military partnership was frowned upon at the time, I was going to find a way to save lives.

That's what we did! Why my family founded Optican in the first place.

Of course, the loneliness would always inevitably return, even if it was partly the result of the relentless cadence of my schedule. There was always something, the next development meeting, the next qualifying exam, the next restaurant that ignored my pleas for minimal spice application.

Thank goodness for Dan. We'd become roommates in our second year, and it made a huge difference having someone around to help keep you grounded when everything else in your life refused to stop its seismic shifting. Plus, he knew how to cook.

[<<<ADVANCING MANUSCRIPT TO CHAPTER 22>>>]

...it wasn't that we didn't try, that's for sure. Optican had continued to expand in the years after the Covenant War. There were countless worlds—countless *people*—who deserved a ray of hope after all of the darkness we'd been put through. I wanted to help make sure that hospitals were stocked, that technicians were trained, that budgets were approved.

It wasn't enough to be reactive, we had to be prepared. And that takes an evolution in mindset to manifest as an evolution in practice.

Of course, it didn't surprise me that those changes have certainly come with a new set of challenges, though fewer of those challenges were shooting at you. Well, to be more accurate, *different* challenges were shooting at you.

But the mission never changed.

I just wanted to make them proud.

Still do.

[<<<PAUSING MANUSCRIPT>>>]

*

“Alright, all good?”

Adam tentatively waited for confirmation from the audio engineer on the other side of the screen that divided the recording booth from the rest of the room, but he was already slumping in his chair a little. This was about as much as he could put into the performance of revisiting some of the most traumatic memories of his life.

“We're all good, Mr. Andrews,” confirmed the audio engineer, giving him two thumbs up. “I think that's a wrap on this session. I'll update the publisher's rep on today's progress.”

“Good.” Adam promptly rose from his chair, strode out of the booth, and marched quickly to the closest restroom.

Trapped. Alone. The transit station's doors wouldn't budge.

Noises outside. Shouting, screaming... a glimpse of what was happening though the window.

“This is Ground Control, Covenant are closing in! Prepare emergency launch protocols.”

It was a bright and beautiful day, and the end of the world had come...

Adam ran the tap and splashed cold water on his face, taking a series of deep breaths to calm himself and clear his head. He needed to lie down, to rest. Thirty-six hours running on nothing but Casbah coffee was well and truly taking its toll.

But there was no time. He had one last thing to see to.

*

“Hey kid,” a voice called. “What the hell are you doing in there?”

“Can’t get out, door won’t open,” Adam said.

“Wanna see a magic trick?”

“A... what?”

A few moments passed, and then the transit station’s doors slowly parted a few inches before jamming. His rescuer then ran up the stone steps to force them further apart, and Adam finally got a good look at him. He had never seen a magician in Marine Corps battle dress uniform before.

“Do you know any other tricks?” Adam asked as the magician grabbed his hand and pulled him out of the building. There was a vehicle waiting for them—a military car with two curved tusks at its front and a large rear-mounted cannon.

The magician remained quiet as he helped lift Adam into the passenger seat of the vehicle, the grin on his face fading into a look of focus and grim determination. With this elevated view, Adam could see the crowds of people streaming towards the city's spaceport as aircraft flew overhead to carve a path through the skies while armored soldiers sprinted towards the sounds of panicked screams and gunfire.

The tusked car took off at an incredible speed that forced Adam back into his seat, the deep roll of thunder passing above as the soldier on the rear-mounted cannon fired on purple shapes that passed by in a blur.

"You wanted to see another trick?" asked the magician. "We're gonna play one on the Covenant. When we get to that spaceport, we're gonna make you and everyone else disappear. Just keep your eyes on me, alright?"

Adam nodded. He told himself that nothing else in the world existed, fixing his gaze upon the magician.

His promise was put to the test almost immediately as the car swerved sharply to the right. He redoubled his efforts, catching himself before he could properly see what they had collided with. It was then that he caught sight of a peculiar trinket strapped to the magician's shoulder pad.

"What's that?" Adam asked.

"The ace of spades," the magician said, that confident grin returning once more. "That's our ticket to get Lady Luck on our side, kid!"

*

The EV-44 Nightingale was a sight to behold as it awaited Adam's arrival on the executive-level pad, its tiltrotor wings already running to make an immediate departure. His ride here from Optican's office headquarters had certainly been smoother than the memory of his rescue that he had allowed himself to be pulled into as he gazed out at the glasslands of Arcadia.

This VTOL was one of the earliest partnerships Adam had secured with Misriah Armory in the aftermath of the Covenant War. He had originally envisioned the EV-44 solely as a medical support vessel, but a compromise that was later framed as a symbolic gesture of “the best of both worlds” saw the creation of a highly customizable airframe to suit a variety of purposes.

He had ordered two other EV-44s to follow him from a distance. Adam would travel alone, save for his pilot, while the other two were crewed with a complement of four private military specialists—just in case things went south.

To that point, now was Adam’s last chance to make one particular call.

He’d been putting it off all day.

“Hey Dan.”

Adam winced slightly at how awkwardly that had come out. After twelve years together, Dan would immediately know something was off.

“Running late at the office again today, you know how it is, but I think we’ve got leftovers from the other night so feel free to have them. I’ll probably grab something from World Cuisine on the way back. And yes, I know, I said I was going to give it up. Old habits...”

Adam trailed off for a moment, still weighing in his mind exactly what to reveal and how to say it as he fiddled with his seat’s arm rest.

“I know I’ve been... distant, lately. Wrapped up in work, away from home—from you—for long periods of time, and I know it’s wearing on you. I’m working on something. Something big. I’ve had to keep it quiet, but we’re turning a pretty huge corner today, and I’ll tell you everything about it when I get back. Tomorrow, when I’m back tomorrow. I promise.”

Letting out a heavy sigh, Adam searched for a sense of relief that did not come. He'd have questions to answer when he got back, and he hoped that Dan would understand why he had to do this.

Adam tried to distract himself by looking out at the landscape of Arcadia. Though the Covenant had been beaten back from the planet during their initial assault in 2531, the alien alliance returned eighteen years later to finish what they'd started with renewed, vengeful vigor. Since then, Arcadia's surface had remained ashen gray—there were no pockets of color to be seen from orbit...

But glassed planets had become something of a hot commodity in recent years. These lifeless rocks were the perfect job-creators, with the likes of Liang-Dortmund, Aquarius, and other opportunistic corporations playing a long game of land ownership by investing in deglassing operations. Displaced refugees became captivated by the promise of reclaiming their homes, working in conditions where breathing in the wrong place could shred your lungs with tiny shards of glass in the atmosphere. They needed to be looked out for.

That—as Adam told himself, day after day—was where Optican came in.

After the Covenant War had ended, or at least slowed to the point where humanity was not in imminent danger of extinction, the task of rebuilding a healthcare plan on an interstellar scale had arisen. And there he had been, right at the center of it.

Advanced wheelchairs, artificial limbs, instant-application field-issue medigel, physical therapy, mental health, the study and treatment of bacteria and diseases from dozens of different worlds, all on top of general healthcare for the countless souls that had been displaced during the Covenant War, with refugees scattered across surviving colonies...

All of it relied on the Unified Earth Government's infrastructure, which President Charet had sought to prioritize rebuilding upon her appointment.

But despite all those pretty speeches about how humanity would never again be the victim of warring alien factions, it didn't take long before new threats emerged. Covenant remnant groups, reawakened Forerunner constructs, an AI rebellion, the Banished... and who even knew what had become of the UNSC's once-expansive reach over the last year.

The work of civilization simply could not keep up with the rate at which an increasing number of groups were trying to end it.

Lady Luck had *not* seemed to favor them of late.

For this feeling of existential malaise, Adam had no remedy—and he kicked himself for how unhelpful his attempt to distract his thoughts were.

A jolt brought him back to the present, as the Nightingale landed in a swampy clearing. This was a rare area of Arcadia that the Covenant had actually avoided glassing directly, discovered after Adam had sent a scout team to this region a few years ago.

The impact of that trip, and all the plans it had spun up, had culminated in the journey he was making today.

Exiting the Nightingale, Adam's boots hit soft ground and squelched in thick mud. The clearing was quite remarkable, as he found himself surrounded by tall, thick-trunked trees that were miraculously still growing leaves. He knew that the Covenant had once shrouded this area in a protective energy dome on their first visit to Arcadia... had it been restored? Was that how this place had been preserved?

The path ahead led him to the ruins of an old UNSC firebase surrounded by strange ancient ruins that looked as if they were made of weathered stone, but vein-like lines and patterns of hardlight told Adam that these structures were not as fragile as they appeared.

He wondered if Arcadia had been a resort world for the Forerunners as well...

But his thoughts were quickly turned to business as he found his quarry. The telltale whine of a Phantom dropship sounded above and three Kig-Yar quickly deployed next to the firebase's entrance, outfitted in salvager gear with holstered plasma pistols. They had taken precautions too, it seemed.

"Held up our part of bargain," the one in the middle squawked, gesturing towards an industrial-grade UNSC equipment crate that descended to the ground via the Phantom's rear gravity lift. "Brought out to middle of nowhere for this. You have payment?"

"Let's take a walk."

The Kig-Yar narrowed its eyes. "Nor Fel not like unexpected surprises, human."

"She and I have that much in common. But I do think she'll be pleased with what you will be giving her."

Leading them past the firebase and the Forerunner ruins, Adam led the Kig-Yar through the overgrown field beyond. He saw other, smaller temple structures with what appeared to be crude huts and metal shacks positioned near them, raising even more questions in his mind about what exactly had happened here upon the Covenant's return in 2549.

"Almost thirty years ago, the Covenant came to this planet," Adam started, filling the otherwise uncomfortable silence. "It was one of the few places that was apparently spared from their glassing beams because it was home to Forerunner technology they deemed valuable enough to warrant a very special protector."

He could see the ruins of it up ahead. The alloyed corpse of an incomplete Scarab, a unique form of the excavator so large and powerful that it could not simply be deployed but had to be built on-site.

“It was, of course, no match for a team of Spartans and the UNSC forces that went up against it, but one part of it *did* survive...”

Adam savored the dramatic moment that had held the Kig-Yar in captivated silence as he found the part he was looking for. And Adam saw the light in the Kig-Yars’ eyes appear to shine even brighter as they saw what he was pointing at.

A massive focus cannon—the head of the Scarab—was approximately eight meters long, powerful enough to disintegrate even some Forerunner alloys.

He had pored over every record, every report and intelligence file he could find of that time, to learn about those who had saved him, hoping that he could one day find the magician who had taken him to the spaceport. He had even sent scout teams to the nearby Fort Deen, which was what had led them to come across this site where the leftover wreckage of a battle still remained.

Through these efforts, he had learned of the UNSC *Spirit of Fire*. Missing in action. Later declared lost with all hands...

The magician’s final magic trick had been to make them disappear.

Adam believed that they were still out there, somewhere. A childish hope, perhaps, but the galaxy was a large place.

And with so many heroes missing, the infrastructure of their deliverance seemingly sundered, it fell to others to fill the gap their absence left. That work began today.

“Deal is acceptable, human,” the lead Kig-Yar nodded its avian head in acknowledgement of a respectable transaction. “Nor Fel will be satisfied.”

Without another word, the Kig-Yar signaled for their associates to prepare for departure and secure the focus cannon with their Phantom’s gravity lift.

Adam wandered back to the UNSC firebase, finding his own cargo being disassembled into smaller crates that were loaded onto each Nightingale. After helping to secure the crates, Adam relaxed in his seat and felt some of the weight that had been pressing down upon him finally lift. It had all gone off without a hitch.

With the end of this chapter, he was ready to begin the next. Briefly, he wondered how his next book might be written...

*

August-099 continued to observe through the scope of her M99 Stanchion as the three Nightingales departed. She knew that uncovering the details of Optican's part in this deal would have to wait for another day, but the Kig-Yar salvagers and their Phantom had not yet departed—their window of opportunity was still open.

August noted Robert-025 and Leon-011 had winked their status lights green on her heads-up display. They were already in position.

She gave the signal with three quick bursts from her M99. The Kig-Yar didn't have more than a nanosecond to react as the anti-matériel rifle's tungsten rounds found their mark—it was as if the trio of salvagers had simply been wiped from existence as they flew to pieces.

Leon charged towards the Phantom, leaping into the rear gravity lift and igniting his energy sword to dispatch the pilot and any additional forces contained within. Robert was prepared to meet any escapees of the craft with his heavy machine gun turret, but it only took a few short seconds for Leon to confirm that the dropship had been neutralized.

"Good work, Omega Team," August spoke over TEAMCOM now that they were alone.

“Obtaining the transport manifest now,” Leon said, feeding the data to their HUDs. Robert moved over to the Scarab’s focus cannon to begin preliminary scans.

Ever vigilant, August continued to perform overwatch for the team, ensuring that there weren’t any other surprise guests lying in wait or unexpected visitors who might be late to the party.

“Nor Fel’s getting a bit too confident now that she’s sure the Created and ONI aren’t breathing down her neck,” Leon remarked as he updated the feed with the cargo manifest the Kig-Yar had traded. *“Not seen these in a while...”*

August glanced at the data and quickly understood Leon’s surprise.

She remembered.

Hellas, 2527...

Insurrectionist activity during the Covenant War had been uneven and inconsistent. Where some sectors saw declines, other groups had been keen to press a new advantage with a weapon they’d obtained that their leaders said could level the playing field against Spartans.

They’d forced a retreat into an indefensible fox hole. Twenty of what had once been a full company, cornered, backs against the wall, low on ammo... but then, one of them pulled something and injected it into his arm, started pushing *forwards*. Whatever he’d taken had turned a soft target into something as resilient as an M808. He didn’t even stumble until he’d taken half a mag from an MA5B, but when his own allies moved up to cover him, he turned on them, shredding through them like they were nothing.

When several similar reports emerged from Fumirole and a handful of other colonies, Naval Intelligence got a good look at what they’d been using.

Formally, they called it a Waverly-class augmentor, but grunts on the ground simply called them “rumbledrugs.”

This chemical cocktail could temporarily suspend the normal limits of the human body, massively enhancing strength and pain tolerance by rapidly targeting the frontal lobe—though this came at the cost of immense and irreversible psychological damage. As soon as it became clear that the user was as likely to tear apart their own side as their enemies, it had fallen out of use and was officially declared illegal.

Naturally, this begged the question: *What the hell did Optican want with these illegal and ineffective drugs?*

For now, there were still some last staging details to finalize so that Nor Fel would believe that the transaction went smoothly and the item of interest she was expecting to acquire had been waylaid after her salvagers had departed.

“Focus cannon is secure,” Robert confirmed over TEAMCOM.

“Skies are clear,” Leon winked a green status light.

“Let’s wrap it up, Omega,” August said. *“We’re gone.”*