



GHOSTS & GLASS



A HALO WAYPOINT CHRONICLE

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HISTORIAN'S NOTE

Halo: 'Ghosts & Glass' by B. Giraud takes place in March 2558, over five years after the fall of Reach.

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BRAVO 001: *"Mayday, mayday! This is Bravo 001, en route to your position. Do you have a visual on my aircraft, over?"*

GOLDEN ARROW: *"Bravo 001, this is Golden Arrow. I do believe you are steering that bird in the wrong direction, over."*

BRAVO 001: *"Negative. Bird's electronics are fried, I'm flying blind! Just need you to point me in the direction of the LZ."*

GOLDEN ARROW: *"You got it, Bravo 001, happy to oblige. Link up with uniform-delta one-zero-one-five-three-niner-niner-zero, heading south-southwest. Slips about one-zero-zero knots. Advise you head for the treetops and fly straight at Mount Törött. We got more than enough problems of our own down here."*

BRAVO 001: *"I say again: that's a negative, Golden Arrow. I've got high value assets in tow with strict orders to drop them directly on your location. My bird ain't going to hold together all the way to the boneyard. Need an LZ clear, over."*

GOLDEN ARROW: *"With respect, Bravo, unless you have a cartful of tac' nukes with my name on it, you don't have anything of value in that bird. Get your ass to evac."*

BRAVO 001: *"All right, Golden Arrow. If I can't set her down, I'll just drop these big Spartans on your head, out."*

GOLDEN ARROW: *"Damn Bravo, why didn't you say so? Come down close to the tree line about two clicks due west of your current position. That's where me and my boys are, over."*

BRAVO 001: *"I'm gonna need that LZ cleared, Golden Arrow. I'll be right on top of you in three mikes."*

GOLDEN ARROW: *"Hell, I'm gonna clear you a spot myself, Bravo. Look for the trooper with big-ass grin on his face."*

BRAVO 001: *"Roger that, I'll see you. Out."*

// [end – next file] //

RECON 43: *"Gamma One Actual, this is Recon 43. We are in position, over."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Recon 43, this is Gamma One Actual. Gimme a radio check, over."*

RECON 43: *"Got eyes on three Ghosts and twenty-four infantry. Typical scout detachment, please advise."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Recon 43, do not engage. Sit tight and keep your eyes and ears open. I say again, gimme a radio check, over."*

RECON 43: *"Gamma One Actual, we do not read you, say again, we do not read you, over."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Recon 43, you are not cleared to engage. I say again, you are not cleared to engage. Is there anyone else close to their grid? Damn it!"*

RECON 43: *"Looks like we're on our own, boys. This is their eyes and ears, we flatten these guys and disengage. Tag your targets and get ready to go loud on my mark."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Recon 43, this is Gamma One Actual. I say again: you are to stand down and withdraw immediately. Do not engage, over!"*

RECON 43: *"Fire! That's it, make 'em count!"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"What do we have that we can send to support them? Damn it!"*

RECON 43: *"Pull back, move and shoot, move and shoot! Where the hell did all these hostiles come from?"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Tell Beta Romeo Actual that the company we are expecting is going to be arriving a little sooner than we anticipated. Recon 43, I say again, you are not cleared to engage! Stow your weapons, we are reading multiple inbound hostiles in your sector. You do not want their attention, over!"*

RECON 43: *"Aw, damn! Tip of the spear, nothin'. It's the whole godforsaken fleet! Fire, fire, fire!"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Recon 43, respond. Check in! Recon 43, do you read me? Damn it! Get Red Team up and running, high alert. We're about to have company."*

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What you just heard is the moment that the battle of Reach hit the point of no return.

There are more messages like this than can be counted. Even as we speak, the debris field around Reach—over five years later—is still being combed over and turning up new data, building the overall tapestry of the greatest military defeat ever suffered by humanity.

My job is to sift through that data, to listen to the moments that piece together the battle as it happened. To find and tell the stories of those valiant souls who heroically fought against the Covenant, holding the line so that just one more ship had a chance to evacuate as the planet's surface was burned by orbital plasma bombardment.

My name is Benjamin Giraud, and this is *Ghosts & Glass*. Join me as we explore the untold stories of the fall of Reach.

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PVT. GOODMAN: *"So, uh..."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Come on, spit it out."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"You, uh, got a zombie plan?"*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Hell yeah."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Yeah? Maybe we could exchange notes."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Well, uh, I dunno, man. Zombie plans are kinda... deeply personal thing with me."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Oh I understand, it's just, I find that saying them out loud, you know, getting 'em out in the open really helps reveal any flaws they might have."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Yeah, makes sense."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Okay."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Alright. So, zombies can still hear and stuff, so that makes guns a weapon of last resort, right?"*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Yeah, yeah, solid so far. Ammo, too."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Exactly. So I was thinking that, what is a weapon that'll keep them out of grabbing range, and won't run out of ammo? A spear."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Hold up. Now, see, this is workin' already."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Huh?"*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Spear! I thought so too at one time, but the possibility of getting it stuck in the brainpan of a walking corpse is very real."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Oh yeah, you're right. Man, I hadn't thought about that. Well, uh..."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Ball-peen hammer."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"But you'd have to get right up on top of the zombie to use it, man."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"Yeah, survival ain't about running around killing zombies, man. Plus, a single sharp blow to the head would drop most zombies. It'll work on cheetahs, too."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"What the... There ain't cheetahs on Reach. Anyway, we should probably be working the kinks out of our alien invasion plan first. Aliens are smarter, faster, and more technically advanced than zombies. They're also here. Zombies, not so much."*

PVT. GOODMAN: *"What I tell ya? Reach ain't no place for no self-respecting marine to spend any amount of time."*

PVT. DEAKINS: *"Hey, we ain't in the Autumn yet, pal."*

*

Here's the thing, a lot of the data that's being found is what some might call junk. Believe me, I've built up an entire archive filled with the inane ramblings of bored troopers just sitting around, waiting for orders. I'm sure I could put together several seasons of episodes from that alone.

While these recordings don't necessarily shed any light on the battle itself, they still hold immense value. There is something deeply precious about the preservation of these interactions, these tiny moments in time set against the devastation brought by the Covenant. I believe that when we are faced with unrelenting violence and death on such a scale, we must process that loss—sit with it, feel it, rage against it, weep... whatever it takes to actually digest these events that define our history and connect us with our common humanity.

During the war, we didn't have the luxury of slowing down. The danger of annihilation was a constant presence. One day, you were living a normal, ordinary life, and then the Covenant would arrive. They would burn your home and everybody you've ever known to a cinder. And if you didn't make it to an evacuation craft, one of the few that was lucky enough to get out? Well, then you burned too.

We're out of that period now. Covenant remnant groups still strike at smaller, far-flung colonies, but they're no longer quite the "bogeyman" they were over the last few decades. The dust has settled; the glass is being chipped away. At last, we have the opportunity to reckon with everything we've lost.

Unsurprisingly, we're going to have to reckon with that for a very long time.

So yes, this archive of nonsense ramblings from the people on Reach may not contribute to our historical understanding of the battle, but I keep them stored and preserved as a tribute to the soul of what we lost. This archive continues to grow. It may not be something as grand as the still-standing Sedlec Ossuary, but it is something that I hope to one day pass on to the Museum of Humanity for future generations to learn about the war that defined our species.

Walk the streets of just about any city on Earth and you'll still find "Remember Reach" among the most common graffiti around. It's just one of those things where—whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever you feel about the Unified Earth Government—the fall of Reach was a moment that hit all of us one way or another.

Of course, there has been a lot of lively discussion over the years about the battle itself, resulting in countless conflicting accounts. Some ardently insist that the battle took place over no more than a day and that the notion of it spanning a month-long Covenant military campaign was merely propaganda concocted to improve morale. There are even some corners of Waypoint where conspiracy theorists have suggested that the Office of Naval Intelligence *lured* the Covenant to Reach—though no concrete reason as to why ONI would do such a thing has ever been arrived at.

But this isn't about giving credence to such spirited speculation, let alone claims as wild as seeing Jackals riding enslaved Gúta. No, today's episode is about a story I came across while piecing together recordings from my archive and restoring the communications logs of a destroyer known as the UNSC *Majestic*...

Today's episode of Ghosts & Glass is the story of Charlie Company and a Spartan team known as "Beta-Red."

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GAMMA FIVE: *"Gamma One, Facility Alpha 412 is overrun, and I'm heading to your location with what's left of Gamma Five, over."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Gamma Five? Damn, it's good to hear you. How many are you bringing? I thought B-net said your house got knocked down."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Confirm. ODG-412 is slag. Lost all but fourteen able bodies. Making our way over in two 'hogs and a radio van."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"The more the merrier. Looks like we got makin's for a party. Some honest-to-god Spartans are ridin' up here with some boys from Third Mech as we speak."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Hate to break it to you, Gamma One, but Covies hit us with two divisions at Alpha 412. How many Spartans you got on approach?"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Gamma Five, say again? That was two divisions, over?"*

GAMMA FIVE: *"That's affirmative. We put a dent in 'em, but that's about it. The only reason I ain't one of them on the line with you right now is HIGHCOM decided to drop every available asset right on top of 'em, and us. Over."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Well, I hope you're bringing extra ammo then, Gamma Five."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"All we could carry and then some. ETA twenty-five mikes, out."*

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Let's back up for a second.

These recordings are all dated August 30, 2552—the day that Reach fell. As survivor accounts have revealed, this was perhaps the largest known deployment of Spartan teams in the war.

The Spartans of Red Team were aboard Pelican Bravo 001, which we heard from earlier as they negotiated a landing zone near one of the generators for the orbital defense platforms.

ODPs are satellite stations built around a really, *really* big gun—the kind that can fire rounds at something like four percent of the speed of light, gutting a Covenant ship in one shot. Reach had an array of twenty of these bad boys, each of them powered by fusion generators buried within the planet, which made them a priority target for the Covenant invasion.

As the Spartans split up into splinter teams, their mission was to protect those generators. Hold the Covenant back, whatever the cost.

This is what happened next.

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BETA ROMEO ACTUAL: *"Gamma One Actual, my team is in position. Get your people ready to move as soon as I give the signal, over."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"With respect, Red, we might not be Spartans, but this is our home. My men will die here if I ask them to."*

BETA ROMEO ACTUAL: *"I don't doubt that, Gamma One Actual. Let's hope we won't need them to. Defensive perimeter online."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"This is nuts. What in the hell are those autoturrets supposed to do against what they're bringin', over?"*

BETA ROMEO ACTUAL: *"Divide their attention. Visual! Thirty-two Wraiths moving with two-hundred sixty infantry at two-hundred meters, closing*

on our lines due west at six kilometers per hour. Beta Red, hold position until I trigger primaries, then close on their front line as fast as you can."

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Dammit, Red, I heard you Spartans were crazy. Gamma-Five: radio check, over."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Five by five, Gamma One Actual. Drone is holding station at over ten thousand feet. We got eyes on the whole damn thing."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Those Spartans are crazy, they're gonna get us killed."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Holy-- You ain't gonna believe this! Beta-Red just punched right up into the guts of that Covie column! Ever see a Spartan go hand-to-hand with a Wraith? Unbelievable!"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"What are six Spartans gonna do against thirty thousand Covenant? They're dead men."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Can't argue that, but those Spartans just bought us some time. We might just make it out of this alive! Get ready to move, over!"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"That's the signal! Let's get the hell outta here."*

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GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Unknown station, this is Gamma One Actual. Do you read, over?"*

IRON FIST: *"Gamma One Actual, this is Iron Fist. We read you. What is the current status of Facility Alpha 331?"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Facility Alpha 331 is overrun and offline, defense grid in zone Uniform Delta is running at starvation levels. If you're taking survivors, we've got a few."*

IRON FIST: *"Negative, Gamma. We are en route to support Beta-Red. Any word on their status?"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"None, over."*

IRON FIST: *"Acknowledged. There's a temp evac station fifty klicks west along your current vector at Uniform Delta zero-zero-eight-niner-six-three-niner-eight-seven. I'll let them know you're coming."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Might want to tell them to start pulling up stakes. Beta-Red may be tough as hell, but I don't know how long they'll be able to tie up two armored divisions."*

IRON FIST: *"Say again, Gamma, over?"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"I said Beta-Red may be tough as hell but-- oh, my god!"*

IRON FIST: *"Gamma One Actual, we lost you. Say again, over?"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Iron Fist, this is Gamma One Actual. Three Covenant cruisers just dropped out of clouds directly above us, holding at approximately twenty thousand feet, traveling due east at approximately three hundred knots-- three-zero-zero knots!"*

IRON FIST: *"Visual confirmed, Gamma One. They just passed within fifty meters of our bird. Go NOA and punch it, there's still a chance we can pull Beta outta there."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Wait, you're not planning on heading into that mess, are you?"*

IRON FIST: *"Godspeed, and see you on the other side, Gamma. Out."*

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UNSC MAJESTIC: *"Alpha Two Zero, this is UNSC Majestic, two mikes out from window. Once we're on-station, you'll have us for all of three-zero seconds, over."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"Acknowledged, Majestic. Stand by, we are waiting for the go, no-go on the shoot. Uploading telemetry on targets."*

UNSC MAJESTIC: *"Telemetry received, on standby."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"CENTCOM, OWA is one mike three-zero seconds out from window, DD with five-zero one-hundred-sixty charlie mike, once on station we'll have three-zero seconds of trigger time, over."*

CENTCOM: *"Alpha Two Zero, this is CENTCOM. Beta-Red is directly in the splash zone. Until we have visual confirmation of their status, we are no-go, over."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"CENTCOM, those cruisers are burning birds out to five-zero clicks. Hell, they've hit civvy evac birds all the way out to CIS. Beta-Red have gone above and beyond but there's no way out for them, they just bought us our window. Now give me the go and I'll finish the job."*

CENTCOM: *"God help us... Go hot. Out."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"Alpha Two Zero to UNSC Majestic."*

UNSC MAJESTIC: *"Copy, Alpha, requesting go for shoot."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"Affirmative, we are go on the shoot. Over."*

UNSC MAJESTIC: *"Acknowledged. Shoot is a go, out. Six rounds, target number Kilo Tango two-zero-zero-five."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"Copy, Majestic. Six rounds, target number Kilo Tango two-zero-zero-five."*

UNSC MAJESTIC: *"Shot, over."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"Shot, out."*

UNSC MAJESTIC: *"Splash, over."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"Splash, out."*

UNSC MAJESTIC: *"Rounds complete, over."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"Rounds complete, out. End of mission, Majestic. All three target vehicles neutralized. I don't even want to guess what happened below."*

UNSC MAJESTIC: *"I copy, Alpha. End of mission, all three target vehicles neutralized. It's been fun, hope we get a chance to do it again. Out."*

ALPHA TWO ZERO: *"God willing. Out."*

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The Covenant fleet had arrived in force. Three cruisers were inbound while *thirty thousand* enemy troops were converging on the orbital MAC generator...

It's difficult to even comprehend the odds that Beta-Red and Charlie Company faced that day. We can only imagine the thunderous sound of so many alien boots marching, the whine of enemy aircraft swarming out of the cruisers, the moment before the first shot was fired as the scale of the enemy became clear.

And when those heroes on the ground were overwhelmed and could no longer hold the line, the UNSC *Majestic* unleashed hell with six consecutive MAC rounds on the area.

Survivors? The chances were as close to zero as you can imagine. Did Iron Fist make it in time to get Beta-Red out of there? There's surely no way anybody could emerge from that crater.

And yet...

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GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Gamma Five, holy crap! Buckman, you see that?"*

GAMMA FIVE: *"See it? Felt that in my damn chest. Whoever pulled the trigger wanted those sons-of-bitches dead."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Can't believe we just walked outta that crater. We gotta be the two luckiest bastards on this whole planet."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Luck ain't got nothing to do with it, Jake."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Think anybody could have survived that?"*

GAMMA FIVE: *"You mean Beta-Red? They say Spartans never die, but I don't think anything lived through that."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Damn, whole lotta real estate burning down there. Won't be much left once this is all said and done."*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Here we are, hightailing it to anywhere else. Doesn't seem right."*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"Well, pretty soon won't be any place else to run to. What's next, Earth?"*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Jake, anyone tell you you talk too damn much?"*

GAMMA ONE ACTUAL: *"All the time. What the hell else was there to do on Reach besides chase pioneer girls?"*

GAMMA FIVE: *"Now there's nothing, man. Now there's nothing at all. Five out."*

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Two marines climbed out of that damn foxhole!

I don't know what happened to them afterwards. The death toll from the fall of Reach is still being routinely updated, so Chapman, Buckman, if you're out there and happen to be listening, please get in touch. There are a lot of folks who would love to know that you're okay.

And as for Beta-Red. As Buckman said, "Spartans never die."

It's a piece of myth that is captured in a work of art in the 'Believe' series by the late and great artist Anaru Kawiti, who sadly perished last year during the attack on New Phoenix. This piece lives in the Museum of Humanity and depicts a Spartan, bloodied and defiant, holding aloft a tactical nuclear device as a horde of Covenant surrounds him—a settlement and orbital elevator on fire in the background under the shadow of a great snow-covered mountain. Below it is an inscription, words from Tennyson, that simply reads:

*Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell.*

In the wars of the past, there were mementos, keepsakes, medals—tangible things that we could hold onto, that would help us to remember the friends and family we lost. But we fought an enemy that burned those things to glass. There are no personal effects from those who fell on Reach. There's just this... these recordings of their voices in their last moments.

Today is March 3, 2558—five years to the day since the Covenant War formally ended. Take a moment to remember Beta-Red, Charlie Company, Reach... the countless billions that are no longer with us.

Carry them with you today. Talk to somebody—anybody—about it. Everybody's got a story to tell, so pass it on. Remember the fallen.

Remember Reach.

That's all for this week, folks. We'll be back next time with an exclusive interview from some of the Reavian citizens who are currently leading the effort to "deglass" the planet. These pioneers are working tirelessly to forge a new chapter for Reach so that, one day, it might be resettled for a generation free from the Covenant War's horrors.

Thank you for tuning in for our latest episode of *Ghosts & Glass*. This is Benjamin Giraud, signing off.

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**[ONI SECTION TWO ARCHIVE // RECORDED CHATTER CONVERSATION //
MARCH 10, 2558]**

> "Benjamin Giraud, as I live and breathe!"

>> "*Hello? Who is this?*"

> "Name's Sullivan. Michael Sullivan, Naval Intelligence. Senior Comms Director of Section Two. I'm a big fan of your work."

>> "*Thank you, but I--*"

> "But you have bigger things to offer than rummaging through old broadcasts from the fall of Reach, I know. That's yesterday's news, Ben.

You've been scraping by as a freelancer long enough; it's time to come back to the fold."

>> *"Sounds like you already have a story in mind?"*

> "I do, Ben. It's really gonna be something. I'll get a meeting on the books for us."

>> *"I haven't said yes yet."*

> "Oh, but I know you will. Tell me, Ben... how d'you feel about doing a profile on the Master Chief?"

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AUGUST 30, 2552 // REACH

If Hell is real, it probably looks something like this.

A seething, swarming mass of bodies as far as the eye could see. Some push forwards while others fall back like waves upon sand. Bursts of green, blue, and purple trace back and forth through the crowd, accompanied by fiery muzzle flashes, the roar of high-velocity cannons, and the groaning engines of vehicles that charge the enemy lines like titanium-plated cavalry.

Across the horizon is a wall of fire and thick stacks of acrid, sulfurous smoke. Columns of plasma strike the ground many kilometers away, ventral beams slicing through a thick layer of blackened clouds—obscuring the Covenant ships from which they originated. Dust, mud, metal, flesh... in its wake, *all* will be burned to glass.

They have already taken the generator. They are just sticking around to finish the job.

The chaos is so thick that it is almost too easy to miss the flash of lightning as it streaks through the sky.

It's not a warning. It is a sign of what has already arrived.

In the span of a single breath, the sound of the blast catches up, screaming through the air with white hot anger, devastating the mass several miles north. The ground bursts, throwing up huge chunks of soil, shrapnel, bodies, vehicles, and concrete in all directions, a towering tsunami of carnage.

Magnetic accelerator rounds are being turned on Reach itself.

"Break ranks!" Somebody shouts. "Get out of here!"

The sky has already lit with another flash, illuminating just for a moment a glimpse of the hulking forms of the Covenant ships in the clouds.

The second MAC round is closer, less than half a mile east. The ground seems to explode upwards, but still the alien horde presses forward, though many Unggoy and Kig-Yar look as if they are themselves about to flee.

The generator is lost. Reach has fallen.

A decision is made.

"All units," Beta Romeo Actual says to any who can hear over their comms, "splash incoming. Get out of the blast zone!"

The world is split asunder as the third and fourth MAC rounds and their after-effects eat up the distance, the ground erupting, the air filled with a cacophony of sounds and frequencies no mortal ears were ever meant to hear.

Weapons fire, the churning of metal, the shrill screams of human and alien alike—enemies fighting each other for opposing armies no longer,

all scattering as they were caught in the crushing grasp of what felt like a violent tectonic rearrangement by the hand of indifferent gods.

The fifth strikes the generator facility and all goes dark.

Beta Romeo Actual does not hear the sixth.

Time passes. The battle here is over—it has moved somewhere else.

All has fallen quiet.

Beta Romeo Actual awakens. She lies in a crater some distance from where she remembered fighting, but as she breathes in deeply and fills her lungs with helmet-filtered—though still sickly tasting—air, she is sure that she is alive.

Fires still crackle around her, the remnants of human and alien bodies alike broken apart, the faces of those that are still recognizable contorted with horror and pain, frozen in that calamitous moment of time.

Her own Mjolnir armor is scarred, its plating scorched, inner circuitry exposed, nanocomposite bodysuit torn and stained with blood from lacerations and blunt-force impacts on her body. Even her onboard systems are sluggish, some unresponsive.

“This is Beta Romeo Actual, does anybody read me? Over.”

She waits a moment as her comms return only static.

“I say again: This is Beta Romeo Actual, does anybody read me on this frequency? Over.”

She begins to work her way out of the crater, climbing atop the mass of bodies until her armored hands find purchase at the summit.

“To anybody who can read me, this is Naomi-010. Our orbital generator is down. Charlie Company... is gone. Status of the rest of Beta-Red is currently unknown, and the Covies seem to have moved on. Significant damage to my armor systems. Will continue transmitting every thirty mikes as I search for a rendezvous point.”

Scanning the area one final time from the top of the crater, Naomi confirmed that there were no other survivors among the dead. Just like everywhere else the Covenant had invaded, only ghosts and glass were left in their wake.

She had been lost in the wilderness of Reach before, many years ago. But she was a survivor—she would find her way. Report in, repair, and then redeploy.

Setting off toward the horizon, Naomi did not look back.