

Chapter 10: The Eye

It was a towering structure just outside the city. The Eye, they called it. It was just as imposing as the PKF itself, a colossal complex of equal social implications.

Dorian: "They say that orphans go in and stalkers come out."

Alex: "I don't know if that's true."

Alex raced up the road that wound up onto the hill, looking out over Coredam. With every weave, the atmosphere grew tenser.

Dorian: "I'll wait for you in the lobby."

Alex: "No. Stay outside, I'll only be a few minutes."

Alex sounded an inaudible sigh through his helmet, before pulling into the parking lot, which was largely overshadowed by a concrete overhang of the many floors above.

Violent white light shone down oppressively from above, almost as if the ceiling itself was watching you. Alex could sense Dorian's anxiety even with a helmet covering his face.

Alex: "Take a second. The Overseer can wait another minute."

Dorian: "Right..."

Dorian's breathing hitched as he tried to force himself to calm down. Just a week ago he had found himself wishing that he would never return there. He still wished the same, but now he had a good reason to disregard it.

Alex: "I will be right out here. If he gives you shit, have someone fetch me."

Dorian nodded, half of his mind elsewhere as he took his helmet off and handed it to Alex, who attached it to a clip on the side of the motorcycle's frame. Anxiously, Alex watched him head inside, into the maw of the lion's den.

The inside was sleek and efficient. There had been left no room for decoration, other than the commemorations of different stalkers, both fallen and otherwise. There was the occasional potted plant here and there, but not enough to cause the illusion of a home.

Dorian kept his eyes on the floor as he approached the reception, where the most normal-looking Peacekeeper ever forged was seated. He wore a pair of glasses that bore a camera, with immediately lit up with a tiny red LED, the moment that Dorian made himself known.

The receptionist looked up from his paperwork, an inquisitive glare burnt upon his face.

Receptionist: "Are you here on an appointment."

Dorian: "I- No, not really. The Overseer wanted to talk to me, though, and I thought better now than later."

Receptionist: "Name?"

Dorian: "Dorian. Dorian Accada, but I might be in the system as 'Viper'."

The receptionist looked up from his screen again, eyes now less inquisitive and with more clarity.

Receptionist: "I have planned you for an immediate meeting. He should be in his office soon. Take the elevator to the twelfth floor. Wait in the lounge until you are called."

Dorian nodded nervously before pacing towards an elevator, two of which could be found adjacent to the reception.

Twelfth floor, top floor, he noticed. He found himself shutting the doors first, before pressing the twelfth button. He cursed under his breath when the sudden jerk of the elevator made him jump.

To his horror, the elevator stopped just a few floors short of twelve. He tried to control his breathing as the doors opened and a pair of Peacekeepers stepped in.

He held his tongue when he was faced with their blackened armour, indistinguishable, oppressive. He knew that they were

not even looking at him, but he could feel their piercing gaze all the same.

The Banshee's Wail, it sounded behind his eyes, ringing within his ears as he thought of the red eye. He tried to drown it out, but it was everywhere, even within his soul. He could feel tears forming in his eyes when the door opened up, twelfth floor.

He quickly stepped out, perhaps a bit quicker than he should have. He could feel their eyes following him, even when the door was already closed.

Finally, he dared to look around again, at the surprisingly lavish decorum of the lounge. It seemed an oasis in this desert of a building.

The air seemed lighter here, as Dorian could almost imagine government representatives and corporate executives simply kicking back on these sofas.

He tried to imagine being one; unbothered, wealthy, borderline immortal... He imagined having it all. He imagined having nothing to fear. He imagined having nothing to hide. He imagined it not being so easy to imagine.

Dorian glanced over at the door to the Overseer's office, the crimson glare upon it, bleeding the same red. Even he felt its hurt and he wasn't even being hunted, or so he allowed himself to believe. Maybe he would not get to believe for long.

Dorian 'Viper' Accada

A metallic voice rang out from a speaker overhead.

Enter the auditorium.

Shaken out of his trance, Dorian climbed back upon his feet, the knot in his stomach now rising into his throat. One step after the other, he walked towards the eye. He hated the way it felt like his life was flashing before his eyes as he opened the doors, those being the only manual ones in the entire building.

Though, they did swing open easier than most, revealing a pitch black room, at first. The moment that he closed the doors behind himself, a faint blue glow settled upon the space.

The ceiling lit up with the light of thousands of stars, as well as a pair of pale blue moons. The domed, seemingly glass ceiling would arch over head, the panes coming together in one vibrant star. The Northstar.

Down the Northstar shone upon a silver necklace, suspended from a hook within a glass cage.

It called to him, almost, as Dorian instinctively treaded closer. Again, one step after the other, until he stopped in his tracks when something else lit up. The sudden red light in the room almost made Dorian cower on the spot, but he stood his ground.

The crimson eye looked upon him from behind the pedestal, stepping out from behind it now that he had been revealed.

Overseer: "Dorian. So nice to see you again. I didn't think you'd visit me in my home."

Dorian: "You- You... You said that you wanted to talk to me, have a drink and all that... Right?"

The Overseer had a funny way of making you second guess yourself.

Overseer: "I did. And now that you're here, why not?"

The rubber thuds made Dorian's stomach churn as the Overseer paced to the side of the room, where a small table stood with piles of shot glasses, some chipped, others brand new. From an adjacent cabinet he grabbed a bottle of whiskey, one that was undoubtedly only there to entertain the Overseer's other 'guests'.

Back he would walk though, to soon for Dorian, before coming to a halt again in front of the pale-haired one. Only one glass, of course. Dorian wondered why he had expected the Overseer to actually take a sip. He himself needed one, though.

Through flesh and bone it went, after all, when the Overseer spoke.

So he downed it, like he always did.

Overseer: "So you wanted to... Be relieved of your function?"

Dorian: "Yes!"

Dorian started a little too loudly, quickly lowering his voice.

Dorian: "Yes, I... This is not for me. Overseer, this.. Toxin.. Thing, it.. It is not me."

Overseer: "You are Viper, correct?"

Dorian: "Well, yes, but not like that! Never like that. Not until I met you..."

Overseer: "I see.. So, you wish to wash your hands of all this?"

Dorian: "Yes. I do."

Dorian tried to keep standing up straight, forcing himself to look the Overseer in the eye, as he spoke these words.

Overseer: "What then of your family?"

Dorian: "What?"

Overseer: "Will you go back to them?"

The blond one had no answer for the other, simply staring blankly as he tried to imagine going home, but he couldn't. Somehow, he couldn't.

Overseer: "I see. Then where will you go?"

Dorian: "Somewhere."

Overseer: "To the club?"

Dorian: "No."

Overseer: "To Alexander."

Dorian's eyes widened as he took a step back. The Overseer's helmet tilted, the eye remaining level as his words killed.

Dorian: "No."

Overseer: "You lie."

Dorian: "No! He doesn't want me there. I will leave. I will leave and go somewhere."

Overseer: "Speak the truth!"

Dorian knew a command when he heard one. It rang in his ears, like the Wail did, until he couldn't help it.

"I will go to Alexander! Please, please I just want to leave. Let me take him with me and leave, please."

Tears started to run down his face as desperation lined his voice.

"I'll never ask for anything again, I'll never come to you again, just let me leave!"

The Overseer took a step, then another, and another until he was in Dorian's face. The blond one swore that he could smell the gunpowder.

"Say what you want. Say what you really want and you will have it."

"I... I want- I want to-"

His ears wouldn't stop ringing. What was that sound? Was that his blood?

"Look into the eye in the abyss. Look into it and tell me what you want."

"I want to go home!"

"The Eye, Dorian! It knows you. What does it say?"

"I- I..."

I want to disappear.