

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 912: Clear The Threat[1,067 words]

"Falcon Two, maintain formation. Falcon Three, circle east and prepare for the second payload release on my mark." Adrian hated how steady his voice sounded.

From this height, District One was no longer a city but a wound splitting open across the earth. Smoke rose from several blocks where the first bombs had already landed, thick black columns twisting upward into the pale afternoon sky.

Fires crawled along rooftops while the roads were clogged with abandoned cars, overturned buses and bodies that looked like dots from above. Except he knew they were not dots but people. Some of them were infected while the rest were not, and that was the part eating through his chest.

His gloved hands tightened around the controls as another scream broke through the open emergency frequency below.

Civilians were still broadcasting from somewhere inside the district. The voices came in broken waves through the military channel. They were all pleas and prayers, with someone sobbing that they were not infected.

Unfortunately, he could not afford guilt right now.

District Two had already reported heavy infestation along its border. If District One was not contained, the virus would spread through every remaining district like fire through dry grass.

This was the right thing to do. One district for the survival of eleven.

"Falcon Leader," Control crackled through his headset. "Prepare for the second drop. Confirm target grid Delta-One-Seven through Delta-Two-Three."

Adrian looked down at the burning city again. His throat worked once.

"Falcon Leader confirming target grid," he answered. "Second payload preparing for release."

His thumb hovered close to the authorization switch when the air beside him folded like someone had grabbed reality by the edges and twisted it inward.

Adrian barely had time to turn before two bodies suddenly appeared inside the cockpit.

One of them landed half-crouched between the narrow space behind his seat and the equipment panel. The other was practically squashed against the side, his shoulder hitting the console with a dull thud.

"What the hell?!" Adrian shouted, the words blasting straight into the communication system.

The man with dark hair and hazel eyes, too amused for the situation, looked around the cockpit like he had just arrived at a mildly inconvenient hotel room.

"Trust me," Micah said with a grin. "This is the least weird thing happening today."

Then the grin vanished. He leaned closer, and suddenly there was nothing playful about him.

"You're going to want to turn this thing around."

Adrian stared at him.

"What?"

The headset immediately exploded with voices.

"Falcon Leader, report."

"Falcon Leader, what is your status?"

"Adrian, respond. What the hell is going on up there?"

Adrian reached for the emergency alarm, but Asher Nightshade moved first. His hand shot out and grabbed the cockpit microphone.

There was no patience in his expression. His eyes darkened as his power slipped into his voice.

"All pilots connected to this channel will abort the bombing run immediately," Asher commanded. "Turn your aircraft around. Leave District One airspace now."

For one terrifying second, nothing happened. Then every pilot who heard him obeyed.

Across the sky, bombers that had been holding formation suddenly tilted away from the district. One after another, they broke from their assigned path and began turning back as if the order had come directly from God himself.

Adrian's hands moved before his mind could catch up on what he was doing. The aircraft banked left and away from District One.

Inside the central command room miles away, General Graham stood rigid before the enormous wall of screens as every aircraft in the first strike formation turned away from the district.

"What is happening?" he demanded.

No one answered fast enough.

Operators scrambled across their stations, screens flashing with maps, live feeds, flight paths and warning signals. The clean formation that had been moving over District One had suddenly scattered, every bomber abandoning its assigned target without authorization.

"Falcon Leader is no longer responding to standard command protocols," one of the communications officers said, fingers flying over her keyboard. "All aircraft in his network are changing course."

"I can see that," Graham snapped. "Why?"

Another officer pulled up the cockpit feed from Falcon Leader's aircraft. The footage was distorted at first, filled with static and strange interference before the image sharpened enough to show two unauthorized individuals inside the cockpit.

Graham's jaw clenched, watching one of them vanishing from the screen a second later, taking the other with him.

"What the hell was that?"

"Magical interference, sir," the data officer said. "We detected a spatial distortion inside the cockpit seconds before the aircraft turned. Then there was an unidentified psychic frequency broadcast across the pilots' channel."

Graham turned slowly toward him.

"A what?"

Before the man could answer, another screen lit up.

"Sir, we have visual confirmation from drones over District One."

The feed expanded across the main display and for a moment, even Graham was speechless.

There was a girl floating above the district. Around her, a huge green dragon circled through the sky, its wings cutting through clouds and smoke as though guarding her.

On the ground, lightning rents through the infected swarming toward fleeing civilians. Some guy was manipulating the currents, striking them down one group after another, and buying the people enough time to escape.

The room fell quiet as they finally recognized them.

"It's the cardinal alphas and Violet Purple, Sir. What do you think they're doing?" one of the younger analysts whispered.

Graham's face hardened. "They are interfering with a containment operation. District One is already compromised. If we hesitate now and the virus spreads beyond containment, every life lost after this moment will be on our hands."

Graham commanded. "Launch the second wave."

The command officer swallowed.

"Yes, sir."

His hands moved over the system, authorizing the next deployment.

Graham pointed at the main screen.

"And this time, patch every cockpit through an isolated encrypted line. No open network or shared audio command. If those freaks of nature appear inside another aircraft, the pilots are authorized to use lethal force."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell them to keep their distance from the dragon," Graham continued. "And if the girl becomes a threat, they are cleared to engage her too. Second wave, proceed."

"Understood, sir."

Outside, far beyond the command room, new bombers lifted into the sky. Above District One, Violet had no idea the next attack was already coming.