Ghosts That We Knew

by angeliquedevive

Summary

Andrea was cursed with vindictiveness, aggressiveness and selflessness. She loved war, and she couldn’t do anything about it. She was the daughter of Enclave.

Arthur was cursed with protectiveness, responsibility and loneliness. He loved his family and wanted to protect the people around him. He was the son of Brotherhood.

They both hated and loved what they were. They found comfort within each other’s lies and each other’s arms.

But they had to choose their side. What it cost and what they learned?

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The story, plot and name have changed. All the chapters have been rewritten. Major changes have been made. The ending has been chosen. Hiatus is over.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Prologue

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hello there! This is my first (and last) fanfiction I'll publish here. I'm not fluent in English, so there are lots of grammar mistakes. Forgive me. I have a beta, but she's currently busy with her real life, so I'm on my own.

The story deviates from the canon a little bit, I added something my own to it. The story's pace is a little bit slow; I wanted to "set up" the story, characters and relationship before angst is released. Beware, I love Arthur and Danse, so this is healthy MaxsonxF!Sole fanfiction, but a sad one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

At the age of eight, Andrea heard that the duel of superpowers would destroy the world. It was inevitable, said her uncle, adding they would have a haven at the Pacific Ocean. But she didn’t believe him. No one would dare to press the button to release the annihilation.

At the age of fifteen, she checked if the Poseidon oil rig could avoid fallout, knowing that mankind would disappear in the blink of the eye into history after the nuclear war.

At the age of the twenty-five, she still believed in the goodness of humanity, even though complex national conflicts raged around the world.

At the age of the twenty-eight, the reality crushed Andrea. People were only test subjects to governments.

At the age of thirty-one, she stood at the entrance of the Vault 111, staring the beginning of the catastrophe and finally understood it was all premeditated.

They were all expendable.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: The prologue is based on Finnish song called 'Kahdeksanvuotiaana' (= at the age of eight) by Ultra Bra.
**Prologue**

Chapter Summary

How everything begins.

Chapter Notes

A/N: This chapter's name is supposed to be **Red Sox**s but for some reason, the title changes back to Prologue by itself. I have no idea why and how...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The world used to be whole. World organisations such as the United Nations and World Health Organization aimed to guarantee people a good state of health, regardless of wealth, and to maintain international peace and security, justice and human rights. People worked for the common good. People lived a safe and peaceful life. They had jobs, homes and food.

However, at some point 2040s, the world became overpopulated, and resources dwindled. Nations began to fight amongst themselves, and it led the world to the war that tore it apart.

Fights were taking the direction that the whole world was moving in. There were no east or west anymore. Former allies were now enemies, and old unions were cut.

Therefore, the President declared martial law all around the country, and U.S. Military controlled the country now. They filled every corner of the city with checkpoints, trying to find spies and enemies.

However, as Halloween neared, people tried to forget what happened all around the world. They tried hard to ignore the news about unrests of Canada and Alaska. People went to the picnic and tried to enjoy life, upcoming holiday. They decorated their houses, yards and did some shopping. They spent time with their families. It was their way to cope with it. Otherwise, they would lose their minds.

Andrea tried to forget it too. She had been in civilian life for four months and what happened around the world wasn't her concern anymore. Or that's what she kept telling herself.

Andrea shook her head almost violently from side to side, trying to shake out the thoughts out of her head and felt how baseball cap fell in front of her eyes.

**Damn it,** she thought and took off the cap. She glanced a house at another side of the road with her dark coffee-coloured eyes. **What is taking so long, Nate?**

Andrea pulled her baseball cap onto her head and tapped her fingers against her arm. She smiled as she heard her father swearing behind her. The over 60year old Air Force General was not happy about the upcoming holiday. Jonathan Adams disliked it — one of the reasons why he still lived at the military base.
“Are you okay?”

“I almost stumbled on a pair of shoes, your shoes. How many shoes does one woman need?” her father murmured, “why are you still here? You were supposed to leave fifteen minutes ago. The game will start soon.”

Andrea turned around and saw him watching her with his weary, ocean blue eyes. She found them gentle, but his subordinates found them frightening. Silver hair and wrinkles gave him a terrifying appearance. One glance from him and most would scamper away All her ex-boyfriends, except for her current one. That man was immune to everything.

“You know them, dad. Nate is always ready like a soldier is supposed to be. Nora, on the other hand, is always late, which is bad for a lawyer and now Shaun with them? It will take forever,” Andrea answered.

“Nothing isn’t easy with a baby. The challenge of parenthood.”

Andrea smiled little but searched his face with troubled eyes. “Dad, why are at home? It’s a tradition for you to be somewhere else than here during the holidays.”

“It’s my day off.”

“You have a day off?” Andrea laughed but then narrowed her eyes. “Wait, did you crack a joke?”

“No, it wasn’t a joke.”

“Oh, I believe you. It wasn’t a joke. However, there is something you have in common with Roger,” Andrea said, “you two both live and breathe the military. Always working. I can’t just believe you have a day off.”

“Now you sound like your mother,” Jonathan said smiling.

Andrea frowned. Her father hadn’t talked about her mother since her death, not even once. It had been his way to cope. Andrea opened her mouth to comment on his strange behaviour, but the sound of honk interrupted her. She turned to look at Nate’s and Nora’s houses front yard.

“Andy! Are you leaving or not?” Nate shouted while Nora put Shaun to the backseat. They were finally ready to leave.

“You’d take a baby to a baseball game? I wonder if it's wise,” Jonathan said to his neighbours.

“Oh course. Shaun is going to be a Red Soxs fan, Sir.”

“No. Absolutely not. Shaun will be supporting the Washington Nationals. Right, Andrea?” Nora directed her question to Andrea with a smirk.

Andrea snorted, amused. “Just because I moved to Washington D. C. doesn't mean I’ll betray Red Soxs.”

“Spoken like a true citizen of Boston,” Nate said, then turned to Nora. “Come on honey, we will be late,” Nate added, saying the last sentence to his wife as this mirrored herself from car’s wing mirror

Andrea shook her head, smiling while listening to their banter, but Jonathan stopped her by touching her shoulder, feeling the strength of his hand. He had been out of the field for years but
had still a significant amount of power, even for his age.

“Be careful, Andrea.”

For some unknown reason, she memorised those words. Andrea frowned after her father kissed her forehead. She narrowed her eyes, looking at him thoughtfully. It wasn’t like him. Was he dying or something?

“Dad, we are going to watch a baseball game, we are not going to Anchorage,” Andrea stated, still wondering what caused her father’s strange behaviour.

“I know,” he answered. “Have fun, Bo Peep.”

Andrea smiled, though she disliked that nickname. “Yes, Sergeant, Sir,” she said and performed the forehead salute.

She still felt his eyes on her back as she walked towards Nate’s car. Her father acted too strangely, and the whole goddamn country was on edge. She knew something was going on.

However, Andrea once again reminded herself that it wasn’t her problem anymore. She was civilian now. Andrea waved at her father before opening the car door and sat next to Shaun.

“Huh, whatcha looking at buddy?” Andrea asked. Shaun stared her for a moment and then giggled. “Oh, you remember your godmother? Good.”

Nora cried out loudly when the Washington Nationals lost their lead. “This is not happening. They did not come here to lose!”

Nate laughed. “Hey, there is still game time left. Anything can happen,” he said, “and of course they’re here to lose, they’re playing at Fenway Park.”

Nora rolled her eyes and leaned forward to see how Andrea and Shaun were doing. “You are good with him,” Nora said as Andrea cuddled the baby and kissed his soft forehead.

“Hey, your boy is smiling because Red Soxs has a higher score,” Andrea said, but then she heard loud cheering from Washington National’s fan base and glared scoreboard. “Or not. Traitor.”

However, Shaun had his limits. About fifteen minutes before the game was supposed to end, he started to cry. Andrea was surprised by how fast Nora was able to soothe him. Maybe it was those mom instincts.

“I think we have to take a little walk. I’ll be back soon,” Nora said and put Shaun into the pushchair before kissing Nate. She noticed Andrea staring them and whispered, “I’m not going to kiss you.”

“Too bad. I think Nate would like to see us together,” Andrea whispered back, flashing a smile. Nate raised his eyebrows and looked at both women confused. The women chuckled at his reaction.

After Nora had left, Nate opened his mouth to speak. “I thought the VIP stand would be full of members of the town council, politicians, officers or other higher-ups?”

Andrea hummed agreeing and glanced at the empty stand. “Dad is acting strangely, and I can’t get in touch with Roger. It’s driving me crazy.”
“When did you last time talk with him?”

“A few weeks ago. The same day when he left to Mariposa with Colonel Spindel.”

Two weeks without hearing a single thing. No emails, phone calls, messages... nothing. Maybe her uncle had isolated the entire base from the outside world.

“What about your father? Could he help you to get a connection with them?” Nate asked, and Andrea shook her head as an answer. “Shit.”

Andrea ran her hand through her black hair. “I hope Roger is okay. I want to hear his voice.”

“He is fine. He is a strong and tough son of a bitch,” Nate said, trying to encourage her. “Your brothers and I wouldn’t have let you marry him if he were a total loser,” Nate continued.

“Always a big brother, huh?” Andrea stated, punching his arm gently.

Since their childhood, they had been inseparable — best friends. People joked they were twins, but her mother had believed they were soulmates.

“How are you doing?” Nate asked, giving her a piercing look.

“Fine,” she answered.

“Fine? You begged to be laid-off after the Yangtze. What happened?”

Andrea sighed and answered his question, “I wanted to leave from the military. I can’t live without it, but I don’t want to be there now. Pentagon sends me messages, requests and orders because they need me to do their dirty work, but I told them ‘no’. Nate... I’m tired of being used. Dad stated I’m wasting my skills.”

“Andy, if you hadn’t been part of that... experiment, you’d be dead by now.”

He was right, but...

“They just think that I’m ready to do anything that they ask after—” Andrea paused when Nora came back. The duo turned their heads to look at the grinning woman.

“What did we do now?” Nora asked.

“Stop grinning, we know Washington won,” Nate murmured. Shame on Red Soxs for losing a game on home turf. “Should we return home? To celebrate this victory?”

“Willingly. And don’t sound so bitter, sweetie. Red Soxs might win their next game,” Nora said, pinching man's scarred cheek.

Before Andrea opened the front door of her childhood home, she looked across the road to Nora’s and Nate’s home. Nora closed the car door, holding Shaun while Nate took pushchair from the car boot. Andrea was happy for him. For them. Though Nate was a good soldier, he belonged here with his family.

Their neighbour, Mrs Rosa, had told Andrea about Nora. How lonely and afraid she had been when Nate was gone. But now Roger was somewhere in California, and Andrea... Andrea was alone and scared. Scared for Roger.

“Hey, Andy!” Nate called her and saluted. “Goodnight Captain!”
“At ease, soldier. Goodnight,” Andrea answered, and Nora performed forehead salute too. “Sorry, I cannot command you, civilian. Wait, I cannot command you either.”

Nate waved his hand at her as he escorted his wife inside their house.

Andrea opened the front door and noticed that her father was not at home after stepping inside. Maybe he got tired of Halloween after all and left to their cabin.

Arriving at her old room, she kicked off her shoes and sat down to the bed. It felt good to lie down and relax. The chairs of Fenway Park weren’t the best to sit on, especially for a long time. Andrea sighed, staring at the white ceiling above her, thinking why her father acted strangely. But most of all, she thought about Roger. God, she missed him. She missed his stupid jokes, his ‘always military man’ appearance, his icy blue eyes and the touch of his beard when he kissed her. She missed his warm, secure presence when she woke up in the morning and yearned for his familiar smell and gentle touch. Closing her eyes, she hoped she would see him soon.

“Why does Major Barnett want you there?” Andrea asked, leaning against the door frame and watched him packing up his military bag.

He was leaving her alone again, like when Andrea worked at the Pentagon, and Roger was sent to Alaska. Fucking Pentagon and Barnett. Though she blamed only her uncle for this. Did he think this could separate them?

“I don’t know. Colonel Spindel said it’s because Pentagon and Barnett want to raise security there. There is something wrong at Mariposa,” Roger said and closed door of the closet.

Andrea frowned again. Had something happened in Mariposa? Had someone tried to infiltrate there? They housed viruses, like FEV, there.

“I don’t like it,” Andrea stated. “I think there is something wrong with the whole military. They could use their funding money for better aircraft’s, for example, instead of using it on some research.”

“You know that the U.S. Military is ambitious.”

“They’re crazy,” Andrea stated, staring Roger as he walked to her, dropping his bag down to the floor. “But we both know why they are sending you there.”

"Andrea, we have talked about this. I can’t just leave the Army... Not yet. I have to follow orders they give me.”

“They are sending a commander of the strike team to another side of the country to be part of... What? Security team? That sounds pretty fishy to me.”

"It is still an order," Roger pointed out.

"I know... It just..." Her words faltered. She knew she couldn’t stop him. "I wish you wouldn’t have to leave.”

“We know the risks, and you know what? It’s better for me to go. I’d have complained to higher-ups, even to your uncle, if they’d have ordered you there. There is always a small chance that something may happen...”

“That’s why I should go with you. The Chinese or even USSR might try to break into the facility if they know about its existence. What would be a better place than U.S. Army’s scientific research
Roger said with a serious look on his face. “It’s better this way. I do not want you near that place. I don’t care how good you are at a battlefield. You are my wife, and I love you,” he added.

Andrea swallowed and glanced floor underneath them.

“I want you to go to Boston while I’m getting used to my new job at N.C.” Roger continued, “You can come to California when things settle down. I talked with the real estate agent. The house will be ours by the end of October.”

Andrea smiled widely. They would start a new life in California. That sounded like a plan. A plan that her uncle couldn’t ruin.

“Go visit your father, Nate and our godson. And don’t forget those tickets you bought to Red Sox game...” Roger grinned.

“There is always a reason go to Boston, and it’s baseball,” Andrea stated, and Roger chuckled after her answer. He stared into her eyes, and without warning, he reached out and pulled her to kiss. Andrea loved his passionate, rough kisses. Loved how rough and overwhelming Roger was, yet still caring. Suddenly, for her surprise, Roger put his hands on her thighs and lifted her.

“Oh, I know what this means. Aren’t you too old and tired for this?” Andrea grinned while the man carried her to a bedroom.

“I want my wife.”

A dog barking waked Andrea, startled her more accurately. She sat up quickly glaring around. For her relief, she was still in her old room. Not in Anchorage. Sometimes even the smallest sounds woke her from the dream — a trait which saved soldiers from death though it annoyed her sometimes.

Remembering her dream, she rubbed her eyes and sighed. If she missed Roger before falling asleep, she missed him even more now. After cleaning her eyes from eye crust, she glanced the clock. It was still dawn. She stood up and headed downstairs.

Andrea listened to the house for a while. Her father had still not returned. The only thing she could hear was neighbour's dogs. Civilian life was pretty dull; especially for someone who lived alone. Her only activities were television, exercise and baseball. Andrea missed the action; her body missed the action, and sometimes it felt like her body was on fire if she didn’t do something. Andrea missed it — the battlefield. However, she had made up her mind and wouldn’t return to the Army anytime soon.

I won’t give up. That asshole can keep his—

The sound of tires screeching interrupted her thoughts, as cars came around the corner. Andrea immediately got up from the chair, seeing two black vans parked in front of her father house, she felt her heart thump faster as five men came out from cars. Men in the black suit. Typical government agents. Her heart leapt from her chest when she finally realised that something terrible was about to happen. Andrea opened the front door before one of the men pushed the doorbell.

“What happened?” she asked.
“Mrs Maxson, ma’am, it would be best if you come with us. We will explain later,” the agent said.

Andrea frowned and saw Nate at his front door, watching them.

As she hesitated, the agent spoke again, “We are here to pick you up by your uncle’s orders. You must leave with us right away. It is an order.”

“Yes sure, I’ll do whatever he wants. How about if you tell me what’s going on?” When she didn’t hear an answer, she opened her mouth again. “We can stand here until Judgment Day, but you won’t take me anywhere before you tell me what is going on.”

“At 12:03 am this morning COMPACFLT spotted three unidentified submerged submarines, possibly Chinese, at California coastline. Three hours later U.S. Air Force spotted unknown aircraft, near Alaska,” the agent stated. “IONDS detected four nuclear missiles at 9:13 am. Four minutes after that, NORAD confirmed them. We have been given an order to escort you into Vault.”

Andrea closed her eyes. Fuck. When she opened them, the first thing she noticed was Nate still at his door watching.

“I’m coming with you,” Andrea said, “but with one condition. They will come with us.” She pointed Nate.

“Ma’am, I’m not sure are we able to...”

“Then fucking call your boss. He has to accept it because if he doesn't, his pride will die when the war starts” Andrea ordered and walked past them, straight to Nate.

Nate looked at her, concern on his face and asked, “What is going on?”

“The war is happening. NORAD confirmed four unidentified nuclear missiles. They are here to collect my precious ass, thanks to my uncle,” Andrea said and glanced agent, who was talking in phone, probably with the devil itself.

“Fuck,” Nate swore, seeing Nora behind him. After noticing Nora’s face, Andrea knew she had heard their conversation.

“So, what are we going to do? Shaun...he,” Nora faltered and looked at her baby in her arms. Shaun looked as if he was about to cry; maybe he sympathised with his mother. “Please, Andrea. Take Shaun with you. Please. Take him to the Vault,” Nora begged.

"Nora, for the first time in five, ten years, I’ve asked a request from my uncle. I’ll take you all with me to the Vault,” Andrea said evenly.

Nora nodded, her shoulders still shaking.

“Ma’am,” the agent called Andrea while he walked towards her. “I spoke to your uncle. He gave Jensen’s permission to enter the Vault. We are leaving now.”

The agents escorted them to the entrance of Vault. There were about seven other people at the entrance with them. Andrea recognised them as significant personnel. Sanctuary Hills belonged to the military after all, and the government didn’t give a shit about civilians, not after they started this war.

The war.
She gasped when she remembered Roger. If he were still at Mariposa, he would be saved. The facility was durable and well-secured. Andrea thought her father and brothers when she heard something loud at a great distance. The blazing nuclear mushroom stole everyone's attention. During those seconds, Andrea cursed Oppenheimer and Project Manhattan.

“Get down now!” someone yelled.

The platform jerked, rumbled, and came to life, and they escaped the nuclear blast just in time, Nate and Nora shielding Shaun from the explosion.

The way down was a long one, or it felt like it. Andrea swallowed as she heard a young woman cry, “they are all gone, all dead!” Resisting the urge to cry herself, Andrea thought how Roger should be here with them. With her. For her surprise, Shaun wasn’t crying anymore, and Nora had stopped crying too.

“Thank you.” Nora’s usually firm and confident voice faltered. Her eyes were red from crying, but she tried to smile.

“Anything for you guys,” Andrea answered.

The place, Vault 111, was somewhat dreary. It reminded Andrea of the military bunker. Are they supposed to live here for the rest of their lives? After receiving their vault suits, they continued their way deeper into the vault.

“Vault suits will give you a little resistance against radiation and energy. Just a precaution, you don’t need to fear radiation here,” Doctor Pierce told while leading new residents to decontamination area, as he called it.

“Yeah that’s what they say before shit hits the fan,” Nate said, and Andrea hummed agreeing.

“Andy, I should thank you for... this.”

“I couldn’t leave you guys there. We should thank my uncle.” Tucking her hair behind her ears, Andrea felt how Nate pulled her closer to himself and hugged her tightly.

“Well, the good thing is I know that's a platonic hug,” Nora said more cheerfully and lifted her baby against her chest. “I don’t want to tell Roger.” Nora ashamed when she realised what she said and apologised. “Oh, I’m sorry, Andrea. I just—”

“No, it’s okay. I’m sure that he is still at the Mariposa. I think. I hope,” Andrea’s voice faltered.

“Do you remember what I said yesterday? He is a tough son of a bitch. That man will not die easily,” Nate reminded.

"Yeah, I know."

“These are decontamination pods, which I mentioned on our way here. Every Vault has them,” the doctor gestured the pods. “Decontamination is essential before entering into the actual vault; we don't want to contaminate the vault and residents who currently are there.”

Andrea glared their surroundings. Somehow the place looked more like a research facility than a Vault. “How many people are here?”

“About forty,” Pierce answered. “Not many but enough. Now, put on your vault suits so we can continue.”
There wasn’t suit for Shaun, so they allowed him to wear his old onesie. Andrea changed her clothes, liking vault suit for its colour, and heard a ruckus behind her.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” Nora apologised after she accidentally bumped a Vault-Tec employee who’s paperwork fell to the floor.

“No, it’s okay. It’s my first day at work, so I’m little nervous,” she said and picked papers from the floor. While holding Shaun, Nora helped the girl. Nate offered his help and took a baby from Nora.

After everyone was ready, Doctor Pierce told them to proceed, the employees assisted the new vault dwellers into their pods. “Claire, can you check whose pod this is? Is someone missing?”

“Jonathan Adams, doctor,” the woman answered. “He didn’t show up.”

Andrea dropped her gaze down and stared a floor and squeezed her hands into a fist. Where did you go, you stupid old man, if you had a place here?

“Well, there is not much we can do now,” Doctor Pierce said.

Andrea glared her pod before going inside, feeling her throat dry. Something, maybe her sixth sense, told her not to go in. She should exit the whole Vault and find her way to California.

“Are you okay?” Asked Nate.

“You know, I’m not just a fan of these pods,” Andrea answered to Nate’s question. “I’m fine.”

“Well it’s over soon,” he stated.

Andrea smiled. “You are so positive, even now.”

“It is easy to be. My family is right here. You and Nora. Everything is going to be fine,” Nate added, sitting inside his pod with Shaun.

“You and your positivity.”

“What you’d do without it, huh?” Nate smirked.

Andrea rolled her eyes and saw the pod’s door close. Doctor Pierce told them it would take only one or two minutes to complete decontamination. Sooner or later, it would be over. Feeling claustrophobia taking control over her, Andrea closed her eyes and told herself it would be over soon. Before realising, she felt dizzy, and she lost her consciousness, without knowing what truly happened.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading!

Canon-divergence: Sanctuary is a military base, and the world is based on ’80s-’90s instead of the ’50s...
Chapter Summary

After recovering from shock, Andrea continues her journey towards unknown. And she dislikes Wasteland even more after it.

Chapter Notes

A/N: suicide attempt.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“This is the one,” a voice said.

Andrea flinched awake when she heard someone speaking and grunted.

Damn it is so cold, she thought.

Then she realised she was still inside the pod and saw two figures standing in front of Nate’s pod. They were unfamiliar to her, and they didn’t look Vault-Tec’s employees.

“Open it,” a man said.

Nate’s pod door opened, and he coughed, asking, “Is it over? Are we ready to continue?”

“It’s okay, I can help,” the woman in a strange suit stated and tried to take Shaun from him. “Come here, baby.”

“I’m not giving you him!” Nate raised his voice.

Andrea felt her heart beating faster, and her mind whirled with the possibilities of what was going to happen when the bald man drew his 44. Magnum.

“Let the boy go,” the man said and aimed Nate.

“Go to hell. I’m not giving you Shaun!”

Andrea flinched after the gunshot, and it took a few seconds for her to realise what happened.

Nate fell back into his pod, blood pouring from the bullet wound on his chest. The first thing what Andrea saw his eyes. They had turned lifeless.

And she would remember that moment the rest of her life.

“Goddammit,” the bald man swore, and the woman took crying baby. Then he talked to the woman. “Take baby out of here.”

Andrea hoped that they would accidentally open her door so that she could kill all of them without
mercy. But she didn’t have the strength to open it herself.

The man turned towards Andrea and said, “At least we have a backup. Freeze her.”

*Come back you a fucking asshole; you’re so fucking dead,* Andrea thought and kicked the pod’s door.

Freeze her? What did they mean? Where were they taking Shaun? Backup? Andrea looked back to Nate and wanted to cry or yell, but she couldn’t.

After Andrea heard that Nate had seriously injured on the battlefield, she travelled to the military hospital to see him. It was a miracle he was alive.

Andrea glanced his amputated leg and closed her eyes for a moment.

“That was the craziest idea you’ve ever had,” she said and gave bedridden Nate worried look. “But… you saved four soldiers and lived.”

“It did feel the right decision at that time, and it still does. I would do it again,” Nate answered and touched her hand. “How are they?”

“Grateful and alive. Even the private who lost his eye,” Andrea told. “I should have been there. I promised Nora to look after you, and I let this happen…”

Nate shook his head and smiled.

“You were at the headquarters. Even you can’t be in two places at the same time,” he said. “I don’t regret it. I may have lost my leg, but we survived. One leg or four soldiers? A fair trade. And the Army already promised me a prosthetic leg. I want a wooden one. Nate Jensen, Captain Hook.”

Andrea grunted frustratedly and asked, “Why do you always turn everything into a joke? You almost lost your life.”

“Because you are so sober-minded. You need to relax. War is over,” Nate said but frowned after seeing her face. “Or is it?”

“No. They are going to transfer me to the Yangtze; I’m leaving today. I guess this war will be never over,” Andrea whispered and squeezed his hand. “I, uh, I came here to see you. To say I’m proud of you.”

“You should go home too,” Nate stated. “Haven’t you seen war enough? Three years, Andrea. You have been three years on the field nonstop.”

“I can’t live without the war, Nate,” Andrea said and continued. “You, on the other hand… return home. Nora and your newborn son are waiting for you there. You have so much to lose. I don’t have that much. I have Roger and you, but no a child waiting for me at home. Go home, sergeant. Your fight is over.”

Andrea stood up to leave the room.

“I know you don’t belong to church anymore but… do you want to become my son’s godmother?”

Nate’s question made her turn around, and she asked, “Are you serious?”
“Yeah. You’re the closest person to me after Nora. Also, we thought that you and Roger would be
great parents if something happens to us.”

Andrea smiled widely and said, “Of course.”

“Good. Now you have much more to lose than just me and Roger.”

And she just lost two of them. And others?

Immediately after her pod’s door opened, Andrea had gone to check on Nora to see if she was
okay. She wasn’t.
They were all dead.

Andrea didn’t know how long she sat on the floor, in front of Nate’s pod, and cried. She was a
soldier of U.S. Army, no; she was more than a soldier — a war hero.

However, she wasn’t sure anymore. She wasn’t a hero that they claimed her to be. She couldn’t
even save her friends, Shaun or other residents. She was one who brought them here to die.

No.

She has to find Shaun. He was her godson. Now after his both parents were dead, his safety was
now her responsibility.

Andrea stood up and stared Nate through pod’s window.

“I’ll find Shaun. I’ll kill those who took him and killed you and Nora,” she said, kissing her fingers
and touched his pod with them. “I love you both.”

After that she left, picking up her dual 10mm pistols from the floor and went to Vault’s main
entrance.

Andrea didn’t see anything before her eyes got used to the light when she reached the surface. She
had been underground for too long. But when she finally saw around her, she gasped and covered
her mouth.

Everything was dead. There were no birds, green leaves, grass, no flowers or sounds of animals.
Andrea couldn’t hear anything else except her heavy breathing.

She turned around, seeing rusty cars, skeletons and power armours on the ground.

Is there anyone left? How long it has been? she thought as she made her way back home. The
silence terrified her. Andrea swallowed and resisted the urge to cry.

You’re soldier, goddammit.

But soldiers have feelings too. They weren’t killing machines as someone believed.

After travelling quite a long time, she arrived at Sanctuary only to find that everything was
destroyed or looted. Checkpoint of the military base was collapsed and abandoned and shredded a
flag of U.S. still hang on the pole.

She didn’t find anyone from the old base, except big flies and mosquitoes which horrified her. At
first, she ran away when she saw the enormous, black creature flying towards her but reminded
herself it was just an animal.
Fucking radiation, she thought.

Her childhood home was looted too, almost collapsed. It was practically empty; except for a few burned pictures and books on the shelves, broken furniture and trash on the floor.

Then for her misfortune, the sun had started to set, and it was already getting dark and cold outside. Andrea didn’t want to know what kind of nights this new world wanted to offer her. It was time to make a fire — time to put her survival skills to the test.

Andrea sat on the floor next to the campfire, thinking where Shaun, her father and Roger were now. She wrapped her arms around and rubbed her body to keep herself warm. Then she threw a book into the fire and glared it before turning her attention to Pip-Boy.

She gazed its screen, studying the machine in her hands and then noticed there were two radio channels up and running.

Then Andrea noticed something that shocked her. She felt something sinking inside her as she looked the year on Pip-Boy’s screen.

October 13, 2287.

Andrea stared it with wide eyes, not believing what she saw on the screen.

A year couldn’t be fucking 2287. There is no way that she had been inside Vault over 210 years.

She began to tremble and breathe heavily — the panic attack. She had had problems with it before, but Andrea tried to think logically as she could.

She had been in cryosleep so she could have been there longer than a few years. There were skeletons everywhere. The cars, houses and equipment inside Vault were now rusted piles of steel.

And the radiation? There was no way that radiation level could be this low after a few years. Then saddest thought came into her mind.

Roger. He was gone, just like everybody else: her father, her brothers, Nora, Nate, Roger — everyone.

She lost all of them.

“Roger… Oh, god,” she whimpered and dropped the Pip-Boy.

Feeling anxiety attack closing, she exhaled with gasps and began sob uncontrollably. Her heart thudded in her chest like a crazy, and the tight feeling on her chest almost suffocated her. Slowly, her brain tried to reason what had happened and where she was now.

Alone in the future and there wasn’t anyone who could comfort her. She wanted to get out. She has to get out. What was she going to do? She was afraid she couldn’t make it without him.

Without knowing what she was going to do with her life, Andrea took the pistol next to her and stared it for a moment, feeling her panic attack easing. She studied the barrel and trigger, realising it was so obvious. It felt easy. Just one press of the trigger and she would be with them.

When she lifted pistol against her chin, the tears trickled down her cheeks, and she felt the cold touch of the barrel on her skin. Just one press and it all would be over.

Then it hit her like lightning from the clear blue sky.
Shaun.

Andrea threw pistol away. Roger and Nate would never forgive her if she committed suicide. However, she could do it to be with him and her family. Andrea sobbed again and fell to the floor.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered. “I’m so sorry, honey...”

Andrea spent a few days at the old military base, trying to find something to eat even though she almost lost her appetite due to shock. But eventually, she decided to leave.

There wasn’t anything for her anymore.

Before she left, she went to Jensen’s house and found Shaun’s old cradle from the ruins. Andrea pushed mobile lightly and stared a crib. Then her eyes caught something underneath it, and she picked up a blue baby rattle from the floor.

She has to find Shaun for Nate and Nora.

On her way out from the military base, she ran to an unexpected visitor — German Shepherd. The dog greeted Andrea by licking her face and continued following her. She found a friend.

Then Andrea turned around to look at pre-war military installation last time.

“Goodbye,” she said and left.

Andrea and her canine friend headed to Concord for ammo and loot. But the only thing what she found was a bunch of raiders and helpless civilians at the museum.

“Hey, you over there! Help us, please!” a man on the balcony said.

Then Andrea’s canine friend ran to the door and barked a few times, calling her.

“You want me to go inside?” she asked him.

Andrea smelled mould and saw glass chips everywhere after she stepped into the old museum. The second and third floor had collapsed, and roof made from the glass was now history.

“There is another one! On the first floor,” someone yelled.

Andrea saw a raider above her and barely avoided a bullet which was meant for her. She ducked behind cover and reloaded her pistols. She was low on ammo.

She fought her way upstairs, avoiding the usage of her pistol and took down hostiles hand to hand. The dog wasn’t useless either; he was capable of taking down raiders as well.

Shepherds weren’t popular in the army and police force just for their looks; they were fierce, loyal and strong dogs.

After reaching the upstairs, Andrea heard two raiders behind the wall and peeked around the corner. They weren’t aware of her presence as they were too focused on the door.

Andrea sneaked up to them, going for the bigger guy first and snapped his in a quick motion. His buddy startled her and grabbed his gun, but Andrea kicked him into the stomach and threw him over the edge.
Andrea crossed her arms and said, “There is a large settlement with a brick fence just near here. You can go through Concord, northwest. After bypassing the old gas station and forest, you will see it. I just looted both of them, so there should not be any nasty bugs.”

“So, who are you guys?” she asked again.

“Preston Garvey, Colonel of Commonwealth Minutemen,” the man answered and then introduced the rest of his group. “We are heading to the northwest. Mama Murphy saw a large settlement with a brick fence in her visions, and we thought it could be a good place to settle down.”

“We’re here just because Mama Murphy found some Jet during our way here and saw this settlement. Preston, I’m tired of this,” she continued.

“I know, Marcy. I’m tired too, but we couldn’t stay in Lexington either,” Preston said.

Marcy didn’t say anything anymore and sat down next to her spouse. Preston stared at her for a moment and then looked back to Andrea, saying, “A month ago, there was twenty of us when we left our town, Quincy. Yesterday there were eight. Now, only we are left, and we don’t know where our General is now. She left to Burlington a few weeks back, but she hasn’t returned. We do fear the worst...”

This place was ruthless to people who tried to survive.

Andrea nodded and said, “There is a large settlement with a brick fence just near here. You can go through Concord, northwest. After bypassing the old gas station and forest, you will see it. I just looted both of them, so there should not be any nasty bugs.”

“Sanctuary Hills,” said the old woman on the couch and looked at Andrea. “You have a history with that place... memories, sad and happy memories.”

“How... you know,” Andrea faltered. “...what?”

“I felt your suffering and the injustice you experienced in the past. I saw you standing in the snow, somewhere cold, just before entering into this world. However, don’t worry,” Mama Murphy said.
“You will find a person you’re looking for, and you will meet him again.”

Him?

“What you—” Andrea’s sentence was interrupted by Preston who returned inside.

“More raiders,” he said, and others gasped. Then he looked at Andrea. “You seem to know how to fight. I know this isn’t your fight, but—”

“I’ll help you,” Andrea said and smiled a little. “Don’t worry, Preston. I can handle them.”

Preston nodded and said, “I’ll help you from up here. Sturgers, the power armour?”

“It’s ready,” Sturges answered. “There is pre-war T-45 power armour on the roof with crashed vertibird next to it; minigun mounted onto it. I hope there is still ammo left somewhere. Have you used a power armour before?”

He directed his question to Andrea, who took the fusion core from him.

“Long time ago,” Andrea answered, patting the dog’s head and left.

Andrea opened the door to the roof and saw still intact power armour standing in the rain. Just like U.S Army had used to advertise, power armours were made to withstand different, rash conditions.

She put the fusion core into power armour and twisted a hatch’s handler. As it opened, Andrea smirked. She wasn’t a big fan of power armours, but sometimes they were handy.

After ripping off the minigun from the vertibird, she jumped down from the roof and landed to the ground with a massive thump.

The first raider tried to attack her with a baseball bat.

Clank.

Andrea rolled her eyes under the helmet. Well, a raider was dedicated, she gave her that. She took down raiders quickly with the minigun and saw a few piles of ashes on the ground.

Preston wasn’t that bad combatant after all, just desperate. Desperate to survive and protect his group.

Soon, there were maybe two or three raiders left, hiding behind buildings like a coward and Andrea decided to finish them barehanded.

She was once again low on ammo.

As she went closer to the end of the central alley of Concord, Andrea heard a growl from maintenance hatch. People had used it for pipeline maintenance in a previous life, but whatever was under there now and tried to get out, wasn’t there for pipelines.

Clank.

Andrea’s eyes widened as she saw huge, ten feet tall angry T-Rex coming from hatch. She disliked this world even more now.
“Deathclaw!” Preston yelled. “Run!”

Her heart began to pump uncomfortably beneath her ribs as adrenaline rushed through her body, and she retreated.

The monster chewed last raiders into pieces and then turned its head to look at her. It growled and began to run toward her.

The power armour slowed her down, and the beast was fast. It would catch her in no time.

This is the stupidest idea ever, Andrea thought as she ran to minigun and picked it up. It fired a few rounds, slowing monster a little bit as bullets hit its leg, but then minigun stopped.

Out of ammo.

She had her 10mm pistols and twenty bullets, plus her knife. This wasn’t her field of expertise. The only thing what Andrea was able to do was to dodge beasts attacks.

Deathclaw struck again with its other hand, and Andrea stopped it with her hands. Thanks to her strength training, experiment, adrenaline and power armour, she was able to withstand and hold back a considerable amount of pressure for a limited time.

But, Andrea didn’t want to test her luck the second time. This creature wasn’t a joke.

She pushed its arm away, before losing against its strength, and picked up her 10mm pistol. She pulled the trigger and shot a bullet into the beast’s eye.

The pain drew it to the brink of rage, and the creature began to swing around furiously. Its tail pushed Andrea to ground violently, and she grunted.

Deathclaw turned to look at her with its only good eye and roared.

She had to act now. It was a matter of life and death.

Andrea picked her 10mm pistol from ground and reshot it. This time one of the bullets hit its already damaged eye, and the beast fell into the ground.

The silence landed to Concord after it. No more growling or yelling of raiders.

Andrea took quick heavy breaths, sucking up the air after removing the helmet. She tried to calm herself. Her body trembled, and her heart pounded furiously.

“Damn, that was... unbelievable,” Preston asked her as he came to her. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” Andrea said and stood up, shaking.

She leaned against double lantern column until her knees were no longer shaking. Adrenaline was wearing off, and she began to feel the pain that fight had caused.

“What is this thing?” she asked as she glared the beast.

“You don’t know?” Preston asked.

“No, I don’t. I just got out of the vault. About three days ago.”

“If you have lived your whole life in Vault and you fight like that, damn,” Preston said and looked
at the creature. “Some ghouls say the deathclaws are mutants of chameleons.”

Andrea glared Deathclaw and said, “I hope I won’t meet a mutant of a scorpion.”

“Actually, there is one already,” Preston said.

She would die in less than a week in this world. She didn’t belong here.

Preston’s group gathered together to the first floor as a Preston returned to them and told them the happy news. Their new friend, as Preston called Andrea, had cleared Concord from raiders and Deathclaw, so they were ready to continue their journey.

“You sure you don’t wanna come there with us?” Preston asked Andrea.

“No, I have to find someone,” she said before exiting from power armour and stared Sturgers. “I think I’ll leave this fella to you.”

Sturgers asked, “Are you sure?”

“It would just slow me down,” Andrea answered, and then she moved her attention to German Shepherd. “Oh, don’t worry boy, I haven’t forgotten you.”

“Dogmeat,” Mama Murphy said. “It’s his name.”

“Is he yours?”

“Dogmeat doesn’t belong to anybody. He stays and helps those who deserve it, and now, he’s staying with you. He’s a good dog; try to take care of him,” Mama Murphy said.

Andrea nodded, scratching the dog’s head and walked over to the older woman. She knelt in front of her and asked, “Do you know anything… about the kidnapped baby?”

“Only thing I can see is… Diamond City. But, that’s all I can manage now. It would be best if you try to find answers from there. Of course, if you bring me more Jet—”

“Mama Murphy,” Preston said with a scolding voice, interrupting her sentence.

“We will all die someday, Preston,” the old woman murmured.

Andrea smiled a little, and then she stood up. “Diamond City it is then. Where I can find it?”

“Downtown. The biggest settlement around here. You can’t miss it. It’s built inside an old baseball stadium,” Sturgers told.

“Fenway Park?” Andrea asked surprised, seeing a group staring her confused. They didn’t recognise the name.

“Try to take care of yourself, dear,” Murphy said.

They returned outside, and Andrea gestured them the way to Sanctuary. Then she noticed cold drops of rain that fell from the sky. Night had already fallen too.

Preston turned to her and offered his hand. “Anyway, thanks all of this. It would be great to have you in Minutemen.”
“You know, Preston,” Andrea said and shook his hand. “I’m honoured about your proposal, but I think I’ll stick as a friend now. This place is just new to me. However, I’ll help you any way I can.”

“That’s understandable. However, if you change your mind, you’ll find me from Sanctuary,” he said with a smile. “I hope you’ll find your godson.”

“And I hope you’ll find your General.”

“If General returns, no, she will return, and then Minutemen will be back in business. She’s our everything,” Preston said. He even sounded a little more optimistic now. “Hey, you didn’t tell us your name?”

“Andrea Maxson.”

She felt something sinking inside her again when she said his surname. Then she noticed Preston’s questioning, maybe pondering look and she asked, “What is?”

“You said you are from Vault, right?” he asked, and Andrea nodded. “Well, then it is just a coincidence.”

“What?”

“Your surname just reminded me of one military organisation. They’re called Brotherhood of Steel.”

Andrea furrowed her brows together and then she bridled, “What would we do without the military?”

She said goodbyes to Preston and others, hoping they could find a place to settle down and try to live a normal life. Then Andrea decided to sleep overnight at the old church. Only an idiot would travel during night-time.

But when she was about to enter into the church, she felt eyes on her back.

Then, from the corner of her eye, Andrea saw someone moving in the shadows and glanced in the direction.

Nothing.

The only things that she saw were dead Deathclaw and darkness. But Andrea swore she saw someone who had a long coat.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I’m not a fan of action scenes, but I have improved a little bit. Which is a good thing! And thank you so much for encouraging comments and kudos!
Chem Laboratory

Chapter Summary

During her second 'mission', Andrea meets someone unusual and helps him with his task. Short of.

“...Now it’s my turn to go AWOL if that concept even applies anymore. My armour’s fusion core is burned out, so I guess my soldiering days are done. I’m heading to Boston on foot, to see if my sister survived all this. She’s got an apartment on Boylston Street. This is Mike Daly, signing out. Good luck. And God bless America. Or what’s left of it.”

Andrea sighed as the tape ended and looked up to the sky. Her soldiering days were done too.

It was a brand-new day in a brand-new world. Andrea and her canine companion continued their journey towards the southeast after they had found something to eat and tinkered some weapon holsters. She couldn’t carry dual pistols all the time.

“We had a deal, Trudy. Hand over the goods,” a voice said.

Andrea stopped walking and glared toward the old Drumlin Diner. She thought about leaving; it wasn’t her problem after all. However, she was still a soldier who wanted to help people. It was her duty to protect people.

“You piece of shit!” an older woman yelled. “Selling this junk to my boy wasn’t part of our deal if you call it one.”

“As I said, it’s not our fault if he wanted to buy them… whoa whoa!” the man pulled out his pistol after seeing the dog and Andrea. “Easy there, vaultie. This doesn’t involve you.”

Andrea could disarm both of them, but the woman and her son were in a line of fire.

“You stop waving that gun in my face or at them, or it’s gonna involve me,” she said.

Maybe her military appearance and firm tone of voice made them stand down.

“Okay, okay. Take it easy. Just don’t do anything crazy,” the man said as duo lowered their weapons.

“Now get the fuck out of here and don’t come back.”

“Are you fucking kidd—” he started but shut his mouth as Dogmeat revealed two sharp rows of teeth. “Fine. Let’s go, Simone.”

Andrea chuckled a little bit as they ran away, in a hurry.

“Well, this was just what I needed. Thank you,” Trudy thanked her.

Dogmeat went to see her son and licked his shaking hand as if trying to help him somehow.

Andrea stared at the boy and asked, “Not a problem. Is your son okay?”
“He will be. It will not be easy, but we will make it.”

“Do you have any addictol?”

“Not right now but Carla, our travelling trader, should come here back soon as she can with supplies from Diamond City. She left about two days ago.”

Andrea crossed her arms in front of her chest and said, “Maybe I can find some before she comes back, or maybe I should go after those two assholes and make them give their addictols. So, is there any place from where I could find addictols or drug addict raiders?”

“Hmm. There is a lake southwest from here,” a woman pondered. “My son told me that raiders have ‘secret’ drug lab there. Are you sure about this?”

“I want to help. If I find addictols, I’ll bring it to you,” Andrea said and called Dogmeat.

“Thank you,” Trudy said.

The lake wasn’t too far away, but it took a while for the duo to reach it. Andrea faced wild dogs on her way there or if they were dogs anymore. They acted like a one, barked a lot and attacked with speed and teeth, but they looked zombies.

This place is hideous, Andrea thought.

Dogmeat took care of one of them while Andrea killed one with her knife and murmured something by herself. She didn’t want to kill dogs, even if they were skinned and angry ones, but she had no choice.

Looking around her, Andrea realised how spooky quiet the forest was. She couldn’t hear birds or other animals. Then she made a mental note to herself not to move during night time.

She had seen battlefield before, seen horrors of it but this place was different. Animals were top of the food chain now.

As the duo approached the old lake, Andrea saw a man leaning against a fallen tree, stalking someone or something through his scope of a rifle. He had body length jacket, held together by a belt with several pouches, had a cap on his head with two rifle rounds strapped to the brim by the sweatband. He looked like a mercenary but not as bad as that asshole back in the Vault.

Andrea glared man thoroughly and glanced Dogmeat, telling him to stay behind and approached the man slowly. Though grass was dead and dry, her footsteps didn’t make any sound.

Stealth Steps.

That’s how her comrades had called it — the ability to move without making sounds.

She drew her pistol from the holster and aimed the sniper’s head with it.

“Put that rifle on the ground and don’t move. What’s your business here?” she commanded and touched his head with the barrel.

The man froze but didn’t do as she said. Instead, he asked, “How I am supposed to put the gun down and not to move at the same time?”

“Don’t test me,” Andrea said, and the man put his rifle down to the ground. “Now answer my question.”
“I’m just doing my job. Do you know what job is?”

“Yeah, that’s why I am here too. Are you with the raiders?”

“No, I’m trying to get rid of these freaking raiders. I don’t care if I have to kill some raiders for the caps. Or you,” the man stated.


“Is there a drug lab down there?” she asked.

The man shrugged as an answer and Andrea hit his head with a pistol, not hard enough to knock him out but enough to make him talk.

Then she said, “A next thing what will hit your head will be the bullet.”

“Okay, fine. I was hired to kill these raiders for, uh, my customer. Those raiders owe him caps and drugs, but they didn’t listen to him. So here I am, trying to do my job until you came and ruined it.”

“Sure. Turn around,” Andrea said and took a few steps back.

The man turned around, still holding his hands up and she frowned.

Jesus, he’s just a kid.

A pair of gorgeous blue eyes glared at her a moment longer, and then the boy muttered, “Oh great, a vault dweller surprised me again. I should train more of my scouting skills...”

“You should mind your surroundings more,” Andrea lectured. “So, let’s see. Maybe we can take them down together?”

“Are you stupid? You just sneaked up on me, threatened to shoot a bullet in my head, and now you want to help me?” the boy asked. “And anyway, I don’t think you have even caps to buy my services.”

“Always doing it for cash?”

“When you’re good at something, never do it for free,” the boy stated blankly.

However, Andrea smiled and then she saw how the boy narrowed his eyes.

For a long moment, they stared at each other and then Andrea spoke,

“Hmm. You said they owe drugs and caps to your customer? And they probably have all those things at their lab, right? What do you say if we go down there to take care of them, and you can keep all the goods? Including merchandise that doesn’t belong to your customer, as a payment of your service for me?” Andrea suggested.

The boy frowned and continued glaring her, then he asked, “You don’t want anything?”

“The only thing what I want is an addictol.”

“Why do you need addictols? Are you high or something?”

“No. Son of my customer needs it,” Andrea said, seeing an empathic look on his face, though it faded quickly. “It’s like... killing two birds with one stone?”
This kid wasn’t a bad guy.

Of course, he was mercenary, and Andrea knew mercenaries as she had worked with them before. They couldn’t be trusted, but this kid was different.

“How do I know I won’t end up with a knife in my back after we are done?”

“You don’t. You know the risks as much as I do. However, if we want to finish our tasks and make our customers happy, there shouldn’t be any problem, or I swear, you will end up with a knife in your back.”

“Or I’ll shoot a .308 bullet into your head,” the boy stated firmly.

“Andrea Maxson,” she said and offered her hand.

It really hurt her to say that name. It reminded her every time that Roger was gone, and she was alone.

Then she heard how the boy murmured something under his breath and asked, “What?”

“Are you from the Brotherhood of Steel?”

“No, I am not. What’s that?”

“Military. Bunch of idiots who collect technology and messes with people lives. You share a surname with that fu— freaking idiot who runs the whole circus,” the boy murmured. “You’re not his family member?”

“No, I’m not. I don’t even know who are they. As you can see, I’m vault dweller,” Andrea answered. “Call me Andrea.”

“Robert Joseph MacCready,” the man said, shaking her hand.

“So, RJ, how do we get in?” Andrea asked and looked at the collapsed building at another side of the small lake. “They have that secret lab of theirs underground?”

“How do you know?”

“That building was a gift shop a long time ago, not a laboratory. They probably did set their lab into employees premises which is more secure.”

“Well, you’re right. I’m not a fan of going into a building with guns blazing, so the front door is not an option. There are presumably traps too,” MacCready said. “Can I take my rifle now?”

Andrea nodded and smirked, saying, “Make sure there are no other ‘vault dwellers’ sneaking around.”


Andrea whistled quietly and soon, Dogmeat came to her, waving his tail.

MacCready frowned and asked, “German Shepherd? Is he with you?”

“Yeah, he is my backup,” Andrea stated and patted Dogmeat’s head. “He is capable of taking care of raiders on his own. Why?”
“You remind me of someone,” MacCready said as he glared both of them and looked through his scope. “I can’t see anyone outside at the moment, but I see a fat pipeline with a hatch. Maybe that’s their another exit?”

“Let’s go find out,” Andrea said with a smile.

Pipeline’s hatch was closed tight and heavy as sin, but Andrea was able to lift it with the help of sniper. She let the boys go first, and Dogmeat took the lead. He could sniff out bad guys quickly.

“Do you have a handgun?” Andrea asked her partner.

“I’m best with sniper rifles. I have a knife though,” he said and pointed his knife under a jacket.

“Maybe I should watch my back, I don’t want to be stabbed with a knife either,” Andrea said with a little grin.

“Don’t worry. I’ll use my rifle is something that comes up. It’s less painful,” MacCready answered, smiling.

Water was flooding inside the pipeline, splashes and traps on the floor making sneaking harder. Their wet clothes stuck to their skins and their boots were full of water. Suddenly Dogmeat began to growl quietly, and the duo heard people talking.

“When the next delivery is coming, boss? Billy is getting anxious. There aren’t enough components to prepare this new drug...” someone said.

Then another raider answered, “Soon. Wolfgang and Simone are trying to find some. I hope they will succeed with traders.”

Andrea frowned. Didn’t that jackass in leather outfit call his friend Simone back at Drumlin Diner?

“I hope we can trust those two, boss. They are associated with Goodneighbor. Mayor of that shithole doesn’t like us.”

“Hah. He has a reason for that. However, he doesn’t have influence here either. So fuck him.”

Trio inside the pipe approached a big hole on the side of the pipeline and took a peek. They saw three raiders, one sitting on the seat, second standing in front of him. The third person leaned against the wall, cleaning his fingernails with a knife.

“Did you saw others?” Andrea asked her new companion.

“Yeah. There were four hostiles outside before you showed up. So, we have about seven guys opposing us.”

“Probably more,” Andrea pondered. “I managed to scare this duo, Wolfgang and Simone, away a few hours ago. I wouldn’t be surprised if they came here.”

“Or they returned to Goodneighbor. Those two aren’t raiders, but it’s good to know they consort with them. So, how do you want to do this, boss?”

“You call me boss even though I haven’t given you any cash yet?” Andrea raised her thick eyebrows.

“My reward is there, hopefully. If not—“ MacCready glanced her hand. “I’ll steal that Pip-Boy of yours after you are worm food.”
“Unbelievable,” Andrea said, grinning. “It’s your choice, partner. Rest of them will hear us no matter how we approach them. We could try sneaking, but the place is too bright. The good thing is, we have their boss in line of fire. However, the rest of them are still a problem.”

Then she drew her pistol from the holster and asked, “Guns blazing?”

MacCready rolled his eyes and snorted. “You’re the boss, boss.”

“Of course I am,” Andrea smirked. “You stay here. Snipe coming raiders while I’m trying to bluff them.”

“You’re going there?” MacCready asked.

Another raider had appeared into a cave and talked with their boss and a woman.

“Don’t worry. This isn’t my first gunfight. Also, don’t forget, there is payment waiting,” Andrea stated, releasing safety of her pistols and exited the pipeline.

It alarmed raiders, and she shot two armed hostiles without hesitation. The raider boss was unarmed, and she attacked him, gaining the upper hand quickly. He fell back, and Andrea finished him as he laid on the ground.

She heard two gunshots, realising that MacCready had shot hostiles that appeared onto the cave.

More raiders were sent out to investigate gunshots. The trio encountered a few hostiles on their way, and they finally reached the main floor and the lab.

Chem laboratory itself was motherload. It was full of drug stacks, jets, buffouts and lots of bags that were full of cash. *Bottlecaps*.

The current currency of Wasteland.

Andrea gave all the bags to MacCready, and he stuffed them into his backpack.

“Are you sure that your backpack is going to hold all that weight?” she asked.

“Of course, it will. It’s made from leather,” MacCready said and gave a addictols to Andrea. “Are you sure you will manage with those?”

“That was the deal,” Andrea said, humming. “So it’s done now. Hopefully, our customers will be happy now, or we did this for nothing.”

“Well, even if this would be a futile job, it was a funny one,” MacCready stated. “I still wonder why you wanted my help? You knew I was a mercenary.”

Andrea stuffed addictols into her pockets and said, “I saw that certain look on your face when I told that I was looking medicine for someone. You have someone you care about. From that moment I knew you weren’t a bad guy.”

MacCready laughed, picking up his backpack from the floor and looked at her.

“Not a bad guy, huh? You know, I kill people for a living. If I had been someone else, you would have been killed immediately.”

“I know,” Andrea said. “You’re pretty good with that rifle, kid. I shouldn’t piss you off.”
They left the building and disarmed all the traps that they found on their way out. Then MacCready turned around and reached his hand toward her, and she shook it.

“So this is where we part our ways. Thanks,” he said.

“You’re welcome. Are you sure you can continue travelling at night?” Andrea asked.

“I shoot and move better at night. Daylight is what I hate.”

“Like a true sniper, huh?” Andrea smirked. “Don’t get yourself killed there, kid.”

The boy gave her scowl after she called him a kid again, murmuring something about mungos. Whatever that meant.

At the same moment when Andrea and Dogmeat returned to the diner, Trudy was closing the shop. Her expression was filled with happiness when Andrea returned with addictols.

“Thank you again,” she said. “You can stay here overnight. Wasteland is pretty dangerous at night. Oh, here is your payment,” Trudy added, giving Andrea a bag of caps.

“Thank you. Um, I would like to sleep outside if it’s okay. I would like to have some personal time.”

“You can use this,” the shop keeper said, taking a sleeping bag from the shelf.

Andrea thanked her again and turned to look at her son, Patrick.

The young man’s body trembled, shaking like a leaf, and he was unwilling to engage in discussion. He couldn’t keep his body under control. He didn’t probably even know where he was — damn drugs and withdrawal symptoms.

Andrea could still remember the feel of ‘being high’. It made everything simple. The feeling of pain and hunger disappeared, and life was a little bit easier… a little bit painful.

But when the effect of pain killers stopped, the pain came back and…

Andrea shook her head. She could only imagine what Patrick went through.

Wasteland. A home of survivors, Andrea thought as she continued her journey next morning.

The country she fought for turned into Wasteland after the world leaders decided to blast everything into pieces.

Andrea thought what people did in order to survive after the war? What Roger did after they dropped the A-bombs? Did he survive?

She glanced her name on pre-war dog tags, before looking up to the sky and spotted view stars on the sky. They had reminded the same.

Andrea thought again, what Roger had told her about them. He had believed that stars were the place where souls resided.

‘Are you there now too? Watching me?’ Andrea thought, thinking him.

Lexington appeared behind the hill, and Andrea turned Diamond City radio off before entering
into the town. It had to be full of raiders. It was always raiders.

She went into the first apartment and found Nuka-Cola, cigarettes, two packets of .38 rounds and some food. She put the stuff into her backpack and left the building.

Survival was her task now. She was a wastelander.

Then Andrea heard a familiar but alarming sound. At first, she heard a whistle and then she saw a big explosion, feeling the ground shaking under her feet.

*Great. Someone has Fat Man. Thanks for General Brock and his group for developing this so-called greatest weapon in our history, and for what? So that these jackasses could nuke the shit out of this town?* she thought.

Andrea narrowed her eyes as she tried to identify targets, seeing people running around the area. However, their behaviour was unusual.

Dogmeat began to growl when one of them came near enough, and for the first time, Andrea saw a feral ghoul.

This zombie, or what the hell it was, didn’t have its arms anymore. Its skin was rotten, clothes were shredded, and it acted like an animal. It sniffed the air, ate stuff from the ground and moved around without a destination. Soon it had more company.

A few seconds later, Andrea heard the whistle again and saw a massive explosion.

“She’s get the hell out of here. I don’t want to have a mini-nuke in my ass,” Andrea stated Dogmeat and turned around slowly, cursing guys of Fort Strong for developing Fatman.

The next place wasn’t any better. The old car landfill was full of huge rats and radioactivity, latter one making Andrea retreat immediately when her Pip-Boy warned about radiation.

However, the machine began to beep again as they approached downtown.

She furrowed her brows together and checked the machine on her left arm. Those two radio stations were still available, but there was now new radiofrequency on the list.

*Military frequency AF95.*

Maybe it was old, forgotten frequency from the time before the war that played on a loop.

Andrea shook her head, imagining how Nate would lecture her about her pessimistic view of life.

‘What if it’s old and forgotten, Andy? It would remind the people about the long-forgotten U.S. Army. It would be an eternal memory of our existence,’ she thought.

She chuckled to herself and turned frequency on.

At first, the only thing she heard was the static as Pip-Boy tried to decode frequency, but then the sound became more clear.

*This is Scribe Haylen of Reconnaissance Squad Gladius to any unit in transmission range… sustained casualties, and we’re running low on supplies … port or evac from our position at Cambridge Police Station. Autom…*

Andrea didn’t recognise term scribe or unit Reconnaissance Squad Gladius. The message had to be
post-war.

She lifted her gaze to Cambridge. It wasn’t far away, and she knew where the Police Station was. Dogmeat whined and watched her with a questioning look in his eyes.

“What do you say, buddy? Should we save some lives again? Maybe we will get food or caps as a payment?” she asked Dogmeat and cast her gaze back to Cambridge. “If there is anybody left...”
ArcJet System

Chapter Summary

Andrea finds herself helping people again, but this time it's military turn. Without even knowing anything about them, she agrees to help Paladin with his task to infiltrate the old facility.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sounds of gunshots and freaky cries echoed through the streets. The closer Andrea got to the old police station, the more frightening the sounds were.

She drew both pistols from holsters before pushing the wooden gate open. Then her eyes widened in horror as she saw what was happening.

A herd of mindless zombies kept attacking a man wearing power armour and one soldier who stood the top of the barricaded gantry.

Andrea lifted her pistol and pulled the trigger when one of those zombies bit the man. Her bullet killed the creature, but then a large group of zombies attacked the man.

“Keane!” the power armoured man yelled, but it was too late.

The soldier called for help, but the man hesitated when he looked behind him.

There were a wounded man and a woman at the front door of Police Station.

If he left, those things would kill them too.

He grunted in defeat and stayed where he was, protecting those two behind him.

Andrea didn’t blame him for his decision. But she returned to reality when Dogmeat attacked one of the zombies and killed it with ease.

One of the zombies got too close to the duo at the front door, and Andrea picked her knife. She threw it toward the creature and the blade pierced its head.

Eventually, they managed to kill all the zombies, and Andrea holstered her weapons after reloading them. And again, she was low on ammo.

A man in power armour walked to the top of the barricaded gantry and stopped after reaching the body of a fallen comrade.

“Rest in peace, Knight Keane. Ad Victoriam,” he said.

He stood there a while and then returned to their helpers, glancing Andrea and Dogmeat.

“My squad and I appreciate the assistance, civilian. But what’s your business here?” he asked.
“I picked up your SOS-message at the Lexington, and I came here to check the situation.”

“Are you from local Vault?”

“I left from Vault not a while ago,” she answered. “Um… who are you?”

“My name is Paladin Danse of Brotherhood of Steel,” he said, then looked at his soldiers. “His name is Knight Rhys, and the young lady next to him is Scribe Haylen.”

Brotherhood of Steel.

The same military that Preston and MacCready had mentioned.

Andrea wasn’t thrilled about the fact military still lurked around here. She scrutinised his light brown eyes and scars on his face.

His facial expression was firm and observing — typical military officer.

“I beg your pardon but if it’s okay to ask, what are you doing here? I imagined there would be more soldiers with you?” Andrea asked.

“We’re on recon duty, sent here to search technology, pre-war documents and investigate the odd energy readings. However, our squad got ambushed multiple times, and I lost men. First by raiders, and then by super mutants. We tried to report to our main chapter about our findings, but the police station’s main antenna is broken,” Paladin explained and gestured the antenna on the roof.

“Later, these feral ghouls attacked our stronghold. Scribe used our communication gear to send out a short-range distress call, and our remaining squad tried to fight off the ghouls. You saw the rest.”

Andrea found that these zombies were feral ghouls and there was super mutants out here. Whatever they were, she didn’t want to know. And then there was this unlucky squad.

“I’m truly sorry about your losses. That was unnecessary to ask. I apologise.”

“I appreciate your apology, civilian. You wanted to know who you helped.”

“Excuse me, sir, if I may?” Scribe Haylen spoke suddenly, and Paladin gave her permission to continue. “I’ve modified the radio tower on the roof of the station, but it isn’t just enough. We need something that will boost the signal, and I think I found a solution to our problem. Pre-war records mentioned facility called ArcJet Systems. There is a chance that this facility contains a device called Deep Range Transmitter, designed for long-range communication.”

“So you’re not sure?” Knight Rhys asked, annoyed, as he tried to stand up.

“Well, the document is over two hundred years old, Rhys,” Haylen answered. “It may still be there, or someone may have taken it.”

Paladin grunted and rubbed his unshaven chin, thinking.

“You said ArcJet Systems?” Andrea asked the younger girl. “I know where it is. It’s northwest from here. I can help you infiltrate the facility and secure transmitter. If you allow me to help you?”

“So it is settled,” Paladin said, saw a small glimmer of hope on his face. “Haylen, take Rhys inside and bind the rest of his wounds. And Rhys, when you’re ready, I want you to bury Knight Keane.”
“I’m on it,” Rhys replied.

“After Haylen has taken care of your wounds, Knight.”

Rhys nodded and the duo headed inside the Police Station.

“All right, civilian. We’re going to an unknown area, and we don’t know who we will face there. Head inside and resupply yourself, then let me know when you’re ready.”

“But if you’re running low on supplies—”

“You helped us to fight off feral ghouls, and now you’re willing to help us secure the transmitter. It’s at least how I can repay you. Without you... you two,” Paladin faltered when he remembered German Shepherd. “This could have been the end of our squad.”

“There it is, ArcJet System,” Andrea stated after they reached the building. “Are you ready?”

“Should I be the one who asks the questions?” Paladin questioned with a firm tone of voice.

“I was checking. I’m ready,” Andrea responded with a little smile. She didn’t know what they might face there, but she was ready and eager for action.

The facility was utterly dark, empty and silent. Lights worked only in specific rooms, and they had to rely on their flashlights. At first, it seemed there wasn’t anyone else inside the building, but someone or something had taken care of building’s security. However, Dogmeat didn’t sniff out anyone.

Andrea looked around, trying to find something to loot but she saw only documents, broken machinery and parts of Protectrons.

Trio arrived into the lab control room, and she went straightly to a terminal, huffing.

“Is there something wrong?” Paladin asked her.

“If you happen to be MIT level hacker, then nothing isn’t wrong,” Andrea murmured and glared another terminal on her left. “Well, here goes nothing. I hate technology.”

After multiple wrong guesses, she sighed and heard Paladin grunting as he tried to open a door with force.

“Any luck with that terminal?” he asked.

“No. What do you know about this place?”

“Scribe Haylen told me this place was working on the nuclear-powered rocket during the 2075’s, according to documents we found. She also mentioned Mars Shot Project and deep range transmitter.”

“They wanted to fly to Mars,” Andrea recalled. “Did Scribe mention ArcJet System CEO’s name?”

“No, I don’t think so. She only found one name from documents; Dr Rory McCellan? Why?”

Andrea frowned as she recognised the name and said, “He was a scientist who worked for the U.S. Army before ArcJet System hired him.”
“How do you know about it?”

“I did read about it,” Andrea answered.

She had heard about the ArcJet System and XMB booster engine from her father. Then she had an idea.

*How about this? It’s a long shot but...*, she thought.

Then she heard an acceptable sound that came from the computer speakers. “I’m in!”

“Outstanding. What was the password?”

“The name of XMB boosters satellite which McCellan created. They told about satellite’s launch —” she halted in mid-sentence. “I can now change passwords. Just a moment.”

Paladin glared her as she changed the password of control rooms. “Did you read about that too?”

“If we get out of here, I’ll tell you,” Andrea replied. “I believe it’s not the time.”

“What do you mean?”

“As you said, we are not alone.”

Paladin turned to look behind him as security doors opened and figures attacked them immediately. The first robot ran through the door, and Paladin shot it with his laser rifle.

“Multiple synth targets! Take them down!”

Even without Paladins suggestion, or command, Andrea drew her pistol and shot three incoming synths with Paladin.

“What the hell are those?” she asked.

“If we get out of here, I’ll tell you. Now we must get moving,” Paladin stated.

________________________________________

“Okay. I cannot wait until we get out. What are these *synths*?” Andrea asked as the last synth fell, repeating *systems offline* and she turned around to look at the man.

Thanks to their effort and pretty good teamwork, hostiles in the test chambers were defeated pretty quickly after Andrea managed to activate test chambers powers.

“These are synths, made by the Institute. They’re quite like robots but more dangerous.”

“What is the Institute?” Andrea asked, confused.

“You really aren’t from here? They’re a group of scientist who went underground when the Great War started. They have spent two last centuries littering Commonwealth, and it’s surrounding areas with their technological nightmares. They created synths to overpower humanity. It’s unacceptable. They simply can’t be allowed to exist.”

As if this world wasn’t dangerous already.

Then he continued, “An elevator should be now online, but let’s be more careful. I think synths are after Deep Range Transmitter too.”
And Paladin was right.

As they approached the upper control room where the transmitter was supposed to be, they saw synths running around the room. But they had no chance against power armoured Paladin and his sidekicks.

Last two synths were hiding behind a shelf, and Andrea kicked nearby computer table towards the shelf with a strong kick. The desk hit the bookshelf, and it smashed synths.

“Good kick, civilian,” Paladin praised her.

“I didn’t miss a leg day on the gym,” Andrea joked.

Then Paladin looked around and said, “All right, it seems none of them didn’t make out of the room before we arrived. Let’s find that Deep Range Transmitter and get the hell out of here.”

Andrea could tell that he was worried about his squad. Maybe the man was more eager to leave the building that she was.

After they reached the surface, Paladin took off his helmet and said, “Well, that could have gone smoother, but it was refreshing to work with a civilian who can follow orders and take care of themselves in the heat of battle.”

“Well, it was refreshing to work with someone with military training. You soldiers are pretty rare nowadays, I think?” Andrea asked, but then she remembered their conversation inside the control room. “I, uh, I think I owe you an explanation.”

Paladin remained quiet, letting her continue.

“I’m indeed from the Vault, but… I’m pre-war. So that’s why I knew about ArcJet System and Dr Rory McCellan.”

“How did you survive?” he asked, doubting.

“We were put into cryostasis. It was some sort of experiment. I just woke up a few days ago,” she continued.

Paladin raised his eyebrow and asked, “And others?”

Andrea gave him a sad shake of the head and said, “It’s a graveyard now — frozen mummified corpses in the pods and old skeletons on the floor. According to Vault-Tec terminal, others died because of asphyxiation due to life support failure, and it seems the staff was executed or they starved. A few skeletons have bullet holes in their skulls.”

“How your life support didn’t fail?”

Andrea shrugged. She had thought about that too. Maybe God punished her for her sins.

“I was conscious for a while at some point. I witnessed a man and a woman in a strange insulation suit killing my childhood friend and kidnapping his son in front of me. It seems, they put us back into sleep and then somebody opened my pod and let me go,” Andrea told and looked up to Paladin.

“It sounds so unbelievable. However, it’s not the first time when I hear stories like that about Vault-Tec. According to Brotherhoods intel, most Vaults had some kind of experiment going on.”
Andrea wasn’t sure was she surprised about news or not.

“In the name of science, huh? Well, they weren’t so different from the government,” she said. “But hey, about this mission… Do you want that transmitter?”

Paladin raised his eyebrows on a sudden change of subject but nodded. Then he said, “There is something I would like to ask from you.”

“Ask away.”

“I’m not a hundred per cent sure about your story, but your appearance and behaviour are different from wastelanders… if you’re pre-war, do you have any experience with the military?”

“Actually, I am... I was in the army,” Andrea faltered and showed her dog tags.

“As I thought. Brotherhood of Steel isn’t U.S. Army, but a group of U.S. Army soldiers founded our organisation, so we’re somewhat connected with them,” Paladin told her. “There is one question, proposal actually. We had a lot thrown at us back there and even if you didn’t know what you were fighting against, you handled it like a soldier. There is no doubt in my mind that you’ve got it what it takes.”

“Are you asking me to join into Brotherhood of Steel?” Andrea asked, and the man nodded.

“The way I see it, you’ve got a choice. You can continue wandering in a wasteland from place to place, trading an extra hand for rewards. Or you could join the Brotherhood of Steel and be again part of the military you had to left behind a long time ago.”

Andrea looked away and considered her options.

Brotherhood’s main objective was to collect dangerous technology, preventing unwanted and harmful use of technology by wastelanders. It was their way to protect civilians, as Paladin had explained it. Andrea knew what kind of horrors mankind had done in the name of science and power.

But was that what she wanted? As much as she loved the army, she hated it at the same time. She hated their way to act. Their leaders. Their selfishness. The military had controlled people with fear and betrayed her more than once.

She didn’t want to go through that again.

“I’m sorry. I don’t have faith in the military anymore,” Andrea said. “People, to whom I swore my oath, let me down more than once.”

“I do understand; it’s a big decision. However, if you change your mind, you can find me from Police Station,” Paladin said confidently. “May I ask your name? I would like to know who saved our lives.”

She glanced him and nervously shifted her stance.

“Andrea Adams.”

“Are we in luck, sir?” Knight Rhys asked as Paladin, and his companions — those whom Rhys ignored — returned to Police Station.

“Yes. Mission was successful. We have the transmitter.”
“Finally, some good news. Good work, sir.”

“I didn’t do it alone. I got some help from our newest ally,” Paladin said. “However, she wasn’t sure about joining into our ranks, but I left the request open. Until that, she’s allowed to stay here if she wants but only if she stays out of our way.”

“Thank you,” Andrea said. “But I’ll hit the road now. I don’t want to use any of your supplies.”

Rhys glared her from head to toe and said, “Good. We didn’t want you here, anyway.”

“Knight Rhys,” Paladin Danse raised his voice, and the younger man apologised. After Haylen had thanked Andrea, giving her few stimpaks, she left the building and closed the door behind her. But the door opened again, and Andrea heard someone approach her. She looked over her shoulder.

“Is there something wrong?” Andrea asked Paladin.

The man stared her for a while and took his laser rifle. “I would like to give you this.”

“Why? You don’t need it?”

“Take it as payment. You did a good job at ArcJet Systems, soldier,” he said, stressing the word soldier and gave her the weapon.

“I’m… I’m honoured about this, but you will need it probably more than I do.”

“Brotherhood soldier always carries a backup gun, and I have many guns here. Take it; it’s least what I can give you after what you did. My laser rifle is better than pipe pistol,” Paladin stated and glanced pipe pistol on her hip.

“Righteous Authority,” she said, reading the name on it as she studied it.

“It’s one of my personal weapons. I bought it, modded it and took good care of it. It’s yours now.”

“Has someone ever told you that you’re a little bit hard-headed?” Andrea asked.

Paladin smiled a little. “Yes,” he answered.

“I have to go now,” Andrea said. “However, fire up your military frequency if you guys need help. I will come back as fast as I can.”

As usual, she ended up into fight with raiders, and they chose the wrong battle. Andrea made her way to back door of the old store, after killing hostiles and noticed that the door was locked. She murmured under her breath while opening a lock with tools. Then she opened the door and saw three more raiders standing behind it.

Trio glared her a moment, and Andrea glared them back, picking up her dual pistols as fast as she could. She killed two of them with few shots and was about to kill the last raider until someone else did it for her.

Andrea witnessed hostile falling to the ground and pointed her pistol towards the approaching figure, narrowing her eyes when she recognised the man.

“This must be fate… Or are you following me?” she asked.
“No. But you were the one who gave me a lecture about ‘mind your surroundings’ bullshit and look, I saved your a-s-s,” MacCready said as he walked towards her, holding his rifle on his shoulder.

“Being surprised by a vault dweller in a wide area is little different from being surprised by raiders after crashing a door, kid. And I would have killed him myself. What are you doing here, anyway?”

“What? I can’t travel anywhere where I want to?” the man asked and admired her laser rifle. “Hm. Not bad gun. Who did you kill to get that gun?”

“Brotherhood soldier gave it to me.”

“Argh. I knew you had connections with them. Is that stupid Elder your relative?”

Andrea raised her eyebrows, confused. “No. Who’s this Elder?”

“A clown who runs that circus.”

“Oh. You don’t… like them, do you?”

“No, I don’t,” MacCready said. “About ten years ago, they helped civilians a lot more than they do now. With the help of another vault dweller, they purified water of Capital Wasteland from toxic and radiation. You know, the water there is drinkable. But now they are a bunch of a-holes. I heard they took a power core from an old aircraft carrier and now the town inside it is without electricity.”

Somehow it was something that Pentagon could have done. Somehow it didn’t surprise her.

Then Andrea asked, “You didn’t answer my question; why are you here?”

“I was sent to clear out this place, kill their leader, but seemingly, you did it for me. Maybe I should return to collect the caps,” MacCready smirked. “Where are you headed? Somewhere to kill more raiders?”

“I wish. No, Diamond City. I’ve to find somebody, and someone told me that Diamond City is the right place to start.”

“Nick Valentine. He’s detective,” MacCready stated. “I can walk you there.”

There was something fishy in his idea. Andrea narrowed her eyes playfully and asked, “How much?”

“Two hundred and fifty caps.”

“Make it two hundred,” Andrea said, smirking.

MacCready rolled his eyes, saying, “Okay, two hundred. No less.”

Andrea threw a pouch of caps to the mercenary and clapped her hands, calling Dogmeat, “Come on Dogmeat.”

Then she looked at MacCready. “You too, kid.”

“Kid? You’re only like five years older than me?”
“You don’t even know.”

Security men of Diamond city greeted trio as they passed them, though one of them asked what their business there was and glared MacCready suspiciously. After talking their way out of the situation, Andrea smiled when she saw an old statue of a baseball player and green, rusty main gate.

No baseball games nowadays, she thought.

But when they approached the stadium’s main entrance and lobby, homesickness overwhelmed Andrea. She stared the lobby of the Fenway Park and fell into her thoughts.

It had only been a week since she was here with Nate, Nora and Shaun. She could still hear the voices of the game and the cheering fans. People’s laughter and cheering echoed inside her head. She could still remember the smell of fresh popcorn and warm beer.

Andrea wrapped her arms around her body as if hugging herself. Hugging that homesickness away.

Then she looked stairways which led to the stadium, remembering the last time when she walked up those stairs with Nate, Nora and Shaun.

A week ago in her timeline.

Over two hundred years ago in reality.

“Hey, boss,” she heard MacCready calling her. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” Andrea said and continued her way towards Diamond City market with MacCready and Dogmeat. “Do you know where the detective’s office is?”

“Behind Arturo’s shop,” MacCready said, but then Andrea stopped in front of Swatters after seeing baseball bats and gloves.

“What’s a Swatter?” she asked the shopkeeper.

“Rookie, huh? Swatter, my friend, is a Diamond City tradition. This place was used to be a stadium, where two teams would meet and play a game called baseball. One team would beat another team to death with baseball bats, and the best bats were called the Swatters,” the man explained.

Andrea took a deep breath before raising her voice which caught the attention of the guards.

“If you ever again talk like that about baseball, I swear to God; I’ll smash your head with that—”

“Sorry Moe, this lady had a bad day,” MacCready stated and tried to push his partner away. “Come on, boss. It was just a metaphor for the pre-war game.”

“For someone like me, who lived here and loved baseball, that was sacrilege,” Andrea gnarled and followed him to Valentine Detective Agency’s office.

As soon as MacCready knocked on the door, it opened slightly and the young woman peeked behind it. At first, it seemed she startled MacCready but then she noticed Andrea.

“Um, we’re looking for the detective. Is he here?” Andrea asked, getting her attention.
“I’m afraid that you’re a little late. Detective isn’t home,” the young woman answered.

“Is there something wrong?”

“Nick, he… He has been gone for three weeks. I’m worried.”

“I don’t blame you for that. However, I need him. Maybe we can help you to find him? Where did you saw him last time or do you know where he went?” Andrea asked.

“He was working with his latest case. Group of Triggermen kidnapped a young woman, and her father contacted us. Nick told he found clues about this case and it led him to Park Street Station,” the woman explained.

Andrea heard MacCready grunting behind her in disgust.

Then the woman continued, “Nobody hasn’t seen him after that. I tried to warn him about a possible trap, but he just smiled and told me not to worry.”

“I’ll find him. He’s fine,” Andrea stated. Has to be. “To the Park Street Station, boys. I know where it is.”

The woman looked now cheerful, but only a little.

“I can give you a few caps for your service. Thank you so much,” the woman said, glancing MacCready quickly and closed the door.

Andrea glanced man in turn. “You do have a reputation here already, don’t you?”

“Maybe,” the sniper shrugged.

“Maybe I should be more careful with you.”

“No, you don’t. I don’t want to mess with you. However, the place where we are going next? We should be more careful there.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I called ferals zombies until Andrea learned what they were. Don't kill me. As usual, any feedback is greatly appreciated and thank you for reading!
Chapter Summary

What is the result when you send a mercenary, soldier and shepherd dog into the old subway station? Bunch of dead triggermen, of course. But what happens when detective, soldier and shepherd dog goes to investigate the home of another mercenary?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

On their way to Parker Street, MacCready told Andrea about the mob boss called Skinny Malone who had led his mafia group for decades, using Parker Street Station as their headquarters.

Andrea hoped that detective was alive as usually enemies of mafia ended up ‘sleeping with fishes’.

Trio infiltrated Park Street Station, and they ended up killing a dozen triggermen as there wasn’t a way to pass them without Stealth Boy. Once again, Andrea was low on ammo, and she didn’t want to use her pistols.

MacCready stayed a little bit further as he sniped triggermen from a distance while Dogmeat and Andrea took care of hostiles who came too close.

“How many men Malone has?” Andrea asked MacCready and ducked behind cover.

“I don’t know! Did you expect this to be easy? This whole thing was your idea,” MacCready shouted.

“Let’s kill these assholes. We have to find a detective,” Andrea said, taking the grenade. She pulled the pin and threw it toward hostiles. The grenade bounced off the concrete floor and exploded before triggermen were able to jump to safety.

“And you didn’t tell me you had fu— freaking grenades?” MacCready asked as he stood up.

“I took these from Police Station,” Andrea stated and threw one grenade to him. “Use it wisely.”

“Yeah, yeah... I know how these works,” MacCready murmured.

Dogmeat led them into a large atrium, and Andrea crouched down as she saw triggerman on the upper level, MacCready following her gesture.

“I don’t see or hear anyone else. Let’s go... Dogmeat, wait!” Andrea whispered as German Shepherd went ahead.

It was unusual for him. Usually, he listened to her orders.

“How are you doing there, Valentine? Are you having fun? Feeling hungry?” triggerman asked and stared someone through the window.
Andrea drew her pistol from the holster and heard MacCready reloading his rifle.

“Keep talking, Dino. It’ll give Malone more time to think about how he’s going to bump you off.”

“Don’t give me that crap, Valentine. You got nothing.”

“Really? I saw him writing your name down in that black book of his. Then he struck your name across three times. You do know what that means. It seems like you’re done for.”

“Three strikes? In a black book? Oh, I gotta—” triggerman said, sounding frightened but couldn’t finish his sentence as Dogmeat attacked him.

They all heard a scream, growling and then a sound of a groan. Then the dog let go of his neck and walked away as if nothing had happened, staring his companions with his puppy eyes.

Andrea stared at the dog and his bloody snout.

“Your dog is pretty bloodthirsty. Maybe I should be careful with you,” MacCready frowned.

“There was once a phrase ‘dogs have their owners personality.’,” Andrea stated and approached the window, peeking through it.

“Hey, you! I don’t know who you are, but we have three minutes before they realise that their’ muscles-for-brains’ isn’t coming back. Get that door open. Use that terminal next to you.”

Andrea turned her head to look at the terminal and rolled her eyes. This one wasn’t locked though, thus saving her sanity.

Her brown eyes widened in surprise when she saw detective first time, instantly moving her hand on her pistol as she recognised those yellow eyes. Then Andrea realised the detective wasn’t a threat as Dogmeat greeted this friendly.

“You’re a synth?” she asked.

“Well noticed, Sherlock. Have to love the irony of reverse damsel-in-distress scenario. Why did our heroine risk life and limb for an old private eye? And since when MacCready has participated in rescue operations?” the detective added when he saw MacCready.

“Every Sherlock needs Watson?” Andrea asked.

“He’s more like one of the boys from Baker Street Irregulars,” the detective stated.

“She hired me to watch her back. So I’ll follow her wherever she goes,” MacCready answered to detective’s second question.

“And I need your help, detective. I need to find someone who’s missing,” Andrea answered to his first question.

“Missing person, huh? You came to the right person but at the wrong time and place. Let’s get out of here; then we can talk.”

Apparently, Nick knew the way out as he took the lead.

“Malone’s crew here used to be small-time, muscled out of the old neighbourhood by bigger players. Yes, there are other mob bosses around. Then they found this place. Don’t know what happened to previous owners, but apparently, they didn’t make it. A perfect hideout for Malone’s
group. Empty vault, underground.”


“No. He isn’t smart as Al Capone was,” Nick answered, but then he stopped, and Andrea noticed why.

Three triggermen came through a door.

“How do you want to play this?” Nick asked.

“One triggerman for each. Don’t miss it. I will take one with a fedora.”

“I’m taking the furthest one,” MacCready stated and prepared his rifle.

“Hm, you guys left me that fat one? Harder to miss, I think,” Nick hummed.

Andrea counted to three and trio shot their targets after she finished her countdown. Then she praised her company’s performance.

“This door’s on the fritz. Let me see if I can get it open. Behind this door is the entrance of the Vault. Our way out,” Valentine said and crouched down to pick the lock-up. “Malone and the rest of his boys are waiting for us, probably behind this door. He may not be Al Capone, but he is still dangerous.”

And the detective was right.

Malone, his triggermen and the young woman stood in front of the entrance of the Vault, preventing them from leaving. There wasn’t a way to pass them without killing them or talking their way out.

“Yeah, about my case,” Nick said and gestured a woman with a baseball bat. The girl I went to find and rescue, wasn’t kidnapped. Darla is Malone’s new flame.”

“Nicky? What are you doing?” Malone asked. “You come into my house and shoot up my guys. You have any idea how much this is going to set me back?”

Darla turned to look at mob boss and said, “I told you Skinny, we should’ve just killed him, but you had to get all sentimental. And now we have a mercenary, vault dweller and goddamn dog messing around inside our Vault?”

“Darla, I’m handling this,” Malone assured her and looked back to Nick. “Nicky, we have a history together, and you know, I do respect you, but in this vault, I’m the king of the castle. You hear me?”

Darla glared their uninvited guests and took a better grip of her baseball bat, her hands shaking a little bit.

Andrea didn’t want to hurt her. Darla was a civilian who played with the mafia and usually, that ends up badly. She didn’t belong here.

“Darla, listen to me,” Andrea said and got her attention. “You have… home and your father is waiting for you there. I wish I could return to my home and see my father, but I can’t because he is gone.”
For a moment, she thought about her father’s last words to her.

“And I didn’t have a chance to say goodbyes. You can. There isn’t anything more valuable than your own family. I realised it after I lost my own. Don’t waste that chance,” Andrea explained, trying to remind Darla what was important if she allowed herself to think like that.

At first, it seemed her persuasion didn’t work, but Andrea kept her gaze on Darla’s eyes. As if convincing Darla with her empathic stare.

Finally, the woman seemed to give up and put down her bat. She stared the floor for a moment and walked over to her lover.

“Darla? What are you doing?” Malone asked.

“Home, Skinny. Where I should be right now anyway, I’m sorry,” the woman apologised, turning around slowly and left.

Guards glanced Skinny and then each other. Malone tried to call Darla back without success and murmured something under his breath.

“Argh! You cost me my men, my headquarters, now you and your friends here cost me my girl.”

Andrea was surprised that they hadn’t shot them yet.

“I think my friend here did you a favour. You always had bad taste in women. Now, as she’s not around here to feed that temper of yours, maybe you let us walk out of here? You still owe me two weeks in the hole and my cigarettes.”

“You smug, overconfident ass…. Get the hell out of here!” Malone yelled. “I’ll give you ten seconds; after that, I’ll shoot you all.”

Nick suggested his group to follow him as Malone began to count numbers. Nick even knew the way out of there.

Andrea concluded that he had been at the vault more than once.

After they reached the surface, the detective looked up to the sky and spoke, “Ah, look at that Commonwealth sky. Never thought anything so naturally ominous could end up looking so inviting.”

MacCready shut a cover behind them after Andrea had lifted Dogmeat to surface.

“Yeah. The sky, and the stars, are the only things that haven’t changed after a war,” Andrea stated sadly.

Nick gave her a confused but empathic look, and then he said, “Thanks for helping me out. How did you find me, anyway? Not many people knew where I left.”

“Your Mrs Hudson told me,” Andrea answered, referring to their previous conversation.

“Huh? I should give Ellie a raise.” Nick smiled. “Now, you mentioned a missing person?”

“Yes. A baby. My godson. Shaun. He’s been kidnapped. I’m trying to find him and his kidnappers.”

“A missing baby? Shouldn’t be hard to find if we’re optimistic,” Nick hummed, rubbing his chin
with his metallic fingers. “If you’re willing up to continue searching with me, let’s go Diamond City. There is more privacy in my office. Give me all the details, and besides, you have earned a chance to clear your head.”

“Lead the way, Watson.”

“Nick! Is that you?” Ellie asked and almost hugged synth after they returned to the Agency.

“What? Are there other handsome synths around?” Nick asked.

Ellie shook her head and turned to look at Andrea and MacCready. “Thank you very much. You saved my boss, this agency and my job. This isn’t probably enough, but it’s all I got.”

Ellie gave a pouch of caps to Andrea. The latter one smiled at her as a response and spread caps over the table. Nick, Ellie and MacCready watched her confused as Andrea counted them, divided caps into two pouches and gave another bag to her partner.

“Didn’t do it alone, kid,” she said.

“I knew I could count on you, boss,” MacCready smirked.

“What? Of course, I’ll share our payment. I’m a soldier, not a mercenary,” Andrea wisecracked.

Before the interview, Ellie brought Nick and their quests a cup of coffee and freshwater for Dogmeat. Coffee wasn’t as good as it had been before the war, but it won that liquid what the Army had offered to the soldiers at the Anchorage.

Andrea glanced synth and asked, “Where to begin?”

“Andrea didn’t know from where to begin her story. From the day when bombs dropped? Her story had ended that day, and someone else’s story started when she woke up from Vault.

She lost everything she loved and knew, except Shaun. She found herself from the world, which she didn’t recognise anymore. Everything she knew was ancient history to people around her. She didn’t even know who she was anymore.

“Are you okay, honey?” Ellie asked.

Andrea nodded to her and cleared her throat.

“I lived in Boston. Before the war,” Andrea started. “Just before enemies dropped the A-bombs, my friends and I got permission to enter into the Vault that saved us. There wasn’t anything inside the vault, not anything that I had expected. Vault-Tec told us that the pods to which they guided us, were used for decontamination. And after the procedure, we would have continued our way deeper into the vault. In reality, Vault-Tec put us into cryostasis.”

“I don’t know how long we were on ice before we woke up for the first time. I saw a man and a woman approach us, and they opened my friend’s pod. Then… they tried to take his son from him. I don’t still get it why they wanted him. He’s just a baby,” Andrea told and kept a break.

“Nate refused. Then this man shot Nate with his 44. pistol. They took Shaun and left after re-frozen us. I woke up again about a week ago. Everyone else there is dead, including Shaun’s mother,” Andrea finished.
She heard MacCready saying *damn* quietly behind her.

Valentine and his secretary stared her for a while.

“Don’t know really what to say or where to begin. There were so many things what got my attention. Why take a baby? Baby needs a lot of care and nutrition. Or how they got there? Moreover, if it belonged to the U.S. Military, I’m pretty sure they sealed vault thoroughly.” Nick pondered. “It couldn’t be a one-person job either; they must have an agenda behind infiltration.”

Then he asked, “You said he had revolver?”

“Yes.”

“Can you tell more about him?”

“Bald, had a scar across his left eye… his voice was low and rough. He also had strange outfit; jeans, dark jacket and odd armoury in his left hand,” Andrea described the mercenary and heard MacCready moving a little bit behind her.

“Kellogg,” Nick said.

Andrea raised her both eyebrows. “You know him?”

“Sounds like him and it seems MacCready knows him too,” Nick said and looked at the mercenary.

“He’s one of the most dangerous mercenaries in East Coast,” MacCready said. “Rumours say that he has connections with Institute and other factions. I don’t know if it’s true, but that guy is a legend, *deadly legend*.”

Andrea glared a desk in front of her, staying quiet. The devil had a name now. *Kellogg*.

“Ellie, what do we know about Kellogg?” Nick asked.

Ellie flipped through her notes and said, “Not much. Someone with the same description bought a house from Diamond City, that abandoned one. Residents also said that he had ten years old boy with him.”

“That couldn’t be Shaun. Another kidnapped children?” Andrea wondered.

“Or his son? Though I hope he would never have one,” MacCready said.

“Either way, I suggest that you two rest now,” Nick said and stood up. “There’s a motel in Diamond City, Dugout Inn. Go talk to Yefim; he will rent a room for you.”

Andrea frowned at his suggestion.

“Don’t give me that look, kid. I’m going to rest awhile. Sometimes even synth needs to *cool down*. You need to rest too, kid.”

Andrea shook her head, smiling little. Nick reminded her of her grandfather.

“What’s your name, honey? I’ll archive this case with your name,” Ellie asked.

“Andrea Maxs—” Andrea halted mid-sentence. “*Adams.*” Where can I find this motel?”
“I think Mr MacCready can show you where it is,” Ellie answered.

MacCready picked up the rifle in his left hand and gestured Andrea to follow him. The rest of the city had gone to sleep, and only the guards were awake. They glared them from head to toe, studying the guests carefully. A few of them patted Dogmeat’s head, and some of them called him a mutt.

After leading Andrea to a motel, MacCready turned around and spoke, “I’m sorry, boss. But, I have to dump you. There’s something that I have to do.”

“Are you all right?” Andrea asked and put her hand on his shoulder.

MacCready looked a confused a little bit. Maybe he wasn’t used to gestures like that.

“Yes, I’m fine, but… It is something that I need to do. It is personal.”

“—Okay? I know you can take care of yourself but be careful,” Andrea said. “Try not to get yourself killed.”

“Look who’s talking, boss,” he said and left.

Andrea glanced at the motel and turned around. “Hey, how I am supposed to find you if I need you?”

“Just kill a dozen raiders in pre-war stores or chem laboratories, and I might show up there!”

“Yeah, and then you collect the caps, jackass,” Andrea murmured before she went to the motel.

Andrea gazed Boeing C-20 landing on the runway of Adams Air Force Base and moved restlessly, hoping nobody wouldn’t bring her the bad news.

Roger and their friends had been at Alaska for months, and she hadn’t heard from them for a long time.

Finally, the plane stopped rolling, and a large ramp went down. What amazed her even more, was that they didn’t bring any coffins this time. Or maybe they couldn’t bring anybody home.

After Air Forces soldiers had come out, she saw Roger coming down from the ramp, still wearing a full set of combat armours. Thank God he was still alive.


Roger rolled his eyes and laughed little. “I have been away for almost five months, and that’s your first question?”

Andrea grabbed the collar of his uniform, ignoring his question, and pulled him to kiss.

“You know that wasn’t a suitable move in the military area, lieutenant.”

“As I care, lieutenant. Make a complaint if you want, sir. How are things out there?”

“Bad. However, I rather not talk about that place while I am here,” Roger said, his eyes glimmering with a hint of sadness and regret.
He never talked about what happened at Alaska. It worried her. But she hadn’t been there so that she couldn’t understand.

“Honey? Are you okay?”

Andrea returned to reality and nodded.

Roger smiled little but then frowned when somebody started to play music. He glanced his friends, and one of them said ‘now or never’.

Andrea started at their friends and then Roger when he began singing. Something was going on.

“… Brandy, you’re a fine girl. What a good wife you would be. Yeah, your eyes could steal a soldier from the battlefield…”

As he continued to sing along, though lyrics were a little bit different, he pulled a small ring box from his pocket and knelt.

Andrea gasped and covered her face.

“Will that Brandy steal one soldier from the battlefield?”

“Do I have to punch you again?” Andrea asked, referring to their first meeting.

“If that punch is ‘yes’ again, go ahead,” Roger said tension in his voice.

“No, I won’t punch you. Get up.”

“I’m not getting up from here before you answer.”

“I’m not going to punch you here, sir. Get your ass up from there, so we can start to plan those goddamn weddings, Maxson,” Andrea said.

He stood up, put the ring to her ring finger and kissed her.

Then Andrea examined the ring. It was a simple golden ring without any diamonds. Something that Andrea had always wanted.

“Jesus, what my dad would say about this?” she asked.

“Well, I asked him if I could marry his only daughter.”

“Old-fashioned way, huh? I bet my dad liked that,” Andrea stated.

“Actually, he just said ‘Come back from Alaska so that we can talk about it...’”

Andrea chuckled and said, “I’m going to marry you, he wanted or not. But I hope… ‘your life, your lover and your lady’ won’t be the Army.”

The sound of someone knocking, more like someone pounding the door, woke Andrea up from sleep.

At first, she didn’t recognise the room where she was, but then she remembered renting a room from Yefim. She rubbed her eyes and sat up.

Now she missed Roger even more. Knowing she would never see him again…
Andrea shook her head.

*Stay strong. You will see him soon,* she thought and sat on the edge of the bed, gathering herself.

Then she heard another knock on the door. “I’m coming.”

After Andrea opened the door, she saw Nick behind it and asked, “Didn’t we agreed to meet at the market?”

“You didn’t show up. I was concerned that something might have happened to you. Vadim told you hadn’t left from your room since you arrived. He saw only Dogmeat.”

Andrea raised her eyebrow before checking her Pip-Boy. “Sorry, it seems I overslept. It has never happened before.”

“You must have been tired,” Nick said as she took her backpack and guns.

“Hm-m. I was dreaming about my previous life. Maybe my subconscious didn’t want me to wake up,” Andrea said and closed the door. “How did Dogmeat get out?”

“He can open doors,” Nick explained. “I’ve worked with him before. He has helped me with a few cases. That dog has one hell of a nose. Sniffs bad guys easily and tracks them by scent. He might be useful if we have to locate Kellogg.”

“Hm, not bad thinking, Watson. Let’s see what we can find from his house,” Andrea suggested.

Kellogg’s house was a lonely apartment at the upper level — isolated and seemingly abandoned. Just what mercenary would have needed.

Valentine grabbed the handle and said, “Locked. Figures. And I thought we could walk inside.”

“Stand aside, Watson. Let me handle this,” Andrea said, taking a hairpin and screwdriver from a backpack.

“You know how to pick a lock? I thought MacCready was the criminal one. Where is he by the way?”

“He said he had some personal matters to deal with. I didn’t ask. He’s a big boy and can take care of himself,” Andrea answered. “And the answer to your first question; as an infiltrator, I have to be skilled in lock-picking.”

“I thought you were a soldier?”

“I was, but the Army needed soldiers with infiltration skills.”

They heard how lock gave up, and she whistled.

“And there it is. What else can you tell me about this Kellogg? I believe there is something you know.”

“There are many mercenaries in Wasteland. Some of them are ‘good’ like MacCready, and some of them are like Kellogg; cruel, fierce and ruthless. He’s professional, and he has no enemies because they’re all dead, except you,” Nick said, then he remembered something. “Oh, and there are old records about him from the 2210s. I don’t know how that’s possible; he should be like... ninety years old now.”
“He sure didn’t look or act like an old man back then,” Andrea stated. “But if I’m two hundred and forty years old, there’s a possibility that he is almost one hundred years old.”

They double-checked Kellogg’s house, but it was empty. He had left his furniture and most of his personal belongings there. Andrea noticed two sleeping bags on the floor. Someone had been there with him. A child?

“You think this place is too small for someone like Kellogg?” Nick asked, crouching down behind the desk and smirked. “Ah, classic place to hide a button.”

Andrea glanced him confused, but then she heard the wall moving, revealing a secret room behind it.

The room had everything that mercenary needed — cigars, bullets, weapons and alcohol. On top of the table, there was San Francisco Sunlights cigar, 44 rounds and bottle of Gwinnett Brewery. But no signs of Kellogg.

“He was here, but he’s gone now,” Nick stated blankly.

They examined the room thoroughly, but they didn’t find any clues about where he would have gone. Of course, it would have been too easy if Kellogg would have left a letter “I'm at place X” written on it.

Andrea looked at Dogmeat and asked, “You said something about Dogmeat... that he has tracked someone by scent?”

“Yeah, but then we would need a piece of cloth or something… or we could use that.” Nick pointed cigar.

Andrea turned to look Dogmeat, and he sniffed a cigar a few times. Then he barked once and ran outside.

“It seems he got it. Let’s go find our Moriarty,” Andrea stated but frowned when she heard quiet beeping, it getting stronger and stronger quickly. It was a trap. “Nick, outside! Now!”

They barely reached the exterior of the house when the bomb did go off and blew up the whole house into pieces. Shock wave brought both of them down and alerted the rest of the city.

_Fucking_… Andrea thought and touched her forehead. She swore mentally as she saw blood on her hand. Then she glanced Nick, noticing he was all right.

Kellogg didn’t only try to kill them, but also remove clues and proof about his existence. He was leaving, and she had to find him before he could disappear.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Nick is one of my favourite companions in the game, and he's kind of father/uncle-figure to Andrea. I'm trying my best to keep him safe from harm. One reasonable headcanon; RJ should know Kellogg and his reputation, I mean, they're both mercenaries. Kellogg isn't small fry.

And as usual, any feedback is appreciated! Thank you for reading!
Andrea finally faces one of her nemesis and sees something... beautiful and little horrifying, if you like.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It took more than a couple of hours to find clues about Kellogg. He had left a few traces, such as cigars, bloody bandages, bullets and parts of the synthetic body. The evidence made Nick assumed that Kellogg had synths with him and that he had at least a few days advantages.

Andrea was ready to travel to the West Coast if she had to. She wasn’t going to give up after all this. That mercenary killed Nate, and she and Nick barely survived from the explosion. Andrea wanted to kill that son of a bitch. Kellogg was asking for it. She sighed and tried to lit her cigarette.

“What are you thinking, doll?” Nick asked and borrowed his matches to her.

Andrea smiled little at his gesture.

“My mind is messed up. Every time I should think about the present and future, I find myself thinking about the past. Now I know how my grandparents felt,” Andrea answered and checked the body of raider, hoping she could find matches or another lighter. Nada.

“I know how you feel. Original Nick Valentine was from Chicago. I have his memories and personality; even his name is mine now.”

“I wanted to ask from you about it,” Andrea said as she stood up. “Why you are so different compared to other synths? They sound and act like robots, and they look a little different than you do. There is something strange in you.”

“Something strange in me? Look who’s talking, icicle,” Nick replied. “Original Nick was transported to Boston lead ‘Operation Winter’s End’.”

“Winter?” Andrea frowned. “I remember him. My father always told me to avoid South Boston because all of Winter’s criminal activities were focused on that area.”

“You’re right. He was involved in almost every type of crime, from petty larceny to first-degree murder. But then we found out that he was working for the BADTFL and district attorney in exchange for immunity.”

“It was on the news back then,” Andrea recalled, but then she noticed Nick’s gloominess. Even though he had synthetic skin, she could see how sad he looked. “What happened?”

Nick stared at their surroundings and stayed quiet for a moment. Then he answered,

“Just before they disbanded the operation, Winter shot my fiancee. Nick’s fiancée,” he told. “I remember her smile and laugh. I remember how much Nick loved her and how that poor bastard...
felt when the police chief told him the sad news. It’s something that even I can’t forget.”

“I’m so sorry,” Andrea whispered. “I’m so sorry, Nick.”

Then she thought what if Roger would have been murdered like Jenny and Nate? She would have lost her mind after it.

Nick continued, “Then Nick was ordered to seek treatment for his PTSD at the C.I.T. where scientist scanned his brain as part of his treatment. That’s how the Institute was able to obtain his memories and transfer them into me. I believe I was the Institute’s prototype for third-generation synths. You may have seen them, but you can’t tell the difference between a real human and third-generation synth. They’re perfect copies.”

That explained why Nick was so different from those synths that attacked Andrea and Paladin Danse at the ArcJet System.

Andrea guessed Kellogg being inside the old Fort Hagen as Dogmeat led them to the military area. It was a perfect hideout, well-secured and stable building.

“He’s here. I don’t see or hear anything else except for those turrets,” she said.

“Maybe the rest of security is inside?” Nick asked.

“Synths,” Andrea said, taking her new laser rifle from her backpack and kissed Dogmeat’s snout. It was too dangerous for him. “Wait here, boy.”

Turrets were easiest to destroy. Only a few good shots destroyed them quickly. Andrea made a mental note to thank Paladin Danse again. She had never been a massive fan of laser guns, but Righteous Authority was a good weapon. Danse seemingly took good care of his weapons. Synths were a more significant problem this time than turrets.

“Energy weapons aren’t very effective against synths,” Nick hinted.

“Every day you learn new things, huh?” Andrea stated, taking her twin pistols instead. “It seems that you’re pretty good with that gun.”

“Nick had lots of target practice in Chicago, and you won’t survive in the Wasteland long if you don’t know how to use gun and shoot.”

The fusion cell flew past Andrea’s head and hit the wall.

“Can you keep armed synths away from me? We don’t have much ammo, and this place is full of synths,” she said and threw him a packet of .38. “We have to take care of unarmed one’s hand to hand.”

“This place is a warren,” Nick said. “But go ahead, don’t just get killed there.”

“That’s why I need you to keep them away from me,” Andrea stated and drew back behind cover.

Nick kept shooting synths as Andrea moved towards the middle of the room. Then she saw two laser turrets on the roof and barely dodged the gunfire of turrets and synths.

“Two synths left and those goddamn turrets. I hope you’re good at hacking because I suck at it,” she said to Nick. “I’ll give you cover fire.”
“I’m a synth, remember,” Nick stated. “I know how to handle terminals.”

“Yes, yes, Watson.”

One of the synths approached her, and she kicked it. As synth lost its balance and fell, Andrea pierced its head with her knife. Then using herself as bait, Andrea attracted turret’s attention to herself. She hissed when she got burns from gunfire. Maybe her luck will run out sooner or later.

Nick hacked the terminal, taking turrets down that way and Andrea jogged to the elevator.

“You really should try to find some armours, kid,” Nick said as he walked over to her and glanced her wounds. “Vault suit isn’t the best choice to wear in Wasteland.”

Andrea smirked and asked, “Gives me a unique look, doesn’t it?”

The elevator reached the first floor and doors opened. The duo peeked inside of it and frowned when the speaker said kzzzzh floor.

“Well, at least it’s working,” Nick said, lowering his pipe pistol.

“You do sound like Nate sometimes. It’s a good thing to have someone with the same kind trait. Someone who reminds me about that there’s something positive in this life, even in this world,” she said and flashed him a smile.

“Every dog has its day, Sherlock.”

“This place I.S. like a warren,” Andrea stated, amused and shot synth.

“I’ve never seen anyone having fun in the middle of a battle.”

“Look who’s talking. Ellie said that you have a habit to laugh back to Death. Someday, he will laugh back,” Andrea said and reloaded a laser rifle.

“But not today—”

“If it isn’t my old friend, the frozen T.V. dinner. Last time we met, you were cosying up to peas and apple cobbler.”

His cold voice pierced her like an arrow.

She could never forget the owner of that voice. She still could hear how he ordered Nate to let go of Shaun and gave Nate last warning.

Andrea felt goosebumps scurry up her skin and clenched her hands into fists.

She could still see with her mind’s eye how Kellogg shot Nate and left them to die.

Andrea tried to calm her breath and closed her eyes.

“Let’s go,” she said. “He’s here.”

Andrea knew Nick noticed her sudden change of mood. He tried to talk to her, he was worried about her behaviour and tried to remind her of her wounds, but she wasn’t interested in the conversation now. She wasn’t interested in her injuries. She barely felt them.
‘I’m not giving you Shaun!’

‘At least we have a backup.’

Her thoughts about what Kellogg did at the Vault 111 only reinforced her aggressive behaviour, feeding a beast through the bars of the cage, and it was exactly what she wanted.

“I’m not surprised you got this far. You got skills and determination. You’re pissed off. I get it. I do. However, whatever you hope to accomplish here? It’s not going to your way.”

Nick frowned, pondering out loud what he meant. Andrea didn’t bother to answer and shot another synth without hesitation.

“It’s not too late. Stop. Turn around and leave. You have that option. Not many people can say that.”

“I didn’t expect a dangerous mercenary to advise someone to leave. Is Kellogg scared or something?” Nick asked.

“I’m at his fucking front door,” Andrea hissed.

The duo reached General’s quarters, and Andrea walked to the door between two U.S. flags. She touched the handle and realised it was locked. She bridled and turned around.

Nick studied bottles, some unknown medical equipment and kits on the table.

“These look awfully familiar,” he said touching kit with his metallic arm. “These are from the Institute. Maybe—”

“Okay, you made it. I’m just up ahead. My synths are standing down. Let’s talk.”

Kellogg interrupted Nick, and they heard the metal door opening behind them.

“Let’s be careful; it might be a trap. Again,” Nick warned.

They arrived at the fort’s command centre and saw a few synths standing here and there. They held laser rifles on their metallic hands but stood like statues; waiting for orders. Then from the corner of her eye, Andrea saw movement and raised her pistol.

“There she is. A most dangerous person in Commonwealth. I thought I had that honour.”

She recognised the voice and this time; she didn’t hear it from speakers.

The mercenary stepped out behind the shelf with his hands in the air.

Andrea saw him finally face to face. No cryopod’s hatch between them this time. This time there wasn’t anything between them to save his sorry ass.

“So let’s talk,” Kellogg continued.

“We don’t have anything to talk about,” Andrea snarled. “Tell me, where Shaun is?”

“Shaun? What is he to you?”

“You don’t do anything with that information. So tell me; where Shaun is?”
Kellogg just smiled amused and said, “Shaun. He’s a great kid. A little older than you expect but if you’re hoping for a happy reunion, that isn’t going to happen. He’s not here.”

“Then tell me where I can find him, or I swear to God, I’ll beat that information out of you.”

Andrea noticed Kellogg smirking. Fuck, she hated this man.

“I know you would. However, there’s no need for that. He’s at the Institute. He has a loving family and home. Something you could never give him. Do you still have an insurmountable need to return to the battlefield? To kill someone?”

Kellogg smiled little as Andrea stiffened her upper body.

“Institute knows what you are. That you were trained only for one purpose. For war and—”

“So they thought the Institute would be a better place to raise a child?” Andrea ignored Kellogg, changing the subject. “A place which is full of murderous psychopaths who think they can create a better future with synths? Replacing humans will make this world better?”

“Institute in a nutshell. However, you should know that humans were the ones who destroyed this world in the first place.”

“Yeah, mankind in a nutshell,” Andrea stated. “It still doesn’t justify killing and replacing humans with androids. Where is humanity in that?”

“Look. I’m not here to talk about politics,” Kellogg said sternly.

“Neither am I. Now tell me, how to get into Institute.”

“Nobody goes to Institute till they’ll let you in,” Kellogg said. “You don’t find Institute, Institute finds you, and that’s how people end up there.”

“Fuck you, Kellogg. I’ll find Shaun. No matter where this... Institute is,” Andrea sheeted and mercenary laughed a little.

“That’s the spirit. I have to admit; I kind of like you. We are kind of alike, after all.”

“We are nothing alike,” Andrea said. “I don’t go to underground vaults and kill innocent people when they’re protecting their children.”

“I was expecting this topic. He was... unfortunate accident. This world, you have seen it, it’s cruel. Death is the only way to escape from suffering and pain.”

“Accident?” Andrea asked. “You fucking piece of shit. You didn’t even give him a chance to defend himself or his family. Men like you, you don’t regret anything.”

“True but I was following my orders. You know what that means, don’t you? However, I think we’ve been talking long enough. We both know how this has to end. So... are you ready?” Kellogg asked.

Andrea narrowed her eyes and said, “Oh, I’m ready. The question is, are you?”

Kellogg’s synths raised their guns to shoot at her and Andrea plunged behind the cover, avoiding the fires in the last second. Then, in the hush, she heard a familiar sound.

“Fucking coward!” she screamed, knowing Kellogg could hear her.

After Nick shot one synth down, he went behind a cover too and said, “I can take these fellas down; you handle Kellogg.”

“Or maybe you take Kellogg, and I’ll handle synths. Be careful, Watson,” Andrea said dryly and changed her position. She hid behind workstations, tracking down Kellogg at the same time. 

_Fucking cat and mouse game._

Unlike some people believed, users of Stealth Boy always left traces if tracker knew what to seek — sounds, the silhouette of refraction and even smell.

It was something that Andrea had learned at the Anchorage. She could smell the scent of his cigar and hear the sounds of his footsteps. He approached her.

Andrea holstered her pistol but left straps open before moving into a new position. She peeked behind the corner and watched Kellogg approaching her old position. She narrowed her eyes when his Stealth Boy ran out of juice, and his figure appeared out of nowhere.

Not wasting any time, Andrea slammed her forearm into his weapon hand, disarming him before doing anything else and tried to hit his head. Somehow it didn’t surprise her when Kellogg blocked her attack. Someone had taught him taekwondo and judo. He was faster than the average man.

He may have succeeded in preventing her first attack, but he wasn’t fast enough to prevent her second strike. She aimed her hit to the side of the neck, but it didn’t knock him down. He did withstand more hits than the average man.

Then she kicked his knee to unbalance him and pushed him against the workstation. After blocking his counter-attack, she aimed his face again. Desperately, but focused she kept attacking him. Aiming somewhere where she could do the most damage: head and neck.

The first time during their fight, he showed emotion. Annoyance. She was getting to him. He did the same and hit once her to head.

Andrea stumbled.

The mercenary grabbed her in a chokehold, but she managed to push both of them down to the floor. She hit Kellogg’s stomach once with her elbow so he would loosen his grip.

They both stood up quickly as they could.

Kellogg drew a knife from a holster on his waist, but Andrea disarmed him again and punched him in the face.

The mercenary wiped the blood from his mouth and glanced out his gloves.

“Damn you hit hard,” he said after spitting blood out of his mouth.

“Maybe I’ve to hit harder next time,” Andrea said, taking a few breaths and attacked him again.

Kellogg managed to hit her few times into body and once in the head. His punches hurt more than the average person hits did, and without her excellent ‘physical shape’, Andrea would have probably lost her consciousness.

She screamed in pain as mercenary pressed burn wounds on her hand. Then he tried to grab her
10mm pistol.

But Andrea stopped him and headbutted him.

Then she kicked his chest with a flip kick and sent him flying to the workshop behind him. He fell on the ground and coughed blood.

When he tried to get up, Andrea kicked him violently back down to the ground and pushed him down with her leg.

“I have to admit it…. You got skills. They trained you well,” he said but grunted as Andrea kicked his chest again.

He took a few breaths and spoke again, “Institute tried to re-create Doctor Nordlinger’s work but failed. Instead, they created mechanical augmentations...”

Andrea remained quiet and stared at him. Then Kellogg laughed a little bit.

“Your kick broke something inside me… One hell of a kick, Maxson. You kicked me to the same place where I shot—”

Andrea drew her pistol from the holster and shot him in the head. For Nate.

Then she squeezed the trigger and shot him the second time. For Nora.

After glaring his body for a while, Andrea holstered her gun and ran her both hands through her hair. It was over. She did it.

However, it wouldn’t bring them back.

She felt how blood ran down her face from the wound she got after she had headbutted Kellogg.

“How you’re holding up?” Nick asked.

Andrea glanced at him and said, “I’m fine. You?”

“Same,” Nick stated and stared at Kellogg. “Well, it’s over now.”

“How I am supposed to get in there?!” Andrea asked angrily; then she turned to Nick. “You don’t know anything, Nick? You’re synth, for fuck sake!”

“If I knew, I would have told you right away,” Nick said sternly. “But I’m garbage to them. Tossed away a century ago. They didn’t exactly leave me their house keys.”

“Fuck!” Andrea swore again and broke one of the chairs with her kicks. She needed to release her fury somehow.

Then she took a few breaths to calm herself down and said, “You’re right. I’m sorry, Nick.”

“It’s okay, doll. It’s not the end of the world. We did find out your godson is still out there. He’s alive. If you can believe Kellogg’s words.”

“Is there someone who could help us to find Institute?” she asked finally.

“I can think only one person. You know her already. Piper. She has investigated Institute since who knows how long. If there is someone who knows something about Institute, it’s her,” Nick said.
It was the only lead she had. They went to search for clues, and Andrea found bullets and paper towels. She pressed it over the bleeding wound and heard Nick calling her.

“Hey, Sherlock! Could you check his body? Maybe he has a password written down somewhere. Maybe we can find something from this terminal.”

Andrea went back to Kellogg and began to search his pockets. At first, she found an old picture of a woman and an infant. Andrea stared picture while and then looked corpse.

*Everyone has a family. He killed mine,* Andrea thought and put the picture back to the pocket. She opened his jacket and found a piece of paper from the side pocket.

“I found this,” Andrea stated as she returned to Nick. “This might be a password. I didn’t find anything else.”

Nick took the paper and typed a password into the terminal. Then he asked, “You all right? You should show those wounds to our doctor. Just in case of a possible concussion.”

“I’m fine, Nick,” Andrea stated though her body screamed in pain. She glanced terminal as synth opened it, narrowing her eyes as she read the text on the screen.

*Access: Local
Login: Kellogg

Notes: The boy, Shaun, successfully delivered back to Institute, the payment received. New orders to track down renegade, gather reinforcements, cleared out and secure subject. We move out soon.

“Renegade?”

“Delivered back to Institute?” Andrea asked, confused. “Wait, Ellie said Kellogg had ten years old boy with him at Diamond City? What if that boy is Shaun?”

“That would explain what Kellogg meant by ‘little older than you expect’,” Nick thought out loud. “And then Kellogg delivered him back to Institute. But how and why?”

Andrea stared into space. There was a void in her mind. She had no idea what kind of horrors Shaun has to suffer there.

“We won’t probably find any more information from here. This place is almost tidy up. They planned to leave this place. We should return to Diamond City. Piper might have a solution for this.”

“Piper?” Andrea asked.

“A reporter of Puplick Occurrences. She has investigated Institute for a long time,” Nick told. “I’ll introduce you to her. She may also be interested in interviewing you. Be prepared.”

After they reached the rooftop, Andrea glared terminal on the wall and the door next to it. “Nick. Terminal.”

Then she heard a loud, oncoming noise from outside. Sound that she didn’t recognise.

“You’re not a fan of terminals?” Nick asked, bringing her back to reality. He typed a keyboard with his synthetic and metallic fingers.
Then he chuckled and said, “It wasn’t even locked, but here it is. Women first.”

Andrea smiled and walked through a door. It felt good to be out and breathe fresh radioactive air once more. She stretched her limbs with little effort and started exploring the view.

Then from the corner of her eye, she saw something big and turned to look at it.

A giant airship flew toward the city, and its massive belly almost filled the whole sky.

If Andrea were honest, she startled it a little bit, and she felt her heart jump into her throat. Then she noticed pre-war vertibirds and frowned. Who was behind this?

“*People of the Commonwealth. Do not interfere. Our intentions are peaceful. We are the Brotherhood of Steel.*”

“Oh...” Andrea said and noticed Brotherhood of Steel logo on the side of airship and text ‘Prydwen’ written next to it. She had to admit something. Against the dawn, that airship looked beautiful.

*So, they got that damn radio tower working. Excellent work, Haylen,* Andrea thought, thinking Recon Team Gladius.

“Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing...” Nick said as he stared bypassing airship.

Andrea smirked a little. “Nice, Watson. Edgar Allan Poe?”

“What? A soldier knows poems?”

“I learned something at the West Point, and my husband was a bookworm in our household,” Andrea stated and gazed airship. “What do you think?”

“About that? I think the Brotherhood of Steel is here to start a war. Why else would they send their armoured airship here? Into the heart of Commonwealth? Words of wisdom. Stay away from them,” Nick advised. “Their leader is just lunatic warmonger, and rest of them follows his orders without question. Let’s go, kid. Dogmeat is waiting for us,” Nick added and left.

A warmonger. Just like her uncle had been. Maybe she should avoid them as long as possible.

Andrea stared airship and then followed detective.

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Chapter End Notes

A/N: If someone wonders, I don't dislike Arthur. I freaking love him to the death, okay. I'm trying to make a point here; people do fear them, and Nick calls him lunatic at some point. I'm trying to keep it as real as possible as Andrea had problematic past with military and with her warmonger uncle.

But Arthur isn't lunatic, people.
The smell of just printed papers, cigarette and tea filled Andrea’s nostrils after she stepped inside Piper’s home. She looked around and noticed how cosy the home was with sounds of clattering washing machine and whistling teapot. It felt like home, safe and welcoming.

“Hey,” a voice said.

Andrea turned to look at to speaker.

The dark-haired woman walked down the stairs and looked at her visitors. She gazed Andrea and Nick with her blue eyes and then walked over to Andrea.

“Piper Wright, the reporter of Puplick Occurrences,” she introduced herself. “So, what brings a vault dweller into Diamond City?”

“Oh,” Piper said and gestured them to sit down on the sofa.

Andrea sat down and felt how something touched her leg. She glanced down and saw a tiger-striped cat headbutting her shin. Then it climbed into her lap and turned over, exposing his grey belly for her to rub.

“What happened to this... Kellogg?” Piper asked

“We found out only that Institute has my godson and Kellogg knew how to get in there. However, he took that answer with him to his grave,” Andrea said, imagining how she could kill him again.

“So, we still have the biggest mystery in Commonwealth unsolved,” Piper said as she lit up a cigarette. “I’ve been investigating these creeps for over a year now. The Commonwealth’s boogeyman feared and hated by everyone. Sometimes they snatch people in the middle of the night. Sometimes they leave old synths behind to remind us that they’re out there. However, to this day, there’s one thing that no one knows. Where the Institute is or how to get in. Except, Kellogg did...”

“Is there any possibility that someone else might know the way in? Other synths?” Andrea asked.

Piper looked at Nick.
“No synth does. Security protocols strip those memories out,” the detective answered. “Hmm. Then there are Coursers. But they’re a different, lethal story. You can’t get help from them either. They’ll kill you on sight.”

“Coursers?” Andrea asked, looking Piper and Nick in turn.

“Institute’s main operatives,” Nick answered. “They hunt down escaped synths and kill anyone who opposes them.”

“A literal dead end, huh? However, since we are talking about Inst—” Piper said, but the sudden noise startled her, and she dropped her cigarette.

Trio turned their head to look at the figure who rushed through the door and slammed it wide open.

“Andrea, I need your help,” MacCready said out of breath.

Andrea moved a cat from her lap and stood up, saying, “RJ, you need to tell me first what’s wrong.”

“They… they have Duncan. They kidnapped my son, Andrea.”

An empathic wave went through her as she understood why MacCready acted like this. She nodded and turned to look at Nick and Piper.

“We can wrap this up later,” Andrea stated. Part of her knew and hoped that Shaun was safe and sound, for now, but MacCready’s son wasn’t. Then she turned to MacCready. “I’ll help you. Okay?”

“So, tell me what happened?” Andrea asked MacCready as they left from Diamond City with Dogmeat. “Who took your son?”

“Gunners,” MacCready said, and when he saw Andrea’s confused look, he answered her question before she was able to ask it.

“Gunners are disciplined and highly-equipped paramilitary mercenary organisation and are the largest unaligned faction here. Well, I’m not so sure anymore since your relative Maxson arrived here,” MacCready stated.

Andrea rolled her eyes but asked, “Why they kidnapped Duncan?”

“I worked for them. The flow of caps was good, but I don’t know. I’ve killed for a drink, that’s a fact, but I’m nothing like them. However, ever since I left them, I have been haunted by them for continuing to take jobs in their territory,” he explained. “Then they kidnapped my son from Goodneighbour and threatened to kill him if I wouldn’t turn myself in.”

It wasn’t surprising that gang like that used children as a bargaining target.

“Where’s his mother?” Andrea asked but regretted asking it. Somehow she knew the answer already.

“She was killed by ferals,” the man said, anger and sorrow shadowing his face. “On one night, ferals surprised us and killed Lucy. She told me to save our son and… I was forced to leave her behind, so I could keep Duncan alive.”

Andrea stopped walking. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry that I asked,” she said.
“I’ve never gotten over her death, but I have to continue for Duncan,” MacCready stated. “I guess we are now in the same boat.”

“You’re right,” she said, thinking Shaun and then Duncan. “Let’s go get your son back.”

Then the beeping of Pip-Boy interrupted her thoughts, and Andrea flipped displays as they walked.

New military frequency. Brotherhood of Steel.

She had more important things to do now.

They were close to Lake Cochituate when MacCready told her to get down. Both crouched down, and Andrea surveyed their surroundings, peering intently into the distance.

“One of their strongholds is up there,” a sniper told and gestured highways. “See those elevators? We can use those elevators to get up there, but they have, if I remember correctly, an assaultron over there.”

Andrea grunted quietly. Thank you RobCo for this fast and deadly combatant.

“How many strongholds they do have?” Andrea asked, and RJ gestured her to give her Pip-Boy, marking eight different locations into the map.

“This one, where we are, is called Mass Pike Interchange. Winlock and Barnes lead it. Those two kidnapped Duncan from Goodneighbor,” MacCready explained. “Strongholds of Gunners are strongly secured and protected; I suggest you avoid them. If you don’t wanna face Assaultrons or have a mini-nuke in your ass.”

“And look where we are.” Andrea raised her eyebrows. “Hey, how good infiltrator you are? For real this time.”

“Not my strongest skill. Why?”

“It’s just, uh, it’s clear that these guys aren’t raiders. If they have access to highly-equipped weapons and robots, we can’t do anything by ourselves,” Andrea stated.

“You suggest infiltration?”

“It’s my strongest skill. Yours is sniping. I can infiltrate a stronghold, and if shit hits the fan, you can start shooting them. It’ll give me a little time if they are focused on the sniper fire,” Andrea explained.

“I think they’ll know who’s shooting at them. I’m sniper, and they know it. They’ll draw their attention to Duncan after that,” MacCready said.

“Or we can go there with guns blazing, and they’ll draw their attention to Duncan anyway. RJ, they will use him as a shield or hostage, no matter how we approach them.”

“Fine. But you know, my son is in line of fire there. If you screw up there...”

“Believe me; I’ll keep your son safe,” Andrea said, using her strong but convincing tone.

MacCready glared her a while and then sighed sharply.

“Or you can shoot me with .308 round,” Andrea added.
The younger man shook his head and rubbed his hat before asking, “When we are going to do this?”

“At night,” she answered. “Darkness is a friend; you know that.”

“Says someone who just woke up from a freaking freezer and wasn’t sure if she wanted to face nightlife of Wasteland.”

“Hey, I can deal with humans, but I don’t want to mess with Deathclaw or... Yao guai?” Andrea pondered. “About your swearing...”

“I made a promise to Duncan clean up my behaviour and be a better person.”

“That’s going very well,” Andrea stated and received a scowl in return.

MacCready scouted surroundings of the freeway before night fell, and returned to Andrea and Dogmeat.

“Ten gunners. Three at the ground, seven up there. There is also empty power armour and one idle assaultron. I believe they’re holding Duncan in their office. It’s at the end of the freeway,” MacCready explained and pointed the freeway. “What do you remember about Assaultrons? You were in the army, right?” he asked Andrea, who sat on the rock and studied freeway using MacCready’s binoculars.

“We used them as a front-line combatant. Oh, they have a weak point,” Andrea stated and tapped back of her neck. “Here. Stick a knife or another sharp object to the back of the neck and ta-da; they’re done. Damn Chinese figured it out, and suddenly we started losing more Assaultrons than before.”

“They won’t explode after that?”

“No. It’ll destroy their ability to use self-destruction and shuts down the whole unit,” Andrea explained. “Anyway, enough of this nonsense. You ready?”

“Yeah, let’s do this,” he said finally.

Andrea kissed Dogmeat and told him to stay with MacCready. He said he would watch after her through his scope, making sure nobody couldn’t surprise her.

At first, Andrea cleared the land area from hostiles. There were only three of them, so it was a piece of cake for her. This was her speciality. Then she took the elevator and reached the first elevation of the freeway.

However, it alerted others. She saw a few gunners walking towards the elevator and leapt quickly over the edge. By hanging off the side of the elevator, she moved towards the edge of the bridge and climbed up.

“Is this thing broken?” a gunner asked.

“Maybe that private is just messing with us. He does that often,” his buddy answered.

Andrea sneaked behind them and killed them both with her knife. Then she glanced others. Nobody saw her. Everything was going well, for now.

She gazed her surroundings, noticing a fallen piece of road and used it to get into the second
elevation of the freeway.

For her luck, elevation wasn’t occupied. As she approached the ending of the freeway, Andrea began to heard faint sobbing.

A sound belonged to a child. It had to be Duncan. MacCready had been right; they held him at their office.

One of the gunners guarded the door, and the other two were forty feet away. Andrea grabbed the guard and covered his mouth as he tried to yell. She twisted his head, and his neck cracked.

Then she heard a whine from the office and Andrea realised the boy had witnessed the whole scenario.

*I just killed someone in front of him, great.*

“Stay there, Duncan and be quiet,” she told him and dragged the body of gunner behind the fence.

Then she returned to office, witnessing how the boy backed away and gazed her with his little eyes.

“Who are you?” he whimpered.

“I’m a friend of your father. I’m here take you to him. He’s down there,” Andrea explained, and the boy’s face brightened. “But there are still bad guys around, so we need to be careful.”

There were four gunners left and that goddamn Assaultron. The mission would be an easy task without that deadly machine.

Andrea murmured under her breath, but then she noticed power armour. She grinned as she got an idea.

“Stay here,” she said to Duncan and went to power armour. Then she returned to Duncan.

“What did you do?” he asked.

“A little trick but now we have to go. Let’s be quiet.”

Andrea didn’t want to attract Assaultron’s attention, not without having the right equipment. Closest gunner stood near power armour, and the others were little further, minding their own business.

Perfect.

“Do you see that old sidewalk on the left side? That’s our only way out of here,” Andrea asked Duncan, and he nodded. “We have to move slowly and quietly as possible. Duncan, *if* something happens, I want you to run fast as possible to another side of the freeway. Don’t look back, no matter what happens. I’ll be right behind you. Understood?”

A nod.

At the halfway of Gunner’s stronghold, Andrea ordered the boy to stop moving. For some unknown reason, Assaultron went caution state and began investigating.

*A hostile in the area. Alert level Bravo. Scanning.*

She had almost forgotten the sound of Assaultrons. They have such an intimidating voice. The boy
next to her let out another whimper and sniffed. Duncan looked terrified, but he managed to stay still. He tried to be brave.

“Don’t worry. Remember we’ll protect you if something happens,” Andrea reassured and glanced Assaultron.

Then she heard Duncan picking up something from the ground, and before she was able to say anything, the boy threw a tin can to another direction.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“A little trick,” he answered, copying her answer.

A sound of clanking can stole the attention of gunners and assaultron. Maybe it was the right call.

“Kid is missing!” the gunner informed others.

Now hostiles would search whole goddamn freeway.

Andrea glared hostiles and told Duncan they had to leave now, but the boy had already left. She made a mental note to herself never leave a kid alone without supervision. Didn’t she learn anything after babysitting her nieces?

Clank.

Andrea froze right after she realised what happened. Duncan had accidentally kicked a rusty can against a concrete pillar.

Engaging hostile!

“Go!” Andrea screamed and drew her pistol from the holster. The boy ran away as fast as rabbit and Andrea went behind cover, firing hostiles. If only she would have that power armour which she gave to Sturges.

The sound of the rifle shot echoed in the air, and right after it, one of the gunners fell.

Then Andrea noticed another problem — a gunner entering into power armour.

Andrea turned quickly around and ran, reaching exterior of stronghold just in the nick of time when massive explosion brought her down. Again.

Maybe it hadn’t been such a good idea to wire up a bomb at old freeway with cars sitting top of it.

RJ will kill me after this., Andrea thought and heard a ringing in her ears. She lifted her head to see if Duncan was okay. The boy cheered and looked at explosions with awe. Then Andrea dropped her head against the tarmac. At least he was fine.

“Duncan!” MacCready called his son after the duo reached the ground safely. Duncan ran to him and jumped into his father’s arms.

“I knew you would come to save me,” the boy said, hugging his father.

“Of course, I would. Are you okay? You’re not hurt?”

“I’m okay. Auntie here may have wounds,” Duncan said and glanced Andrea over his shoulder.
“They’re just scratches. As long as—” Andrea stated, but an explosion at freeway interrupted her.
“Maybe we should leave before something else happens.”

“What the hell happened there?” MacCready asked. He was pissed off, and it was understandable.

“They spotted us halfway, and I made sure Duncan reached elevators safely. I, um, sabotaged the fusion core inside their power armour. One of them triggered it when he started up power armour’s system.”

“You turned a fusion core into a bomb?” he asked.

“I know the trick—”

“Your trick could have got Duncan killed up there!” MacCready snarled, raising his voice this time. The boy in his arms startled a little bit.

However, Andrea couldn’t blame him. He was right.

“I’m sorry. That’s why I made sure he reached the elevators first. There weren’t cars near that place, and Assaultron would have killed us anyway.”

“I have never seen an explosion like that, dad. Boom!” the boy said and presented the explosion with his hands.

Duncan was thrilled about it, but his father wasn’t. Maybe the boy’s joyous behaviour softened sniper a little bit as he relaxed his shoulders. Finally, the mercenary sighed.

Then he said, “I’m sorry, Andrea. You helped me to save him and then I blame you for something that didn’t even happen.”

His voice turned into sad and hollow while he stared Duncan’s eyes.

Andrea shook her head and said, “Nah, it’s okay. I’m not going to hold a grudge over it. Now, should we head back to this Goodneighbor before Gunners sends reinforcements?”

Goodneighbor wasn’t anything that she had imagined. The first thing what she saw was Old State House, which still stood after countless wars and rough years. For her amaze, it was in good condition, unlike the rest of the city. Then she saw drifters, patrolling gunmen and mercenaries on the streets.

As she studied the town with her eyes, Andrea understood why this town wasn’t the best place to raise children but somehow also understood why MacCready lived there. Mercenaries, criminals and Goodneighbor. A match made in heaven.

“Hold up there. First time in Goodneighbor? Can’t go walking around without insurance,” a voice said.

Andrea frowned and glared bald man in a leather jacket who came to her.

Then he continued, “Insurance. Personal protection, like. You hand over everything you got in pockets or ‘accidents’ star—”

“Get the hell off my face before I put you down,” Andrea threatened, hearing how Duncan gasped and said ‘bad word.’
“Uh, hey. Let’s say your insurance is paid up, for now, miss?” the man continued.

“Mrs.,” Andrea corrected.

“Whoa whoa whoa. MacCready finally gets his son back, and now you’re harassing his friend who probably helped him?” a voice said.

Andrea moved her gaze to a ghoul who wore a tricorn hat and a red frock coat. Then she noticed Assaultron behind the shop’s desk. What the hell was this place?

“I said let them go,” a ghoul demanded.

“You’re soft, Hancock, for letting outsiders walk over us. One day there will be a new mayor.”

“C’mon man, this is me we’re talking about. MacCready, your son doesn’t have to see this,” the ghoul said before walking closer to a man.

Then the ghoul stabbed the man. Repeatedly.

Andrea took a few steps back and watched how the man’s body fell to the ground, and nobody didn’t even blink an eye. Mercenaries, criminals and Goodneighbor. A match made in heaven.

“Now I know you had ole’ Finn handled back there, but mayors gotta make a point sometimes. You all right?” the ghoul asked Andrea.

“Ah, yeah. I’m fine,” she stated while staring Finn. Well, that was one way to get rid of the problem.

“C’mon Hancock; you had to do that now?” MacCready asked.

So this ghoul was Hancock. That’s why nobody didn’t try to stop him.

“Well, the mayor’s gotta do what mayors gotta do. You know it,” Hancock said. “Your kid all right?”

“Yeah, he is. Thanks to Andrea.”

“You should let Amari check him, just in case,” Hancock added.

“You’re right,” MacCready said and glanced Andrea. “And you, behave yourself.”

Andrea smiled at him and moved her attention to a ghoul. “Andrea Adams.”

“John Hancock. Heh, funny. Adams and Hancock are here at the Old State Building once again,” Hancock smirked and continued, “Now don’t let this incident taint your view of our little community. Goodneighbor’s of the people, for the people, you feel me? Everyone’s welcome.”

“Your town, your rules.”

“Good. You stay cool, and you’ll be part of the neighbourhood. However, I think you have done enough already. You helped MacCready twice. At first, you took care of those goons at chem laboratory, and now you saved his son,” a ghoul stated with his hoarse voice. “He didn’t know what to do when I told him the news about Duncan... then he remembered you.”

“Desperate times call for desperate measures,” Andrea said. “I couldn’t leave MacCready alone with his problems.”
“And he has those,” the ghoul said, but then someone called him. “Gotta go, duty is calling. Just behave yourself, girl.”

“No promises,” Andrea said. She liked this man already.

“That’s the right attitude. Maybe you belong here,” the mayor responded before he left.

After the gunmen had dragged Finn’s body away, Andrea stared the blood on the ground, and a single word came into her mind.

Wasteland.

Then she gazed Assaultron behind the desk and hoped it wouldn’t attack her but seemingly, Kill or be Killed was the best place to get more ammo and grenades.

After doing her shopping, she went outside and heard someone calling her — another ghoul. Andrea furrowed her brows together and entered into ‘Daisy’s Discount’.

“You’re the one who saved Duncan from Gunners? You did a good job at there,” a ghoul stated. “Thank you.”

“No problem. I would do anything for those two. How did Gunners get him in the first place? This place is filled with guards.”

“They kidnapped Duncan by sneaking around. But Duncan is now safe and sound, thanks to you. Hancock doubled security after that and promised to give Duncan a room from Old State House. Hancock respects MacCready. After all, man is the mayor’s best and most trusted mercenary.”

Andrea smiled a little but frowned again. “Wait. Old gift shop? How do you know there was a gift shop?”

“I’m a ghoul, remember? I was born almost three centuries ago,” Daisy said.

Andrea tilted her head. “I didn’t know. Did you live here in Boston?”

“Pittsburgh. After the war, I had time to travel around. I turned into a ghoul at some point, so I didn’t have to mind about radiation anymore. Then I found this old and trusty town and here I am, working as a merchant,” Daisy told and Andrea nodded.

“You have any family left?”

“No. My husband was killed during the Sino-American War by the Reds. I never found out where he died. The army stated it was classified or something bullshit like that,” Daisy blurted, sounding bitter.

Typical, Andrea thought.

“World before the war was nothing more but petty governments going to war, dragging us into it and shooting whoever refused to clean up the mess or disobeyed orders. That was U.S. Military for everyone,” she said.

“Amen to that,” the ghoul added.

Andrea noticed MacCready returning, this time alone. She asked, “Where’s Duncan?”

“I left him with Irma. She’s Dr Amari’s friend,” MacCready answered then he gestured her to
follow him, leading her outside of town. “I, uh—”

Was he faltering? “What? You are out of words?”

“No. It just—I’m giving these back to you,” MacCready said, taking a little pouch from his pockets. “Your two hundred caps. You bought my services, and in the end, you watched after me and helped me to get Duncan back.”

Andrea stared pouch for a while and then shook her head. “Keep them. Buy something for Duncan.”

MacCready looked confused at first, but then he flashed her little smile. Grateful smile.

“Okay. But take this.” He offered her a wooden toy — a wooden soldier. “Lucy made it and gave it to me after I lied her that I was a soldier. But you are a soldier. So I want to give it to you.”

A smile appeared on Andrea’s lips, and she hugged MacCready. She felt how his body stiffen.

“That wasn’t bad, was it? Oh, don’t look me like that,” she said smirking.

“Shut up. The good thing was that we’re out of town. I would have lost my reputation there as a hired gun, only gaining that status back after killing you,” MacCready stated sternly, but it made Andrea laugh. “I know you want to continue your search. Your godson is still missing, but I don’t want to leave Duncan alone now. I’ll be here until he feels better so I won’t continue my journey with you, not yet at least.”

“That sounds good. Duncan needs you,” Andrea said and put a wooden soldier into her backpack. “Is... Hotel Rexford still in use? As a hotel? I thought about taking a break from the field. Until I’m bored.”

MacCready laughed this time, and she raised her eyebrows in wonderment.

“You know, you’re too old for me, and I like more feminine women. Thanks for proposal though,” he said.

“You’re thinking too highly about yourself, kid. Do you think I’d be interested in twenty years old boy?”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Any feedback is appreciated. Thank you for reading!
Airship

Chapter Summary

‘All right, soldier... this is the moment when everything changes. I hope you're ready.’ It was what Danse said to her.

And the only thing what Andrea wanted to do after that was; either jump down from the airship herself or toss someone else over the edge.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Try to be careful, dad,” Duncan said.

Andrea turned around after hearing Duncan’s voice and looked at the child and his father. He was worried about his father. Even though Andrea knew that worry in children, or even the ability to worry, may have been different from what adults felt, it was nonetheless genuine.

“I’ll be careful, and I’ll watch after Silver Shroud, you know that,” MacCready reassured, meaning Andrea. “You know what to do if Gunners come here.”

The boy nodded and answered, “I’ll go hide in the Old State House.”

“Good,” MacCready said, smiling. Then he turned to Andrea and lifted the rifle to his shoulder.

“Are you ready, boss?”

“Yeah, let’s go,” Andrea said.

She had spent her days with Duncan and Daisy but also doing missions for mayor and Whitechapel Charlie. She and R.J. were an unstoppable duo. The flow of caps was good, and she enjoyed her life as a mercenary. They had no rules, orders or superiors, but Andrea wanted to find Shaun. She had the opportunity to return to a life of mercenary after finding him.

The duo and Dogmeat entered into C.I.T., its rotunda most precisely, and witnessed a gunfight there. Super mutants and synths.

Andrea concluded that the Institute was close. Why else would synths be there? Mutants managed to win the fight, and against MacCready’s suggestion, Andrea decided to kill those green monsters. She wanted to search for the whole place and find a lead.

MacCready sighed as Andrea reloaded her sniper rifle which he had given to her and followed her upstairs.

However, a search turned out to be futile.

As big as the old university was, there wasn’t any lead which could lead them to the Institute — they found only synths and laser weapons.

Andrea kicked the old wooden chair which broke into pieces as it hit the wall. “ Fuck!”
They were probably so close but yet so far. Of course, Institute had stayed out of reach almost two decades, and nobody knew where they were, according to Piper. Of course, it wouldn’t be easy to find them.

“This—” Andrea said. “This is bullshit.”

“Two caps for Duncan,” MacCready said and lit up his cigarette.

“We have been looking for signs of Institute, what? Two weeks now? And we haven’t found anything else expect for synths. How am I supposed to find Shaun when the only thing what I’ve found is useless robots which want to kill me on sight,” Andrea spat. “Sorry. I’m just worried.”

“As I’ve said, I do understand,” MacCready said. “There isn’t nothing here, boss. Now let’s go before—”

A sound interrupted his sentence.

Someone opened the front doors of the building, and the duo glanced towards the entrance.

Four power armoured soldiers and two women, who wore the same outfit as Haylen did, came into the building.

“Oh, look. Cowboys are here,” MacCready murmured and left from the scene, tossing his cigarette.

“What are you doing here, wastelanders?” a soldier asked.

Andrea glanced a male soldier who asked the question.

He had the same kind of symbol on his power armour as Danse did, the only difference being the number of diamond-shaped symbols.

“Rotunda is clear,” she said to him and followed MacCready out.

“...And of course, they had to fly here with their freaking battleship and slowly, like back in Capital, taking control over every square of this city. Brotherhood of Steel was one of the reasons why I left that place,” MacCready blurted and poked campfire with a stick, glancing Andrea who didn’t say anything. “Are you okay, boss?”

Andrea turned her head to look over her shoulder, seeing an airship that floated above the old airport. She could barely see it against the night sky.

After Brotherhood had arrived at the Commonwealth, sounds of vertibirds had filled the skies, and more soldiers were patrolling on the ground.

It was something that she had missed. However, it was also something she disliked.

Andrea moved her gaze back to the campfire and plucked her cuticles.

“R.J.,” she started. “It seems that, what Kellogg said about Institute being unreachable until they decide otherwise, was true. I can’t find a way there without help.”

MacCready glared her. He knew what she was about to say.

“Oh, shit. Don’t say you have considered help of,” he leaned a little bit towards her.
“Brotherhood?”

“We don’t know where the Institute is. We don’t even know where the Railroad is,” Andrea said. “Do I have a choice? Because of my past, I don’t want to be part of the military anymore. For Christ sake, I would stay as far away as possible from them, but... Brotherhood has the technology to track down Institute. They must have.”

MacCready let out a grunt and rubbed his face.

“I’ll do anything to find Shaun. I do owe that to his father,” Andrea continued.

“What you can do for him if you’re dead? People usually end up dying or getting killed after joining to them,” MacCready gestured vertibird that flew above them. “They’re not so different from the Gunners.”

Andrea added, “Or from U.S. Military.”

Finally, he let out a defeated sigh and glared the vertibird on the sky.

“Well, boss... You’re an adult, and you can do whatever you please. Just... Please don’t turn into one of them though I would like to keep you with me. Duncan admires you.”

He would miss her too, and all the caps they would earn together.

“Tell him I admire him too,” Andrea said. “And I’m already a cowboy. Wasteland is now Wild West.”

This time MacCready smiled little.

“I only need the Brotherhood to find Institute for me. After I’ve found Shaun, I’ll leave. I’m good at disappearing. I’ve done it already once. I can do it again,” she reassured. “But now... I’m going to sleep. It’s your time to be on watch, kid.”

Andrea stood up, taking her wool coat and laid down to the ground. She heard MacCready whispering ‘yes, boss’ and closed her eyes.

They parted ways next morning after Andrea was utterly sure about asking or using the help of the Brotherhood to find Institute.

On her way towards Cambridge police station with Dogmeat, Andrea stopped at the Fraternal Post 115 and stared building wistfully, again thinking the past.

It was a place where Nate should have given his speech about his time at the battlefield. It was a place where he would have received the Medal of Honor.

Andrea had witnessed many ceremonies, and usually, they gave Medal of Honor posthumously.

In Nate’s case, he would have been alive.

And this man, who was worthy of highest military decoration — a real war hero — was shot by a fucking low-life mercenary, Andrea thought. You deserved more, Nate.

It had been now weeks since Prydwen arrived and Adams left from Cambridge Police Station.

Immediately after his superiors had arrived at the Commonwealth, Danse had set up the distress
call for every possible Brotherhood of Steel units, hoping their rescuer would hear it too.

Knight Rhys believed she was dead already.

But then Adams returned to Police Station out of nowhere, stating she wanted to talk with Paladin Danse himself.

After giving her permission to come inside, Paladin examined her from head to toe as she approached him. She didn’t have anymore this ‘I came straight from the vault’ -look though she still had that vault suit under her wool coat.

“So, have you changed your mind?” Danse asked.

“I think… I have seen enough this world,” she pointed out and crossed her arms. “I would like to accept your proposal. If it’s still in force?”

“I did leave the offer open, so this is it. Welcome to Brotherhood of Steel, soldier,” he said.

“Well, I guess I have to get used to that salute,” Andrea cleared her throat. “So, how we are going to proceed now, sir?”

Paladin cleared his throat in turn and said, “Can I have everyone’s attention, please?”

The woman looked around her as his subordinates stopped their acts and moved their attention to them.

“It’s time to welcome our newest recruit to our recon team. Andrea Adams was one who helped us fight against the ghouls and obtain deep range transmitter from the ArcJet System. She shows remarkable talent in the battlefield and with proper guidance, I think she has the potential to become full-time Knight,” he announced, then he looked at her.

“That’s why I’m granting her the rank of Initiate. It’s only a training rank, and I’m not permitted to grant ranks any higher than that,” Paladin stated his last line to her.

Mentally, he smiled as the woman scratched her nose again before introducing herself to others. Most soldiers greeted and congratulated her friendly, but there was, like there always will be, those who disliked recruiting wastelanders into their ranks.

“Ad Victoriam, Initiate,” Haylen said friendly.

“She doesn’t even know what that means, Haylen,” Rhys retorted.

“Knight Rhys,” Danse said, and Rhys shut his mouth. “Like it or not, you’re going to work together for now on. We’re not soldiers of fortune. We’re an army, and we have dedicated our lives to uphold a strict code of ethics. I only ask two things from anyone, including you two…”

Paladin looked at Andrea and Rhys. “…under my command. Honesty and respect. However, I also ask that you will show the same honesty and respect to everyone, no matter who is superior and who is subordinate. Is that clear, soldiers?”

“Yes, sir,” the duo said in unison.

“Ad Victoriam means’ to victory’, but it means more to us. In our eyes, defeat is unacceptable because we are fighting for the future of humankind. Our rallying cry is more powerful than any weapon humankind could ever carry,” Danse explained.
“Now I suggest that you sign up for your next assignment. I believe that our soldiers have some missions for you.”

Andrea did spend a few enlightening days with Recon Team Gladius, learning their way of life and getting to know each other. However, Andrea secretly missed the life of wastelander but also enjoyed the life of a soldier. It was complicated.

She cleared dozens of places for Knight Rhys but had no success with him. She did get along with Scribe Haylen and others, not forgetting Paladin Danse.

Their commander was sometimes little too military-ish; strict and stern, but according to Haylen, he sometimes dropped his guard.

And Andrea witnessed it a few times.

Once she overheard Danse and Haylen talking about something, and the latter one broke suddenly. He comforted her and held her as she cried.

Then one night, when she was on watch, Andrea saw Paladin standing in front of the graves of their deceased team members. Not as a superior, but as someone else.

This man carried on his shoulders not just the weight of dead men, but the weight of his responsibility. He blamed himself for their deaths. He cared about his subordinates greatly.

Andrea understood him very well. She carried the same quilt within her.

On next morning, Paladin Danse came to her and called Andrea by her new rank, interrupting her conversation with scribes.

Initiate Adams. It sounded better than Captain.

“I’ve received orders that we were both commanded to Prydwen,” Paladin started. “I believe you have seen her already?”

“Her? You mean the Prydwen?” she asked. “She was the most beautiful thing I have seen in a while.”

“Takes your breath away? She’s loaded with enough troops and supplies to mount a major offensive,” Danse said with a little smile on his face. “If she’s here, Elder Maxson is here, and that means we’re going to war.”

_Ah, the famous Elder. Thanks for stealing my surname, jackass_, Andrea thought.

She still wanted to kick Elder’s ass. That would be the day.

“I hope that war will not end like the last one. I can assure you, you don’t wanna see it,” Andrea said, concerned.

“If history has proven anything, it’s that an overwhelming show of force has a chance of halting a conflict before it begins,” Paladin added confidently.

Andrea disagreed strongly.

“That being said, you’re about to get to know the Prydwen up close and personal. Follow me up to the roof of the Police Station after you’re finished here; we’re going for a little ride.”
“Can Dogmeat come with us?” Andrea asked as her canine companion followed them to stairs, whining after her. Oh, hell no, she wasn’t leaving him.

“We do have dogs at Prydwen, but you should ask permission from Lancer-Captain Kells. He’s the captain of the Prydwen,” Paladin answered as he stared Dogmeat. “It should be okay; he was one of our rescuers.”

“What we would do without him, Paladin?” Andrea asked Paladin.

Right after she stepped outside, Andrea gasped little as she saw vertibird on the helipad.

“You do like aircraft’s, don’t you?”

“Well, my father and brothers were in the Air Force,” Andrea explained. “My grandfather taught me to fly one. He took me with him to the sky every now and then, showing me Boston from above. It was beautiful. Peaceful. I’ve loved high grounds and flying since then. The sky was a second home to my family.”

Andrea turned around and gave Paladin confused look as she saw his sad expression. It seemed he didn’t even notice her movement. He was lost in thought.

“Paladin? Everything all right?”

The man woke up from his thoughts and shook his head. “Yes. Let’s go.”

“It never ceases to amaze me how drastically your perception of the battlefield changes from the air. We’re going to need that edge when we take on the Institute. They’ve already proven that they’re technologically superior, which means there’s no telling what types of weapons they have in their arsenal,” Paladin Danse explained.

Andrea gazed the Commonwealth from the air. Boston looked a little different this time. Dead was the right word for it, but it was beautiful too.

Then Danse continued, “Hopefully our air superiority and tactical know-how will make the difference. All we have to is find the Institute, and I’m betting that Elder Maxson has a plan already by the time we arrive.”

_These guys really have their faith on this Elder_, she thought.

“I wish everyone down there believed in our cause, but rumours have blinded them. They don’t realise that the Brotherhood of Steel is the Commonwealth’s last hope of survival. Every man, woman and child below is in mortal danger.”

_This place doesn’t need war; it needs humanity. The only ones who can save this city are people of Commonwealth, not military_, Andrea thought.

A dark-skinned man wearing the navy blue version of Brotherhood fatigues and sea captain’s hat waited for them at the deck, staring duo firmly as they jumped down from vertibird.

_Ten bucks, this man is Lancer Captain_, Andrea thought and told Dogmeat to wait.

“Permission to come aboard, sir?” Danse asked the man.

“Permission granted and welcome back, Paladin,” Lancer Captain said as he looked up to power armoured Danse. Then he looked at Andrea. “And this is one of our newest recruits?”
Don’t even think about that surname; you will end up saying it, Andrea thought as she introduced herself.

“I’ve field promoted her to Initiate, and I would like to sponsor her entry into our ranks,” Danse said.

Andrea smiled mentally this time. This man was full of surprises.

“Yes, we’ve read your reports. You will be pleased to know that Elder Maxson approved your request and placed Initiate Adams in your charge.”

“And my current orders, sir?”

“You are to remain on the Prydwen and await further instructions.”

“Yes, sir. Ad Victoriam,” Danse said and exchanged glances with Andrea. As if telling her to stay here and answer to Captain’s questions.

Andrea didn’t know what Danse had reported about her but hopefully not everything.

“Paladin Danse reports say that you have a history with U.S. military before the war. Is that true?” Kells asked her.

“Yes, sir. I served under General Constantine Chase and briefly under General Thomas Callahan during the Yangtze Campaign before the Great War.”

“You were at the Anchorage?”

“From 2075 to January 10, 2077, sir,” Andrea answered.

Lancer Captain Kells narrowed his eyes little.

“Hmph. I’ve read Paladin Danse’s reports. He seems to think you’ll make a fine addition to the Brotherhood. I want to make one thing clear. We travelled to the Commonwealth with a specific goal in mind,” he said. “As a captain of this vessel, I won’t allow anyone to jeopardise our mission here, no matter how valuable they think they are. Understood, soldier?”

“Absolutely.”

Oh god, she hadn’t missed conversations like this. She missed Hancock.

“Good. That’s all for now. Your orders are to proceed to Command Deck for the address, after which Elder Maxson wishes to have a word with you,” Kells said firmly. “If you have any questions, ask me now. Otherwise, you are dismissed.”

“Oh,” Andrea said. “Paladin Danse told me there are other dogs around. So, I thought about asking your permission to bring him aboard, sir?” she asked and looked over her shoulder.

Dogmeat still sat on the platform, tilting his head playfully.

“It shouldn’t be a problem. As long as you’ll keep your dog at the kennel and he won’t do needs indoors,” Kells answered. “Anything else, soldier?”

“I don’t have any more questions, sir.”

“Then I suggest you head over to the Command Deck immediately. Dismissed, Initiate.”
Right after stepping inside the airship, Andrea smelled the scent of cold steel, gunpowder and power armour crease. She hated that smell already.

But the size of Command Center surprised Andrea. She had thought it was bigger, considering the size of the airship. In front of her, Andrea saw the separate room where soldiers stood in line, and someone paced back and forth in front of them.

*That’s probably the Great Elder Maxson,* Andrea thought and walked toward the room.

When Andrea finally reached the doorway, her heart skipped a beat or two.

She forgot other soldiers in the room, power armoured soldier standing right next to the doorway, Dogmeat behind her, airship’s noise, Shaun and Vault 111.

She forgot everything that she had seen or experienced since the bomb dropped.

She forgot everything, except that day when Roger left, staring her with his icy blue eyes as he had walked towards military transport.

And now, Andrea saw those same eyes on someone else’s face.

Then she shook her head mentally.

*He’s not Roger. He’s dead, Andrea. Pull yourself together.*

She had a chance to study this man.

Assumed Elder had a beard, scar on his left cheek and dark brown undercut hair — not typical hairstyle in the military.

Andrea couldn’t guess his age. Was he in his thirties maybe? Those wrinkles and dark circles under his eyes made him look somehow old and tired. Older than Paladin Danse was.

His coat was attention-grabbing, and his voice stood out, stealing everyone’s attention. However, the only thing that stole Andrea’s attention was his eyes.

*Stop. Don’t do this to yourself. Look at that guy; he’s not Roger. That haircut is ridiculous, that beard is too long, and he isn’t even good-looking compared to—*

For the first time, their eyes met.

Then he continued his speech, “... I’m not prepared to allow the Institute to continue this line of experimentation. Therefore, the Institute and their synths are considered enemies of the Brotherhood of Steel and should be dealt with swiftly and mercilessly. This campaign will be costly, and many lives will be lost. But in the end, we will be saving humankind from its worst enemy *itself.* Ad Victoriam.”

Then Andrea saw Dogmeat performing his ‘bunny stance’ as Duncan called it and scratched the tip of her nose.

Other soldiers chuckled a little bit after the dog’s little show, all except Elder. He had that typical scowl on his face — typical military officer.

“True dog of Brotherhood, huh?” the bald soldier asked and scratched the dog’s head gently.

Andrea smiled little as she saw his olive coloured skin. It felt familiar, considering her Spanish
family roots.

“I guess, sir,” Andrea stated, looking up to his eyes and this time man smiled to her.

After other soldiers left, Andrea gathered herself as Elder gazed her. She had no idea how long they stared at each other until she blinked her eyes and mentally kicked herself to say something.

“Andrea Adams. Interesting speech, sir.”

_Really? Interesting speech? Luckily you didn’t introduce yourself with HIS surname, Andrea_ thought.

“I’m interested in one thing. Keeping Commonwealth and her people safe. That’s why we’re here. I care about them,” his expression and voice softened a little bit.

However, somehow it reminded Andrea about _him_.

“Last time someone said something similar, they ended up telling the soldiers to shoot people in case of a protest. What happened more than once when it came to food rations,” she stated and received another scowl from Elder. “I apologise, sir.”

“We’re not here to start a war with Commonwealth, soldier, but with the Institute. The Brotherhood is here to prevent that war by starting one of our own before Institute unleashes their plan. We’ll keep civilians out of it, Initiate. I won’t allow innocent people to die. The difference is that our war won’t reduce civilisation to ashes in two hours.”

“Prevent a war by starting another? Look, two centuries ago someone tried to end the war before it even started and it led us to—” Andrea halted mid-sentence but then continued, “I’m deeply sorry. I can still remember how nuclear mushroom covered our sky and the feel of betrayal when our government betrayed us. It’s not ancient history to me. It all happened a few weeks ago.”

She looked down and then lifted her eyes to his, saying, “Please, don’t punish Paladin because of my behaviour, sir.”

After all, he was the one who took her under his wings.

“I won’t. I can understand how you feel. Even soldiers of U.S. Military suffered because of governments actions. I won’t let the same kind of actions happen in my chapter,” Elder said confidently.

Then he continued talking, but Andrea couldn’t hear him. She wasn’t feeling well. She felt dizzy and thought she might faint.

“Knight, is everything okay?” he asked.

Andrea woke up from lethargy and nodded. “Yes.”

Pair of icy blue eyes stared her piercingly, and then Elder said, “Squire Ortiz will show you Prydwen’s clinic and sleeping quarters. This is my first order to you, Knight. I recommend you go to meet our doctor and let him examine you. Understood?”

“Yes, sir,” Andrea said and turned around.

But then she saw a young child wearing a dark padded jacket, red scarf and peaked cap with Brotherhood insignia and her eyes widened.
“Knight Adams, ma’am. Follow me,” the boy said.

Andrea turned to look over her shoulder and glared Elder with her ‘Maxson glare’ that she had learned from Roger.

*Why they have kids here?* she thought.

“In any event, welcome to the Prydwen. You’re dismissed, Knight,” Elder said and saluted.

Andrea had to gather her strength of will so she wouldn’t give this military leader an earful.

“Thank you, Elder,” she said and left.

She gave last rebuking glance to Elder as she climbed stairs up to Main Deck.

Unbelievable.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Their first meeting turned out to be something else what I planned. This isn't a love story; this is an angsty story with fluff.

Thanks for reading and like always, feedback is appreciated!
Andrea meets the crew of Prydwen.

“Squire Ortiz will show you Prydwen’s clinic and sleeping quarters. This is my first order to you, Knight. I recommend you go to meet our doctor and let him examine you. Understood?”

The way she and Elder had glared each other before Andrea had left from the Command Deck, made her want to say a few selected words to him. Instead, she gritted her teeth together like a proper soldier did and followed Squire.

The airship looked a little dull and cramped from the inside, reminding Andrea of the ship or submarine. But it was still amazing.

“This is the place where Knight-Captain Cade treats most of his patients. We do have temporary infirmary at the Airport, but they use it for surgery and other important operations,” the boy said and gestured door next to them. “I’ll wait for you here, ma’am.”

He stood beside the wall like a statue.

Andrea felt a keen sympathy for him as she remembered her childhood.

Her parents had taught her to treat people with respect, especially officers, and they scolded her every time she failed. They had taught her to become a soldier before she was able even to read.

Andrea wanted to tell this child go play. He shouldn’t stand there like old-school private. Children didn’t belong to a place like this.

A sudden, wild idea appeared out of nowhere when she glanced a dog next to her, and she decided to implement the concept.

Instead of staring Squire from above, avoiding ‘I am superior to you/I am adult here’ situation, Andrea squatted down and smiled.

“Say, what if instead of standing here, you could take Dogmeat to the kennel? This examination may take a while, so you don’t need to stand here and wait for me,” she said and patted the dog’s head. “And Dogmeat might appreciate little brushing.”

The young boy’s face brightened with eagerness. As guessed, Squire was excited about the idea of taking care of the dog.

“O...okay,” he faltered.

“Good. Then it is settled. I’ll be waiting for you here if I’m ready before you.”
“Ar...are you sure about this, ma’am?”

“Yes, and when we’re alone, you can call me Andrea.”

Squire stared her bewildered but eventually nodded. It seems the boy didn’t fear dogs. He greeted a dog eagerly and gently stroked his fur.

“His name is Dogmeat?” he asked.

“Yes. I know it is a strange name, but I think it’s neat,” Andrea smiled little. Squire’s stare turned thoughtful, but he didn’t speak, so she asked, “What’s wrong?”

“I’ve heard that name before. One of us had a dog with the same name,” the boy shrugged. “I don’t know much, but it can’t be the same dog. He died ten years ago.”

Maybe it was just a coincidence. This world was full of surprises, after all.

“Don’t bother your head with that,” Andrea said and squeezed his shoulder gently. “This fella here is alive and breathing, and he’s all yours now. Off you go,” she continued as she turned Squire around.

As Andrea watched the boy and dog leave, she stood up and congratulated herself on her success. The first command she gave to someone was a benevolent one. Purpose of it, at least.

And you can suck it, Elder, Andrea thought, smiling smugly and turned to face the door.

She knocked on the door before opening it. The first thing that she saw were two emergency treatment stretchers, empty IV bags that hang from IV pole and blood on the floor.

That’s not a good sign. Maybe I should leave, Andrea thought.

“So many soldiers killed and wounded,” a man with silver buzz cut whispered behind the desk as he browsed the folder.

That reminded Andrea of where she was now; in the war and army.

“It ain’t never easy,” Andrea stated and closed the door behind her.

“No, it’s not,” the man answered and put notes away. “But we take that risk as soldiers.”

“Amen to that, sir. Ini.. Knight Andrea Adams.”

Or whatever she was now.

“I’m Knight-Captain Dwight Cade, a doctor of Brotherhood of Steel. You have come here to be examined?”

“That’s what Elder wanted. So, where are needles, saws and rubber gloves?”

“That time will come soon,” the doctor said and took a folder from his desk, then he wrote something to paper. “I’ll start with the questions first. Please, answer honestly; otherwise, it might compromise your and our situation here. Paladin Danses report of you gave me little background information, but we tend to interview newcomers. Elder Maxson feels that the mental state of the crew is just as important as the physical.”

“Okay. Fire it up.”
“The first question, were you ever exposed to radiation for an extended time?”

“My mother used to tell me not to sit too close to the television. Of course, we had telephones, smoke detectors, microwaves, Wi-Fi and the X-Ray machines.”

Half-truth.

“The second question, have you ever been seriously sick in your life or have you come in contact with a person confirmed to be carrying a communicable disease?”

“I have had influenza, measles, chickenpox, ear infection... Those were common ones,” Andrea pondered.

Half-truth.

“Those were pretty common diseases, but most of the pre-war diseases are gone due to radiation, or they have mutated. We normally face radiation sickness, leukopenia, cancers and other unknown infections.”

“How do you deal with radiation sickness?”

“It takes time to cure someone from radiation sickness, and Radaway, antibiotics and blood transfusion are currently only treatments for it. We’re trying to develop a non-addictive version of Radaway, but it has been fruitless so far. I sell Rad-X if you’re interested.”

“That was a nice sales pitch, cap. I might buy something,” Andrea smirked.

She was relieved that Brotherhood has a real doctor. Someone who had a sense of humour.

“That’s why I sell those items, Knight. Soldiers buy products before they even know it. Hell, I should be inside that cage instead of Teagan,” Cade said. “The third question. Please answer honestly; have you ever had sexual relations with any species considered non-human?”

Andrea frowned as Cade finished his question. But what was considered to be ‘non-human’? Super Mutants?

“No. That happens often?”

“You would be surprised how many wastelanders answer ‘yes’ to that question. Brotherhood finds that type of behaviour distasteful. The final question. Would you have any problems pulling a trigger on an enemy of the Brotherhood whether they’re human, formerly human or machine?”

“If my life, or someone else’s life, is in danger, I’ll do whatever it takes to defend and protect.”

“That’s an acceptable answer. Excellent. Next, I’ll put on the rubber gloves and take a few tests,” the doctor said.

Cade examined her body in case of blisters, rash or cuts, but found nothing except healed scars and bruises.

“Your teeth are in good shape,” Cade said as he examined her mouth.

“Hopefully they stay like that,” Andrea stated while thinking her Nuka-Cola and nicotine addiction. “I assume there are no dentists anymore?”

Cade shook his head as an answer.
Andrea nodded and then asked, “How many children we do have here?”

It still bothered her. She didn’t like it.

“How many?” Cade continued as he checked her eyes and ears. “There are no many children or babies due to radiation and dangerous Wasteland. However, still, people keep trying.”

“It’s in our genes. Biological need to make sure that our race survives. Even though humans are the reason why our world is what it is now. So I’m healthy?”

“You’re probably healthiest person aboard. May I ask you something, Knight?” he asked and Andrea nodded. “Are you fertile?”

It felt like someone would have hit her to stomach.

She tried to forget it, but someone always reminded her about it.

“I, uh, there is something wrong with my ovaries, I think. I haven’t had luck so...”

“I understand. I’m sorry if I made you feel uncomfortable,” Cade said sympathetically. “I’ll take a few blood test if it’s okay?”

“What I said about needles?”

“Don’t worry. It’ll hurt less than a bite of Wasteland’s creatu—”

Their conversation was interrupted by a thud on the door.

Before the doctor could respond, someone stormed into the room. The older man, who rushed through the door, halted immediately after seeing Andrea. His eyebrows plunged into a frown as he stared Andrea behind his glasses. As if he had recognised her.

Then the man moved his attention to the doctor.

“Senior Scribe Gregson called from the Airport. An unknown hostile has attacked one of our Knights. He is seriously wounded. Patrol is returning from the downtown as we speak.”

The doctor stopped his current act, telling Andrea they would continue later and then he left in a hurry.

Andrea stood up slowly and offered her hand to this man.

“Knight Adams.”

“Proctor Nicholas Quinlan. You must be the recruit described in Paladin Danse’s report. Hm. Have we met before?” the man asked curiously.

“I don’t think so. How so?”

“I had a feeling that I’ve seen you somewhere,” Quinlan stated. “But that’s not important now. Paladin told you’re from a time before the war, isn’t that correct? They put you into cryostasis on the same day when the war started?”

Andrea nodded at his question.

“Remarkable. I’m interested in having an interview with you. You probably have intel about pre-
war facilities, organisations... Do you think you’ll have time for it someday?”

“Yes, I think so,” Andrea affirmed.

“Wonderful,” Proctor said. “However, I’ve to return to my duties. We’ll talk later.”

They had to figure out what had happened to this certain Knight. It has to be something new. They wouldn’t make a fuss about it if one of the creatures or raiders were behind the attack.

Andrea closed the door behind her and pondered who it could have been. Institute or something else?

She always had a feeling that someone was watching her. MacCready had said she overreacted and imagined her own.

*This place is just getting into you,* he had said.

But sometimes she had seen figures that stood in the shadows and observed her and MacCready.

However, whoever they were, they never had attacked them.

As she had promised, Andrea waited for Squire’s return and paced around in front of the door. A few soldiers walked past her, and she gave them a little smile. But then she remembered where she was and rolled her eyes. Did she come here to smile?

“Are you lost?” a high pitched voice asked.

Slowly Andrea raised her head and met the girls gaze. Her eyes were a very pale hazel colour, and her lovely smile stole Andrea’s attention. For the first time, someone actually smiled at her.

Judging by her vivid behaviour and appearance, she had to be younger and more well-preserved than Andrea.

Hell, with her smooth and healthy-looking skin, she looked like a model who lived before the war.

“No. I’m just waiting for Squire Ortiz, ma’am.”

The girl laughed after Andrea finished her sentence. Her laughter was loud, and she didn’t even try to suppress it. As if she wouldn’t even care if someone heard her.

“I’m Knight, just like you are. Knight Stefanie Prince. You’re Adams, right? Don’t mind the fact that everyone knows you, and you don’t know anyone. We don’t usually recruit vault dwellers. Maybe wastelanders, but not dwellers. Anymore at least,” the girl explained while she tightened her ponytail.

Anymore? Had there been vault dwellers in the organisation before? Andrea almost asked about it, but the girl continued her babbling.

“Oh, this guy here,” Stefanie said and pointed tall, dark-haired man who bypassed them. “he’s a hopeless womaniser. Stay away from him.”

Andrea noticed the man’s eyes before everything else. Green and blue. Then she saw his dimples.

“I heard that,” the brunette man said, and he returned to introduce himself. “Fox Jenkins. Don’t worry I’m not interested in older women, unlike *she* is,” he added, meaning Stefanie.
“Paige knows more about women than you do,” Stefanie stated. “And where are you going?”

“To mission. Hunt down ferals,” Fox answered as he left.

“And you’re going there without power armour? Again!”

“Ingram is repairing it. However, don’t worry. I can manage without it,” the man stated lustily and waved his hand.

Somehow interaction between those two made Andrea thought about her brothers.

“Are you siblings?” she dared to ask.

“No. I don’t need fifth,” the younger woman answered. “Or maybe he is like a brother to me. Fox was already orphan when he sneaked into Citadel. Ever since he has been part of the Prince family.”

Andrea recognised the look on younger woman’s face. Same look which she always had after her brothers had teased her, displeased but at same time contented.

“Sneaked into Citadel?” she asked.

“Yeah. Fox was 9-year-old when he sneaked into our headquarters. Eventually, one of our former Elders caught him. So now he’s here with us. Stupid enough not to wear power armours. Says he can’t sneak while wearing it.”

Andrea smiled little. She agreed with him.

Then they heard the sound of metal clanking behind them, and Andrea turned her head. Paladin Danse.

“And I wondered what caused this ballyhoo. Then I saw Knight Prince,” Paladin said and shook his head. “It seems you two have already met. Maybe Knight Prince can show you the rest of the airship while you’re idle.”

The smaller girl nodded eagerly. “Of course, sir.”

Andrea was grateful for Knight’s eagerness to show her around, but she still waited for Squire.

“Um, Elder ordered Squire Ortiz to show me quarters. I’m still waiting for him,” she explained.

“Where did he go?” Danse asked.

“I suggested him to take Dogmeat to the kennel. I told him I would wait for him here. He hasn’t returned, sir,” Andrea answered. “So, I don’t want to let him down. I promised to stay here and wait for him.”

Paladin gazed his protegee thoughtfully and nodded.

“Very well. How did things go with Elder Maxson?” he asked.

“Fine, sir. It seems he just wanted to talk—”

“Knight Adams.” a voice called her.

Stefanie stiffened after hearing the voice and froze completely.
Andrea glanced Paladin in front of her, who now stared into another direction, and heard heavy steps behind her.

She turned around on her heels, after all that someone had called her.

Pair of icy blue eyes stared her almost menacingly. Elder’s intimidating gaze worked on Stefanie as her body stiffened even more and colour practically vanished from her face.

He walked straightly in front of Andrea, glaring her from head to toe.

“Yes, sir?”

“If I do remember correctly, Knight, I ordered Squire Ortiz to escort you to the clinic and then show you quarters, didn’t I?”

“You did.”

“Then could you explain to me why Squire is at the kennel, brushing your dog, instead of being where I ordered him to be?” Elder snarled, his angry voice resounding through the steel hallway and a few soldiers fled from the scene.

Andrea took deep inhale, staring him straightly into those beautiful eyes (though she did find the man very irritating) and opened her mouth.

“Instead of making him stand there,” she said and pointed the wall. “I thought it would be better for him to take care of Dogmeat and do something useful. I ordered him to return after he would be ready. Sir.”

“You thought?”

Stefanie flinched a little bit after his snarl.

Then Elder raised his right hand, index finger extended.

“Listen to me, Knight, when I do give an order to someone, it will be followed to the letter… by Paladins, Knights and Squires. Did I make myself clear?”

“Yes, sir,” Andrea nodded.

“Good,” Elder said and turned his attention to Stefanie. “Knight Prince, return to your tasks.”

However, Elder nodded politely toward Danse as he bypassed him and put his hand behind his back.

Andrea watched how Stefanie left. So much for that tour.

“Fine, Adams?” Paladin questioned her previous answer. “What did happen? Really?”

“It’s just like I said, sir. I thought it was better for Squire to do something useful. Dogmeat was with me, so I thought Squire could take care of him while I was at the clinic. I apologise, sir,” Andrea said, “I’m sorry, Paladin.”

“I just can’t believe you stood up to Elder like that, Knight. It can take a long time before soldiers can even look into his eyes when he is irritated. However, it wasn’t very smart.”

“Well, General Chase wasn’t any different. However, I won’t do anything like that again,” Andrea
reassured but remembered something Elder told her. “What’s all this about you being my sponsor?”

“Elder Maxson is understandably particular when it comes to recruits. As your sponsor, it’s my duty to travel with you throughout the Commonwealth to ensure that our ideals are being observed. I hope you appreciate how much of chance I’m taking bringing you into the fold this quickly. Not to put too fine a point on it, but if you screw up, we go down together,” Paladin Danse explained, giving her little scowl.

Andrea scratched her nose, knowing what he meant with that scowl. But now she knew how much faith Danse had in her. It delighted her.

“I won’t let you down, sir. I promise.”

This time Danse smiled little. That delighted her even more.

“In order to be an effective part of the team, you should continue your tour around this ship. Without Squire this time.”

“And there she is, our newest recruit. I hope Paladin hasn’t tormented you too much? Or Elder?” the tired-looking man greeted her with the question but flashed her a little smile.

Andrea glared the cage-looking room and concluded this man was the one whom Cade meant with cage and shop. Proctor Teagan, ship’s quartermaster. His black hair was swept straight back from his forehead, and his wrinkles gave him handsomely look.

“We don’t see every day how recruits test Elder’s patience during their first day on aboard,” he continued.

“I think I’ve tormented Danse instead. I’m surprised that he hasn’t resigned from sponsorship already,” Andrea stated. “So, you’re the one who sells weapons, ammunition and power armour parts here?”

“That’s right. This place is the storage depot, and I, as you probably already guessed, am the ship’s quartermaster, Proctor Greg Teagan. The powers have locked me in this one person zoo to keep an eye on the Brotherhood’s valuables. If you need to stock up on supplies before you head out to your next mission, this is the place to buy them.”

Shelves behind him were filled with weapons, ammo and armour parts.

“I’ll buy fusion cells and 10mm rounds if you have them.”

“I’m glad that you’re the agreeable type. When I tell most of the recruits that they have to buy their equipment, they give me the stink eye. The good news is by having a constant flow of caps; I’m able to buy whatever you bring me,” Teagan explained.

“As long as there won’t be taxes to pay. I remember when I broke my first rifle in the army, and I had to pay 75 dollars plus taxes for it. Like soldier’s paycheck wasn’t big enough,” Andrea said, and Teagan whistled.

“Taxation. Maybe I’ll suggest to others that we will bring it into use; maybe we could do some extra caps with that,” Teagan pondered.

Andrea made a mental note to herself to stay quiet for now on.
Next, Andrea arrived at the Power Armor Bay and heard how someone yelled. She gazed the redhead and then turned to look at Stefanie, who fixed her combat armour.

“Uh, excuse me. Who’s Proctor Ingram?” Andrea asked Stefanie.

“That angry redhead. Hey, flight suit fits you. Your body looks better now. You’re quite muscular. Do you sleep in a gym or something?”

“I would if I slept. But I didn’t come here to show them off,” Andrea said and glanced at her flight suit. “This colour is just awful.”

An orange. Who the hell decided the colours of these suits. Unbelievable.

“This isn’t a fashion show either. So, it’s orange; you wanted it or not,” the girl said and continued her task.

Andrea went over to the redhead and called her by title.

“Knight Andrea Adams, ma’am,” Andrea introduced herself, and from the corner of her eye, she saw Stefanie facepalming her forehead.

The redhead stared Andrea firmly, her brown gaze drilling through her. She was scarier than Elder with a look like that.

“First of all, don’t call me ma’am. Ever,” she said.

Andrea nodded.

“So you’re our newest recruit. Congratulations on your new rank, by the way. Last time I read a report about you, you were still Initiate. So what do you think about our organisation? It’s little different from the U.S. Army, huh?”

“Well, Brotherhood is little different… however, somehow they’re the same,” Andrea said. “It seems you believe I’m not from this ‘world’? I thought Cade would send me to nuthouse after medical examination.”

“Paladin Danse vouched for you, and that’s enough for me. Since you came here to meet me, we may as well get it over with this. I’m Kari Ingram, head of engineering and Proctor for the order of the Shield. And this lovely place…” she said and gestured power armour station. “...is where you usually find me if I’m not down at the Airport. It’s my job to keep Prydwen in the air and to repair these power armours. Do you know anything about engineering?”

“No. I was going to ask if there’s someone who could upgrade my pistols?”

“I guess I’ve to survive alone with these beauties and with this huge beast. Of course, I’ve my scribes, but my what-to-do-next list too long,” Ingram said. “Anyway, your Power Armor is at the Bay three. You might need it soon; there are plenty of missions ahead. Oh, about your question about weapon modding,” Proctor added and looked a man at the weapons workbench. “Talk to Knight Ortiz; he’s probably our best weapon modder here.”

The same man who called Dogmeat ’true Brotherhood dog’.

Andrea noticed how he stared women as they spoke but turned his head immediately after the duo moved their attention to him.
“Where is your saluting friend?” he asked Andrea.

“Hopefully not teaching that salute to other dogs. Ingram said something about you,” Andrea said and noticed how his face brightened up. “She told me you’re the best weapon modder here.”

“Proctor’s probably right. You’ve something in your mind?” Ortiz asked.

Andrea undid the strap of her thigh holsters and drew her pistols.

“I was thinking... Could you add long light ported barrel, sharpshooters grip, advanced receiver, and reflex sight into these? Of course, I’ll bring you all the components you need and some caps too,” Andrea asked and gave him the pistols.

“Modifications for exceptional damage, improved hip fire and recoil, better focused and sighted accuracy? I can do that.”

Andrea raised her eyebrow. This man wasn’t a rookie. Then suddenly Andrea remembered the incident with Elder.

“Um, is Squire Ortiz your relative?”

“He’s my son.”

Andrea scratched her nose purposely. “I’m sorry if I put him into trouble. I should have followed Elder orders to the letter.”

“No, it’s okay. Elder wasn’t mad at Emilio. But half of the airship heard how Elder rebuked you. First day aboard and already pissing him off, hm?” Knight asked and continued fixing someone’s laser rifle.

Andrea noticed name *Fortune* engraved into it.

Then Latino continued, “Your dog attracted other Squires to the kennel. And soon, every Squire of Brotherhood wanted to play with him.”

“No wonder why Elder was mad at me,” Andrea murmured and crossed her arms.

However, mentally, she congratulated herself about success. She gave Squires a chance to be kids.

“Maybe. Elder saw how they played with your dog, and he walked straightly to you.”

“How did he punish Squires? Push-ups?” Andrea asked and wrinkled her nose in disgust.

“No,” Ortiz snorted. “Elder let them play with the dog for a while. So, no push-ups.”

This time Andrea raised her both eyebrows — that was unusual for a military leader. That surprised her. After Elder had scolded her, Andrea had thought about what kind of punishment Squire got.

Of course, Andrea was higher ranked, and she should have been punished instead of Squire. However, she didn’t get a punishment either.

Maybe Elder thought his macho-rant would be enough.

However, it wasn’t.

She would turn his life and leadership upside down. She was done with military leaders.
A/N: I named Fox and Stefanie after Fox Mulder and Stefanie Joosten + Wonder Woman (Diana Prince). Originally, Fox's surname was Jensen after Adam Jensen (I mean, I love my sneaky men and he is infiltrator too haha) but I had second thoughts. Ah, I named Cade and Proctors after their voice actors. I was lazy haha.

Thank you for reading!
History Lesson

Chapter Summary

Andrea finds about her spouse's connection to the Brotherhood - thinking should she leave or stay? Keep the secrets or tell the truth?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Here’s something I brought to you guys,” Andrea grinned as she opened her backpack, objects inside it making clinking sounds. Squires stopped playing and ran off to her. It wasn’t the first time when Knight brought them fizzy drinks, so they knew what was inside the bag.

“Here. Remember to brush your teeth after drinking,” she reminded.

“Yes, ma’am,” Squires said in unison after Knight had shared drinks.

“Now, go play with your toys,” Andrea said, and children run off.

“You know, you will be in trouble if someone hears about this,” Fox stated beside her.

Andrea glanced at him and smirked. “Then why are you helping me?”

“Do you think you’re the only troublemaker here? What can others expect from wastelanders? Come on, there is something that I want to give you, mom,” Knight stressed the word mom and gestured her to follow him.

That’s how Scribes called Andrea after she had taken Squires under her wings. Some people didn’t like it, but Andrea didn’t care. Those children deserve to be children even once for a while.

“If our previous Elder know that you were breaking the rules of the Brotherhood, he’d be turning over in his grave,” Andrea said as she followed a man through the catwalks.

“Lyons? Nah. He knew I was a troublemaker since the day he found me sneaking in the Citadel. That’s why I’m under the good care of the Prince family.”

“Ah, only Star Paladin Prince can keep you under control?”

“In addition to Elder and Lancer Captain, yes.”

“But isn’t Elder younger than you?”

“Eight years.”

Great, a teenager led the whole army. Unbelievable.

Then Fox continued, “But don’t let his age fool you. He killed raider alone at the age of twelve and Deathclaw with a knife while protecting his escorts. A story which I don’t buy. And he led a platoon of Brotherhood soldiers into a fight against super mutants, thus gaining the rank of Elder at the age of sixteen.”
Andrea frowned. “At the age of sixteen? He was, or is still, a kid.”

“Of course, he’s last Maxson. Brotherhood is sort of family business,” Fow answered.

This time, Andrea felt sympathy for the young leader. After all, they were both raised and trained to become soldiers and leaders, just because of their family name.

Fox hummed and asked, “Why you’re so interested in him, hm? Isn’t he too young for you? Maybe Paladin Danse would be better?”

“I don’t date with my superiors,” Andrea stated firmly but grinned mentally. Lies.

“Don’t mess with him. Maxson isn’t the most powerful man in the East Coast only because of his title and army. He is strong. Now that I think about it, it would be interesting to see who would win; you or him?” Fox pondered while poking her arm.

“I would,” the woman answered.

If I can take down four CIA operatives, how hard it would be to take down one twenty years old beefcake, she thought.

Fox smirked again and continued his way.

“In my opinion, the only person who could take him down would be B.J,” he said.

“Ortiz? Well, he is tall, like high-rise, even without power armour. He could just ram over Elder,” Andrea said and chuckled at the mental image.

Fox took something from his footlocker after they entered into sleeping quarters and offered her a thick and old book. It smelled sweet and musky. It reminded Andrea of Roger’s workroom or old library of Pentagon.

“What’s this?” she asked.

“It’s an old copy of the Codex. Elder, who liked wastelanders, gave it to me before he died. It isn’t up-to-date but should give you little information about our history, constitutions and law,” Fox answered.

“Is there anything else I should know? Instead of this book?”

“Hmm. Did Paladin Danse mention anything about Oath of Fraternity?”

“I think he did. I find it somewhat odd. He took me in, and Elder pressed me into service before taking the Oath.”

Fox hummed as he sat down on his bed. “We have done it since the Brotherhood-Enclave War. Brotherhood needs soldiers. That’s why we two are here now— what?”

Andrea took a deep breath and gritted her teeth together. Then she said, “Enclave. It just, uh, it rings a bell.”

“Hm? I thought you were from the Vault?”

“I’m. I’ve heard about them before the Great War,” Andrea replied quietly while looking fragile book on her hands. “What happened to them?”
“All I know is; someone destroyed The Poseidon Oil Rig back in 2242, and they were forced to leave the West after the might of NCR and West Coast Chapter of the Brotherhood drove them away. Last survivors came to the East and joined together with members of Enclave who had occupied Raven Rock and Adams Air Force Base...”

Andrea raised her gaze back to man, feeling how her heart rate increased a little bit as she heard the name of her family.

“...and about ten years ago, the Brotherhood won the war against them. What happened to the remnants of the Enclave members, we don’t know. Some say they died, infiltrated into our or NCR’s ranks. Or they continue their experiments somewhere.”

“What kind of experiments?” Andrea asked immediately, maybe too quickly.

“Forced Evolutionary Virus mostly. They found samples of it from the Mariposa after the Great War. Enclave altered it somehow and tried to kill only ‘unpure’ population of Wasteland, which meant everyone else except vault dwellers and members of Enclave. They attempted to intoxicates Wasteland’s water with it but Liam—”

Feel of anger turned into a slight panic when Andrea heard the name of Mariposa.

“What? Mariposa?” Her voice trembled a little bit, and a man noticed it.

“A top-secret military facility built to house Forced Evolutionary Virus research. Our Founder found out what happened there, and that’s why they formed the Brotherhood of Steel. Or that’s what I heard—”

I’ve heard there is some kind military at the Capital Wasteland. Your surname just reminded me of them.

Military. Bunch of idiots collecting technology and messing with people lives. You share a surname with that fu— freaking idiot who runs the whole circus. You’re not his family member?

He’s not him. He’s dead, Andrea. He has been dead for almost two centuries. Pull yourself together. Now. This guy has icy blue eyes too. There’s nothing special about them.

Of course, he’s last Maxson. Brotherhood is sort of family business.

“... most of us don’t know what happened there, but since I’m a master of stealth, I might give a little visit to— Andrea?”

It all made sense now. Andrea stood up slowly and twiddled book on her hand.

“I, uh, I have to go. Thanks for the history lesson and this,” she said and raised hand which held a copy of the Codex. She gave Fox forced, a weak smile before leaving from the Quarters.

On her way outside, she resisted the urge to cry. No, not yet. She was still inside the airship, which was full of soldiers who could see crying as a sign of weakness. Andrea stumbled onto patrolling soldier and apologised, trying to collect herself.

Fuck, she swore mentally when she noticed Danse, Paladin-Commander and Elder at the Command Deck.

The only thing what she heard was Paladin-Commander saying they should be cautious with this wastelander and Danse mentioning Fort Strong. Then they noticed her coming down the stairs.
“Oh, Adams, good morning,” Danse but frowned when he saw her. “Are you all right?”

“I, uh, I don’t feel well. I was about to—” Andrea glanced Elder and tightened her grip of the old book. Then she looked at Danse. “I don’t feel very well... I was just about to go outside to breathe of fresh air. Permission to leave, sir?”

“Granted,” Paladin said, sounding a little perplexed.

Andrea nodded politely, avoiding eye-contact with him and turned on her heels. She possibly raised the attention of men and guards as she wrenched open the door and power-walked into the storage room at the end of the Flight Deck.

If Fox’s old copy of the Codex hadn’t been so fragile, Andrea would have thrown it down to the floor. Instead, she put it aside gently before falling to the floor and burst into tears.

Roger survived. The Great War and everything that happened after it; they didn’t kill him.

However, the thought that he lived without her, and vice-versa; it made her miserable. It reminded her once again of what lied between her and a man that she still loved — two centuries and three thousand miles.

“I should have been there with you when… I should have been with you...”

Andrea ended up crying more while thinking about what Roger had to go through after the world ended. Alone without his wife by his side. She blamed herself for not going to California when she had a chance.

Whatever happened at the Mariposa, she should have been there with him.

“I should have...”

She let everything out, trying not to cry out loud as there were soldiers in the Flight Deck.

Moments passed, and her blubbing turned into quiet sobs. Andrea tried to calm herself by taking deep breaths and ran her hand through her hair. She closed her eyes and leaned her head against the wooden box.

For a few seconds, silence fell, and she forgot everything around her.

“he is a tough son of a bitch.”

She opened her eyes.

Once again, dead spoke to her behind their graves.

Andrea turned her head and gazed Prydwen through storage room’s window. As she stared and studied the steelish beast carefully, her thoughts cleared little by little.

Roger had continued his life after her ‘death’ and founded this. Not even nuclear war or their separation didn’t slow him down.

“And after that beyond, I want you to go on. Keep on living. No matter what happens to me.”

He held his promise, and she was the one who almost broke it — almost killed herself.

Andrea dried a tear from her cheek. Then out of nowhere, a smile appeared on her face when a
thought occurred her.

Roger got what he wanted. A family. Children. Something that she could never have given him.

Somehow a thought of him sharing his life with someone else didn’t bother her. Andrea was ready to give up her happiness and well-being for someone else’s own.

Especially for his.

Smoking. It was something that Andrea had learned *again* after living in the Goodneighbor.

She took a puff on her cigarette and stared Boston’s downtown. She thought about Duncan and MacCready and pondered how she could return to them after all this.

Maybe Shaun and Duncan would get along. If Shaun were anything that his parents had been, extrovert and positive, it wouldn’t be a problem.

“This isn’t what I expected when you talked about breathing fresh air, soldier.” a voice said.

Andrea turned to look over her shoulder and met Danse’s eyes. He started firmly as usual but gave her a worried look after he presumably noticed her red eyes. Instead of asking what was wrong, he grabbed her scarred chin gently between his thumb and forefinger.

“Did something happen?” he asked.

“No. It… It was nothing.”

“Did someone say something bad to you? Adams, if—”

“No. I felt homesickness,” Andrea stated confidently before throwing leftovers over the railing.

“Do you think I care if people call me wastelander? I’ve heard worse. If you can’t stand a talk like that, the military isn’t the right place for you.”

Danse continued staring her piercingly.

“I’m fine, Paladin,” she added.

“Very well. However, if someone disrespects you, you’ll tell me immediately. Understood?”

Andrea nodded, and he continued.

“Good. If you’re ready, Elder Maxson has a mission for us.”

“It has something to do with that Behemoth and the Fort Strong?” Andrea asked and looked at the old fort on the ground. “I heard you mention it.”

“Yes, it does. We’re allowed to use vertibird to reach the Fort Strong and take care of Behemoth.”

Andrea glanced monster on the ground and smiled. “Fair enough. *Mors Ab Alto.*”

“Are you sure you don’t want to join our Air Force instead of Ground Forces?” Danse asked, smiling.

Andrea tilted her head and said, “I should keep that on the mind. You should too in case if you get tired of me.”
For some reason, she could show her weaknesses to Paladin. He didn’t give her criticising look when he saw her, unlike some soldiers did like Paladin-Commander, for example. However, Andrea didn’t blame them. They just tried to protect their home and family.

“What do you know about Fort Strong, Knight?” Elder asked Andrea after she and Danse had returned inside.

He just kept staring at her with a piercing gaze, and she took a deep breath, trying to compose herself. Now it was time to be a soldier, not an insecure woman.

“It was used as a top-secret weapons research facility since the 2050s. U.S. Military started to develop and test the Fat Man launcher’s and T-51 power armours there at 2075, under General Brock’s supervision,” Andrea answered. “In June 2076, they shipped the first batch of T-51B suits to the front in China. However, I don’t recall did they send warheads to supply line or are they still down there.”

“According to Proctor Quinlan, there is a sizable stockpile of Fat Man shells still inside Fort Strong. East Coast’s Super Mutants are smart enough to utilise the weapons and Prydwen is well within Fat Man launcher’s range, thus making this mission our top priority. I want you two to head over there with Paladin-Commander and Knight Ortiz tomorrow, wipe out everything that moves, and secure military base and shells. Understood?”

“Consider it done, sir,” Andrea affirmed and noticed how he studied her face again. Not sternly like he usually did, but observing.

Either he could read her like an open book, or she still had signs of crying on her face.

Maybe he just pondered was she suitable for this mission.

“...last survivors came to the East and joined together with members of Enclave who had occupied Raven Rock and Adams Air Force Base...”

Adams Air Force Base. Why I’m not surprised, Andrea thought.

She had hoped that every member of Enclave would have died during the war or after two centuries — but if one of Roger’s descendant was still alive, anything could be possible.

Andrea sat on her bed and stared the Codex on her lap. She touched its engraved cover and smiled. She loved the smell of it; the book reminded her of Roger.

Then she thought, Should I tell about Roger to someone or keep it as a secret?

Maybe she should stay quiet about it and her family. Even if she hadn’t been part of the Enclave herself and she hated them, Brotherhood could still keep her as one of them.

Andrea smiled little as she heard ballyhoo behind her, and she felt how someone jumped onto her bed.

“What are you reading?” Stefanie asked.

“The Codex.”

“Oh, the mighty and omniscient Codex. Except that is lacking information, it’s as old as my dad’s
Gatling laser,” the girl pondered, glancing the book. “If you want to learn more about Elder—”

Andrea grunted quietly and closed her eyes. “What did Fox tell you?”

“He didn’t tell me anything. I see certain things,” the girl stated and giggled. “I’ve seen how you stare at him. Don’t you think he’s too young for you? Even though he could learn a thing or two from you. I think he’s inexperienced with women.”

“Tiene que estar bromeando,” Andrea murmured as she got up. Teenagers.

“W-What?”

“Nothing. I’m going to see B.J. if he has modified my twins. I might need them tomorrow.”

“Don’t go to the Command Deck. Someone might see you,” Stefanie whispered and stared Andrea through her bangs.

“You know, if it were up to me, I would stay as far as I could from him. I—” Andrea stopped and bit her lip. “See you later.”

However, it was hard to avoid someone who was inside the same airship — someone who was a superior officer.

After smoking her last cigarette, Andrea returned inside the ship and wrinkled her nose. She still disliked the smell that filled her nostrils every time she stepped inside.

Then she saw Elder on the Command Deck and sauntered towards him. He was focused on browsing reports and didn’t notice her.

Andrea saw how dead tired and worn, he looked. He had dark circles under his eyes and wrinkles on his corner of eyes. This man wasn’t more than twenty years old, but he still looked like a man in his late 30’s. Burden and responsibility had left marks on him.

Andrea could still remember how her biggest problem at the age of sixteen had been ‘how to join into army’. But what about him? They put him in charge of the whole army. It would have been the same situation if the Pentagon had given a rank of General to sixteen years old Andrea.

The woman put her hands into her coat’s pockets and squeezed empty cigarette pack inside it, thinking what to say to him. Andrea wanted to encourage this young man or do something for him. Because she knew what he went through. She wanted to tell him how she understood. She opened her mouth to speak, but all of a sudden, a flashback from the past crossed her mind.

If you ever slander against me or disobey my order, Captain, I’ll...

“Knight?”

Andrea woke up from her thoughts and looked up to Elder. She resisted the urge to say ‘kick me out’. However, Shaun was still out there, and she was his only hope.

“Actually… It’s nothing,” Andrea faltered. For a moment their eyes locked together and her heart skipped a beat. “I’m, uh, looking forward to tomorrow’s mission, sir. Um, permission to leave the Command Deck?”

Elder nodded as he gave her permission and wished her goodnight. Andrea nodded back and turned around.
After you have completed your task, leave this place, Andrea. He might live longer without you. Roger did.

The best way to keep him alive was to stay away from him.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading!

And c'mon Andrea, go hug him. He needs one. Don't be such an overprotective soldier.
After a rather unprofitable but still successful mission, Recon Squad Gladius had made contact with Citadel after several months of travel. Everyone, like in case of the previous squad, had expected them being dead. Except for Arthur himself.

According to Paladin Danse report, they had detected odd energy readings coming from Institute itself. Since increasing synths attack at the Capital Wasteland, the Brotherhood of Steel had taken the responsibility of destroying Institute.

Prydwen’s arrival to the Commonwealth had been peaceful and undisturbed — until they arrived at the Boston Airport. Right after the troops had approached Airport from the ground, a massive herd of ferals ghouls had attacked them. Thankfully, Brotherhood’s casualties had remained small.

It had taken a lot of time to set up the defence and base, but it has been worthy of their time. They had a mission to accomplish, and they’re ready to do everything to fulfil that task.

Arthur began his address, talking about their purpose and mission in the Commonwealth. He praised the soldiers on Observation Deck and gazed them all, though briefly, one by one. They looked up to him with awe and with a small amount of fear — fear of respect.

He told them their mission and purpose in the Commonwealth was to destroy the Institute, who had created a weapon that transcends the destructive nature of the atom bomb.

The Institute called this weapon ‘synth’.

A robotic abomination of technology that has the capabilities to think and kill. More importantly, it was masqueraded as a human being. Brotherhood’s job was to stop the Institute and prevent the wrong usage of technology. That was their original mission, but like his mentor before him, Arthur tried his best to protect people of the Wasteland.

“Like the atom, if it isn’t harnessed properly, it has the potential of rendering us extinct as a species,” Arthur spoke and gazed his soldiers. Then he noticed an adult German Sheperd that ran into the room and sniffed soldiers one by one.

Where did that dog come from? Every dog of the Brotherhood was either at the field or kennel.

Then something blue appeared on Arthur’s field of vision, and he lifted his gaze to it.
There she was — the rescuer of the Recon Squad Gladius.

She wasn’t anything like Arthur had imagined. He had expected dirty, starved, and scrawny vault dweller who just wanted a roof above them and food to eat. He hadn’t expected a woman with a scowl, piercing stare and strong posture; chin up and shoulders back – a military posture.

And it was natural, not forced or contrived.

She was here for a reason.

“I’m not prepared to allow the Institute to continue this line of experimentation. Therefore, the Institute and their synths are considered enemies of the Brotherhood of Steel and should be dealt with swiftly and mercillessly. This campaign will be costly, and many lives will be lost. But in the end, we will be saving humankind from its worst enemy... itself. Ad victoriam,” he continued and saluted.

“Ad Victoriam!” soldiers shouted in unison.

A few seconds after they had finished their cry, a few of them chuckled as they saw a dog performing his salute.

Arthur frowned in confusion and looked at his owner. She was scratching the tip of her nose now.

“True dog of the Brotherhood, huh?” Knight Ortiz stated to Initiate as he gazed a dog.

Arthur frowned even more. Ortiz never began the small talk.

“I guess, sir,” the woman answered politely.

Arthur eyed both of them and then turned to Scribe. “Summon Squire Ortiz here immediately.”

“Yes, sir,” Scribe announced and left with others.

Arthur studied carefully this brand new Initiate, who in return, stared at him.

She looked familiar.

He almost forgot his surroundings and why she was there as he tried to figure her out.

Finally, the woman blinked her eyes and approached him. Right after she stepped out from the shadows, Arthur noticed her weary face, eye bags and wrinkles. This woman hadn’t slept properly for a long time.

“I’m Andrea Adams. Interesting speech, sir,” she said with her strong and clear voice.

Arthur kept his famous scowl, but the woman didn’t seem to care about it. For the first time, someone didn’t show signs of fear. It made him confused and nervous.

“I’m interested in one thing. Keeping Commonwealth and her people safe. That’s why we’re here. I care about them,” he said finally and relaxed.

He thought for a few seconds what his mentor had taught him. Lyons teachings separated Arthur from his predecessors.

“Last time someone said something similar, they ended up telling the soldiers to shoot people in case of a protest. What happened more than once when it came to food rations,” the woman stated
What was this sudden hostility? How did she dare to speak to him like that? And this woman had been part of the military?

Arthur was about to say a few selected words, but she talked before him.

“I apologise, sir.”

Fair enough.

“We’re not here to start a war with Commonwealth, soldier, but with the Institute. The Brotherhood is here to prevent that war by starting one of our own before Institute unleashes their plan. We’ll keep civilians out of it, Initiate. I won’t allow innocent people to die. The difference is that our war won’t reduce civilisation to ashes in two hours.”

“Prevent a war by starting another? Look, two centuries ago someone tried to end the war before it even started and it led us to—” Initiate halted mid-sentence but then continued, “I’m deeply sorry. I can still remember how nuclear mushroom covered our sky and the feel of betrayal when our government betrayed us. It’s not ancient history to me. It all happened a few weeks ago.”

For a brief moment, she looked down and then lifted her eyes to his.

“Please, don’t punish Paladin because of my behaviour, sir,” she said.

And now she thought about the reputation of someone else instead of her own?

“I won’t. I can understand how you feel. Even soldiers of U.S. Military suffered because of governments actions. I won’t let the same kind of actions happen in my chapter,” Arthur stated confidently, then he continued. “Paladin Danse concluded that you’d be an asset to us with your skills and knowledge. Seeing as he’s one of my most respected field officers, you couldn’t get a better recommendation. Therefore, from this moment forward, I’m granting you the rank of Knight and befitting your title, we’re— Knight, is everything okay?”

She looked suddenly pale and more tired than a moment ago.

“Yes,” she answered.

Arthur doubted that. He gazed a woman for a moment and then glanced Squire at the doorway.

“Squire Ortiz will show you Prydwen’s clinic and sleeping quarters. This is my first order to you, Knight. I recommend you go to meet our doctor and let him examine you. Understood?”

“Yes, sir,” she said and turned around. Then she froze in place and turned her head to look at him over her shoulder.

Arthur narrowed his eyes a little bit when he recognised her gaze this time — confused and criticising. Something that he hadn’t seen after Elder Council gave him the rank of the Elder. What the hell was wrong with her?

“In any event, welcome to the Prydwen. You’re dismissed, Knight.”

“Thank you, Elder,” the woman said and left. This woman was one of her kind.

But what mostly bothered Arthur was the fact she looked familiar, and he had no idea why.
Not long after their newest recruit’s arrival, Paladin Commander Jason Anderson returned to the Prydwen and told they had taken over the Cambridge. Raiders had retreated from the area, but they weren’t their real problem.

“No signs of the Institute. As if they would have disappeared into thin air. Even the amount of energy readings have decreased,” a man with salt and pepper hair reported. “However, we’ll continue our search, though this seems to be harder than we imagined.”

Arthur knew the Institute was hiding in the shadows, waiting for the right moment to strike.

“We’ll find them,” he said.

They had to. Otherwise, they would fail their mission, and failure was unacceptable. “I would like to speak to you, Commander.”

“Need my advice, sir?” Commander noted. “Let’s go for a walk, shall we?”

Everyone on the ship knew Arthur had a habit of walking around the Airship when he was bored or discussed with someone about essential things.

Even if Arthur himself was a skilled tactician, he appreciated other people advise. They had more experience than he did. Unlike Proctor Quinlan claimed, Arthur was simply a human being who learned every day something new.

Then soft chuckles and talking interrupted their conversation, and both men moved their attention down to the second floor.

They saw how every Squire of Brotherhood had gathered to the kennel and played now with German Shepherd.

“Hmm. I wonder who’s behind that,” Anderson pondered. “That dog reminds me of a wastelander whom I saw at the C.I.T. not a while ago.”

“Did they have black angled bob hair and heavily freckled face?”

“So it’s her. Elder, she was travelling with a mercenary of some kind. I don’t think I’ve to remind you about recruiting wastelanders into our ranks, but—”

“I trust Danse’s instincts, and he knows it. He wouldn’t have recruited her otherwise,” Arthur pointed out. Best lieutenant he has. “Let Squires play with the dog for a moment before sending them back to their posts. We’ll finish our conversation later. I need to speak to Knight.”

He stared the older man, who nodded and left. Then Arthur made his way towards the clinic and found a vault dweller talking with Paladin Danse and Knight Prince.

“Knight Adams.”

Paladin and Knight moved their attention to him while Prince just froze in place — as usual.

Arthur glanced brand new Knight firmly as he could, but she didn’t even flinch. This woman had muscles almost as much as Arthur himself had – or much as a woman could have.

For some reason, he swallowed and found his throat dry when he saw the woman without her wool coat.

“Yes, sir?” she asked.
Arthur took a deep breath before opening his mouth.

“If I do remember correctly, Knight, I ordered Squire Ortiz to escort you to the clinic and then show you quarters, didn’t I?”

“You did.”

“Then could you explain to me why Squire is at the kennel, brushing your dog, instead of being where I ordered him to be?” Arthur snarled.

“Instead of making him stand there,” she said and pointed the wall. “I thought it would be better for him to take care of Dogmeat and do something useful. I ordered him to return after he would be ready. Sir,” she continued, keeping her blank face and stiff posture.

Unbelievable.

“You thought?!”

The only one who startled his tone of voice was Prince. Arthur understood why Danse didn’t fear him, but this woman? Arthur raised his right hand, index finger extended.

“Listen to me, Knight, when I do give an order to someone, it will be followed to the letter… by Paladins, Knights and Squires. Did I make myself clear?”

The woman nodded to his statement. “Yes, sir.”

“Good,” Arthur said and turned his attention to Prince. “Knight Prince, return to your tasks.”

He nodded politely toward Danse as he bypassed him. Then mentally, he cursed every vault dweller.

When he couldn’t sleep, Arthur walked around the Airship. Alone. It calmed him, but secretly he wished that he could go outside and walk around the city. But he couldn’t even go to the battlefield with his soldiers. Others said it was too dangerous for him. West said it was too risky.

His eyes caught a group of soldiers sitting at the mess hall, playing card and drinking beer. Arthur wished he could make friends with other soldiers and spend time with them.

However, he was an Elder, and his duty was to be a role model and unshakable leader.

He was cursed with solitude and lonely, endless nights.

Arthur continued his way and arrived at the Power Armor Bay. There he noticed that Kari Ingram was still awake too.

“Ah, goddammit,” Proctor murmured.

Arthur sighed and asked, “What is wrong?”

“Nothing. Its just this power armour. Paladin Lynn needs it tomorrow,” Ingram said, sounding pissed and tired.

Arthur waved his hand once. “Go to sleep, Ingram.”

“But, sir...”
“It wasn’t a suggestion; it was an order. Try to sleep as much as you can. Paladin can fix her power armour herself; she’s capable of that.”

“Okay, fine. Sleeping could help you too, Elder. I know it’s not easy,” the redhead added and left the Power Armor Bay.

Arthur watched her, almost like making sure that she went to her quarters and returned to his room.

After undressing his heavily padded leather coat, that weighed as much as a burden on his shoulders, Arthur walked to bar cabinet. Another regular habit of his. He tried to forget all his problems, his loneliness, in alcohol.

However, he was interrupted by the sound of the terminal — a message, more precisely.

“According to Proctor Quinlan, we have a serious security threat on our hands. There’s a sizable stockpile of Fat Man shells being kept nearby at the remnants of Fort Strong… currently held by Super Mutant contingent of unknown size… Prydwen is well within a Fat Man launchers range. I urge you to send someone down there…”

He brushed his forehead and took a bottle. Unbelievable.

*Who should I send there?* he thought and poured himself a portion of bourbon.

At first, he thought about Paladin-Commander Anderson and Knight Ortiz. Then he remembered Paladin Danse and his new protegee. Maybe this would be *her* time to show what she was truly capable of.

Arthur left the bourbon glass on the table and walked to the door. He ordered Initiate to summon Danse into his quarters. Knowing Paladin, he wasn’t sleeping either.

Danse appeared at his door within five minutes.

“What has happened, sir?” he asked after entering into his quarters.

“I received a message from Lancer Captain Kells a moment ago. There is an old military base close to the Airport, Fort Strong. However, you know this place already, Paladin,” Arthur started as he saw Danse’s expression. “According to Proctor Quinlan’s intel, the place is filled with Fat Man shells. I’m sure I don’t have to remind you about that East Coast’s Super Mutants are smart enough to utilise the Fat Man launcher.”

Danse sighed. “It was a miracle that they didn’t shoot us with Fat Man when we tried to approach Fort Strong.”

“Indeed. I’m thinking about sending you and Knight Adams there. Do you think your protegee can survive out there?”

“Believe me, Elder. She can handle herself. I wouldn’t vouch for her otherwise,” Danse acknowledged.

Handle herself?

The mission of securing the Fort Strong and Fat Man launcher’s shells had been successful, and according to Paladin Commander, they were now supervising the transfer of warheads to the Prydwen.
However, something unexpected had happened after their mission. Group of raiders had appeared into the area after a fight, and they had severely wounded Knight’s dog as she and Danse fought them off.

Knight had snapped right after it. Against Danse’s orders, she had pushed raider down to the ground and repeatedly stabbed defenceless raider. She had continued it until Danse stopped her.

Paladin described it as ‘an unexpected aggressive behaviour’ which had surprised him too. As if Knight Adams would have been someone else for a moment.

*And now you ordered Knight to give me a report without your presence, Danse?*

Not that Arthur feared a woman. He could take her down quickly, but if Danse trusted her, so did he. The woman didn’t seem to be aggressive towards her brothers and sisters, or civilians. She may be stubborn, but she was polite and respectful.

Nonetheless, Arthur decided to inform Cade about this.

But he hadn’t forgotten how Knight had lately acted around him. Her behaviour had changed — no signs of scowl or blank face, but signs of compassion.

She still spoiled Squires with her sweeties and toys, but also taught them basics of survival; how to navigate using stars, sun and other natural elements, how to make homemade shelters, weapons and *smoke grenades*.

After Arthur had cancelled missions of the Squires, Knight had kept them busy. It was one of the reasons why he let her do what she was doing.

Arthur’s thoughts were interrupted when he got a new message.

It was Knight-Captain Cade this time. He informed that Knight Harrison, a soldier who got attacked by unknown hostile during the mission, has died. They had no idea who was behind that attack because both witnesses, Harrison and Squire who had been with him, were now dead.

Then he heard knock on the door.

“Come on in,” he said and turned to look over his shoulder. Adams stepped inside after permission.

“Knight, close the door.”

“Sir, I have a report.” The woman looked him directly into his eyes as she gave him a short report about their mission. “—then Paladin Danse gave me one of his vertibird grenades. I assume he and Paladin Commander are overseeing the transfer of shells?”

“Yes, they are. I’ve ordered the detachment to occupy the location and take it under the Brotherhood’s control. It should provide us with a staging area to protect the eastern side of the Airport,” Arthur answered and gazed woman sternly. “Knight, I would like to know what happened with those raiders?”

A woman sighed. “I was protecting my friend, sir, and I don’t care what it takes to protect them.”

Something told Arthur that she wasn’t telling the whole truth, but he could understand her. He had stabbed a raider to death as he protected one of his escorts but not violently like she.

“I hope you do know what the punishment is if—”
“I won’t attack others if you mean that. No matter how rude they are, I would never attack a fellow soldier.”

Arthur didn’t like how she spoke over him but decided to let it go this time. Then he asked, “How’s your dog?”

“Alive. He’s German Shepherd; he’s not weak.”

“Good to hear. If you didn’t have anything else, Knight, you’re dismissed.”

Knight nodded but dropped her gaze to chessboard on his table and tilted her head.

“What is it?” Arthur asked from sheer interest as the woman raised her hand and moved finger above the chessboard.

“Whoever did play using white chess pieces, was about to win,” she said. “The white rooks were driving the black king to the edge of the board. The opposite player couldn’t have stayed on the sixth rank, because of the rooks. So the player’s only hope would have been to flee the king to the seventh rank. And then the eight rank after that. But as the white rooks would have still followed the king, they would have surrounded him. After that, it would have been checkmate,” she finished, smiling. “White pieces were yours, sir?”

Arthur was stunned. Not only because she smiled at him but that she knew what his intention had been in the game.

“Yes, they were,” Arthur said, then he got an idea. “You want to… take round, Adams?”

“As you wish, Elder,” she answered, taking her gloves off and Arthur gestured her to sit down.

They exchanged glances, and Arthur cleared his throat, reminding himself to keep his gaze on her eyes, not on her... chest.

“So, have you enjoyed your time in our organisation? If I remember correctly, you have been here for a week?” he asked.

“Yes, sir. Brotherhood is a little different than the U.S. Army, but better this than nothing, though. I don’t think I’d have survived without discipline and order.”

“It seems you have befriended with Knight Prince and Jenkins. As well as with some Squires,” Arthur began.

She sighed and held pawn on her hand for a moment before moving it on the board.

“I’m sorry about what has happened with Squires. I see myself in them,” she said, faltering a little bit. “But Jenkins told me that they aren’t allowed go to the field anymore. They’re here to perform errands and menial labour for the military, provided with training and education in return. I don’t like the fact that they’re here, but it isn’t my call.”

“No, it’s not,” Arthur stated firmly.

Knight exhaled and continued the game. Arthur could see how weary she was. According to her files, she was thirty-one years old, but war-weariness and sleepless nights had done their job. She looked ten years older than she was.

Then he added, “But I’m… little grateful what you do. Squires barely have time for animals and
playing. I do remember my own time as a Squire. I didn’t have a chance to be a normal child. I’m trying to give them the best childhood as possible. But I’ll train them at the same time. In this world, Knight, Wasteland kills you faster than you can think. Even children aren’t an exception.”

Adams stared him thoughtfully and nodded.

“Knight Ortiz wants his son to be Scribe one day. Like his mother had been,” she said and smirked. “Maybe I tried indirectly turn Squire into future Scribe Initiate? Maybe he’ll take care of kennel someday?”

If it were up to him, Arthur would give them all rank of Scribe. He cared about Squires, maybe more than others did.

“What did you mean by ‘I see myself in them’?” Arthur asked after a silence.

“I’m a military brat. The last ten generations of my family have been part of the military. One of my ancestors was a leader of the American Revolution. I was born and raised to become soldier,” Knight said and smiled a little. “So I know everything about discipline and order, sir.”

Then she asked, “So how about your family?”

“You haven’t read the Codex yet?” Arthur asked.

“It’s a big book. Tell me about your parents?”

Her gaze exuded interest, and her tone of voice was now friendly, instead of strong and firm. Maybe it was a reason why he decided to speak. Arthur didn’t usually get into conversations like this. He talked with his cat, but not with his soldiers.

“My father was a high ranking Paladin, and my mother was a Scribe. I don’t remember them very well. They were killed when I was four,” he answered her question.

Knight paled a little and scratched her freckled nose. “I’m sorry, sir.”

“You didn’t know. It’s okay.”

“I would have known if I had read Codex,” she said ashamed.

“I said it’s okay,” Arthur said.

The woman nodded, and Arthur stared Knight in front of him and then moved his gaze to the bar cabinet. “Would you like something to drink?”

“No, thank you. I’m going to feral hunting mission later today,” she answered.

“Knight, you don’t have to prove anything to us.”

“No, no, no it’s not that,” Knight said suddenly and waved her hands in the air.

Arthur noticed her wedding ring.

Then she continued, “I just… I want to go outside, learn more about my fellow soldiers and the Brotherhood’s ways and methods.”

“If you’re capable of continuing tasks without rest and you’re under supervision, then you’re free to go. However, I stress, if you get tired and you’ll put yourself and others into danger because of
that—"

After all, Arthur was worried about his subordinates. He has responsibility for the safety of his soldiers. If his subordinates were safe and sound, so was he.

“It won’t happen again, sir.”

“Good.”

They continued their game and conversation until Arthur gathered his courage to ask something from her.

“Where your husband was when the war started? He wasn’t in the vault with you.”

The question froze her, but she answered, “Three thousand miles away on a business trip.”

“Kids?”

Knight shook her head. Then she looked at him, revealing heavy-hearted expression.

He had reminded Knight about her marriage. Arthur was about to apologise, but the woman made her last turn before she stood up.

“I resign. I think others are waiting for me,” she said.

Arthur frowned, glaring the chessboard and he stood up as fast as he could. He closed the door before Knight could get it fully open and her eyes widened a little in surprise.

“I’m sorry. If I… I offended you with my question about your husband…” he faltered. He didn’t usually falter like this.

“I guess we’re even now, but I would like to go now,” Knight stated firmly, still holding her hand on the handle.

Her sudden change of mood and tone of voice made Arthur think what he did wrong, but he gave up and moved away from the door. The woman glanced him once before opening the door.

Arthur closed the door after her and glanced a chessboard.

*Few moves more, and her bishops and king would have surrounded mine. She resigned just before checkmate.*

It had been a long time since someone had bested him in the game of chess. Did she resign because of their subject or because it was considered as bad etiquette to continue playing when the opponent was in a hopeless position?

“I would like to go now.”

It was fear.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I know there is probably better-written Arthur's out there, but this is how I see
him! And this is my Arthur, and my story so...

Thank you for reading! Let me know what you thought!
Old Ironsides Part I

Chapter Summary

After their conversation, Paladin and Knight are sent to investigate the old ship of U.S. Navy, and Andrea's sixth sense saves her from the bullet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Clear!” Andrea informed others as she killed the last feral inside the corridor of Poseidon Reservoir.

“All right, soldiers. Wrap things up and search the area, collect every document and technology you find. If more ferals appear, kill them on sight,” Paladin Lynn ordered.

Andrea stared a green monster on the ground and thought who this poor bastard had been and what he or she had gone through when they turned into ferals. They were insane ghouls, brainless monsters without memories.

Though sometimes, they found relics like small objects from their bodies or belongings. The Brotherhood said those objects were there by accident and that ferals didn’t have memories about their previous life.

Andrea believed otherwise. It was childish, but—

She felt how someone touched her back and instinctively unholstered her an upgraded pistol.

“Fuck, Fox. Don’t do something like that,” she grunted as she recognised a man wearing a combat helmet.

The man lifted his hands as a sign of surrender.

“Sorry, mom. I didn’t mean to startle you. You shouldn’t stand around doing nothing when Pal—”

“Jenkins! Adams! What I said about two minutes ago?” Lynn yelled.

“Wrap things up and search the area, ma’am,” Fox answered as others stared duo.

“And what are you doing? Stop slacking around and get back to work!” the woman snarled.

“Yes, ma’am,” the duo said in unison.

While Paladin Lynn gave her report about their mission, Andrea thought about what she should do next. Leave or stay. If it weren’t for Shaun and Roger, Andrea would leave without hesitation. The Brotherhood was her only ticket to Shaun. But every time she saw him…

Elder caught her gaze and stared at her for a few seconds, but she dropped her gaze. She couldn’t look at him.
“Adams?” someone called her.

Andrea lifted her head and looked at the speaker. Danse.

“May I have a word with Knight Adams?” he asked Lynn.

A woman with buzzcut sighed and said, “Fine.”

“Thank you,” Danse thanked his colleague and gave a piercing look to his protegee. “Follow me.”

Andrea recognised that look and voice of tone but followed him to the Flight Deck.

When they reached one of the platform’s, Danse spoke, “According to reports I’ve heard, you’re repeatedly on the field without a rest, and while you’re idle, you spend your time in a gym. You barely sleep. I don’t have to be a doctor to see everything isn’t okay.”

His scowl didn’t change as he continued, “Do you remember what I told you about honesty and respect when you joined the Brotherhood Of Steel?”

“We’re an army, and we have dedicated our lives to uphold a strict code of ethics. You ask only two things from people under your command, honesty and respect.”

“And more importantly, I want those two things from you, Adams. You’re capable of showing respect but honesty, that’s one another mystery,” Paladin said. “And this time, I want an honest answer, Knight… Do you use drugs?”

Andrea furrowed her eyebrows. What?

“No... I don’t. You can ask it from Cade and please don’t give me that look, Danse. I wouldn’t lie to you.”

“Adams, I know you’ve connections with Goodneighbor...”

“And that doesn’t matter, Danse. I don’t use drugs. Not after—” she paused mid-sentence. “I used morphine and fentanyl a long time ago.”

“For what purpose?”

“I was sick. But... I haven’t used drugs ever since. I’m anti-drug person nowadays.”

“But you still hang out with people of Goodneighbor?” Danse asked suspiciously. “I’m not judging you because of your past, but I’m worried about your future, Adams.”

“If you’re talking about MacCready, he has more heart than you know. He is a good man,” Andrea said and looked up to him. “Do you remember when I told you that I don’t trust the military and its leaders? When you tried to recruit me? I lost my faith in the U.S. Military and their leaders. If you want my honest answer, Paladin, I don’t want to be in the military.”

Then she glanced Prydwen and whispered, “But I guess he knew that we—”

No, she couldn’t tell about him.

“We might be at war here, but we do care about civilians and our soldiers, unlike the Pentagon did,” Danse said. “Just... have faith in us.”

Andrea stared his light brown eyes for a moment and smiled faintly.
“I’m sorry what happened back at the Fort Strong. I can turn into a fierce and ruthless person in the blink of an eye when someone I care about is in danger.”

“That’s what worries me the most,” he said. “You take unnecessary risks when it comes to the safety of others.”

“Altruism, my greatest strength and weakness,” Andrea said. “I still remember how you saved me when that one Super Mutant tried to attack me.”

“I— I just… Never mind,” Danse faltered, his eyes sad and he broke their staring contest.

Something bothered him, but since Andrea valued her privacy, she didn’t ask.

Then Danse spoke again, “There’s another thing I need to talk to you about. Have you seen the old USS Constitution at the other side of the river? Elder thought we could go there tomorrow, check it out and report what we find.”

Andrea smiled. “If you want to take me with you, I’ll gladly come.”

“Good. However, take the rest of the day off. And please, don’t spend your day at the gym.”

“I won’t,” Andrea said and touched his arm for a moment. “Whenever you’re ready to talk about whatever is troubling your mind, Paladin, I’m here.”

This time Danse smiled little. “That was my line, but… thank you.”

A view minutes later, Andrea stood under the steady stream of the shower and let the hot radiation-free water ease some of her soreness.

She closed her eyes and tried not to think.

Then the shower died on its on, and she frowned.

“Someone turned off the water from the main valve,” someone told. “The radiation filter is broken.”

Andrea stared shower head and sighed. Welcome to wasteland, she thought.

At least all the sweat, blood and mud from her skin were gone, but the water didn’t wash away guiltiness. Every time she thought about Roger, she could see him, and then that another Maxson.

She shook her head as if trying to rid of the thought.

She wanted to start a new life. But how could she start a new life, when ghosts of past haunted her everyday? When dead spoke to her behind their graves?

Maybe if she told others about Roger, the guiltiness would go away.

If Andrea despised something, it was dishonesty.

But the only reason why she didn’t want to tell about Roger was the fear of special treatment.

Her family sent her to West Point, and she raised quickly through ranks, gaining the rank of Captain before the age of thirty because she was Adams. Other kids and soldiers had said she was favourite and badmouthed her.
And now, she was nobody.

She stepped out of the shower and dressed the flight suit.

“Hey, I heard you gave hell to those mutants with Anderson and others a few days ago,” someone said.

Andrea lifted her gaze to Knight Lee.

“I wouldn’t have probably survived there alone without others. Those mutants were angry,” Andrea said.

“Dismissive, huh? Well, Paladin-Commander talks highly about your performance. It’s ironic. He’s usually suspicious about wastelanders,” the girl stated but paled little. “Oh sorry, I didn’t...”

Andrea smiled little. “No, it’s okay. I’ve gotten used to it now.”

Then they saw someone coming into the room, banging the door wide open.

“And there she is,” a long-haired blonde said and looked Andrea with her almond-shaped eyes. “Our new shining knight.”

“I don’t know what are you talking about, DeShannon,” Andrea said blankly.

“And I don’t understand why we keep recruiting wastelanders. How a filthy wastelander like you gets a rank of Knight right after joining?” the younger woman asked, looking Andrea from head to toe.

“It wasn’t my call. Respect decisions of our superiors,” Andrea pointed out as she walked to the door.

“Our? Do you know what happened last time we trusted one of your kind? It got our Elder killed —”

“Enough,” Lee snarled. “You remember it’s forbidden to talk about that, don’t you? For your luck, there are currently no officers here; otherwise, they would have dragged you to Command Deck.”

DeShannon shut her mouth quickly. It wasn’t a good sign.

Andrea opened the door and left. Then she scolded herself for her ignorance and naivety.

It seems nothing hadn’t changed. The military still controlled people with fear.

_Goddamn it, sir! How long do we have to wait?!_

_Andrea, no!_

_Get up, corporal! It’s an order!_

Andrea snapped out of a dream and noticed that her sudden scream had woke up others. Stefanie called her by the name in wonderment as others looked her little displeased. After an apology, Andrea took her clothes and left.

Andrea dressed her grey wool coat and fumbled through pockets in search of a lighter.
Then she heard a quiet sobbing. Andrea’s maternal instincts took over as she realised it was one of the Squires, and she walked toward the noise.

But she halted and felt how her skipped a beat when she saw Elder with Squire Hales.

The latter one had crouched down in front of a girl, cleaning every speck of dirt from her skin.

Hales was the smallest and most timid of the children of Prydwen. She was a little clumsy too as she had a habit of stumbling onto her own feet.

‘I do remember my own time as a Squire. I didn’t have a chance to be a normal child. I’m trying to give them the best childhood as possible.’

This time, this feared leader, didn’t talk to the Squire like Elder should have.

He cheered her up, didn’t talk to the Squire like Elder should have.

He cheered her up and reminded her about something that they had discussed previously.

The girl nodded and dried her tears. Now she was more relaxed and self-assured.

Elder showed a new side of himself.

Watching Elder with Squire gave Andrea a warm feeling, and she sensed a strange feeling towards him.

Suddenly, Squire Hales moved her gaze to Andrea, and Elder followed the gesture.

Andrea froze utterly at first and backed away. After she reached the Flight Deck, she took the package of Gray Tortoise from her pocket and tried to lit up her cigarette with lighter.

It didn’t work.

Andrea grunted and swore as she walked to the end of the Flight Deck. She sat down on the top of the railing, facing Atlantic and took Codex from her armpit.

Information in this book was old, but it contained something that she was looking for. Andrea opened the book and flipped through the pages.

She smiled a few times as she recognised names on the book. Then she finally found his page.

Andrea gazed the pages and found what she wanted to know and didn’t want to know. Roger’s time of death. He died at the age of 54, twenty years after the Great War.

Andrea stared pages and then closed the book. That was it. He was gone. A tiny tear appeared at the corner of her eye, and she sighed.

Then she heard footsteps behind her and wiped a tear away with her sleeve.

Instead of turning her head to look who it was, she tried again to lit her cigarette. This time that damn thing worked.

“Should I be concerned about the fact you’re sitting on top of the railing, nothing between you and a deadly drop?”

“No, sir,” Andrea answered to Elder’s question. “Though sometimes I think about jumping down from here if I’m pissed off. What brings you here? Have I done something wrong?”
“No, you haven’t. Paladin asked if I could talk with you. The well-being of my soldiers is my responsibility, Knight,” Elder answered. “I suggest you talk Cade after every mission if this continues. Paladin is right. We’re going to lose you if you continue participating in missions with this rate.”

“You or Cade can’t do anything. When I’m down there, I don’t see flashbacks,” Andrea said. “It’s the only way to keep my mind busy. It’s the only way to keep me from thinking about what I’ve done or how I’ve failed.”

Andrea took a drag from the cigarette and blew the smoke out slowly, still keeping her gaze at the horizon.

“Do you know how it feels, Elder? Do you know how it feels to sleep on the ground if you can because of freezing wind? To wake up to the sound of sirens when enemies approach from the air and ground? To know that you and your brother-in-arms are the only barrier between enemies and civilians you swore to protect?”

“We’re the only organisation who stands between Institute and civilians,” Elder reassured, and Andrea gave him a tired, but warm smile.

“I know. But you’ll never know that feeling when you return home from the war. Back to peace and normal life. It was hard to care about normal things. They were so silly and pointless. Life after the war was like a grey rerun that gave you only a hollow feeling. I never understood what my husband went through—” she misspoke and threw the cigarette down. “...before I experienced it myself. I never returned to the heights and the depths of what I felt at the battlefield when I was at home. It was the feeling which we most missed. Only on the battlefield, we’re alive.”

“It’s the reason why you’re eager to go there, isn’t it?”

“No, sir. It’s more like… I want to keep others alive,” she answered, and her gaze dropped back down to the ground.

From the corner of her eye, she saw how the man walked closer to her.

“Because I’m tired of hearing the dead speaking to me through my conscience. The only way to keep them quiet is to be there where I can be closer to them,” she whispered, and she let the invisible wind to play with her hair. “Sometimes I think they call me...”

Then Elder touched her arm as if he had stopped her from doing something irreversible.

Andrea moved her gaze at her commanding officer and this time; she didn’t drop her gaze. He wasn’t frowning anymore. He looked calm, maybe a little sad. Something that she hadn’t seen before.

He lifted his hand to her face, his fingers almost touching her skin.

_Last time we trusted one of your kind, it got our Elder killed._

Before his fingers touched her cheek, Andrea flinched and slapped his hand.

The concern on his face changed into confusion and scowl. Knowing his reputation, no one wouldn’t dare to _slap_ him.

“I’m sorry, sir… I’ve to go… Thanks for listening,” she faltered.
It was all she could say and then she power-walked away from the scene.

“There she is,” Paladin stated as they reached USS Constitution.

Andrea narrowed her eyes as she tried to see who had occupied this ship. The only thing what she saw was numerous Mr Handies hoovering around.

“She was once called Old Ironsides,” she said. “Haylen wanted to investigate the USS Constitution herself?”

“Yes, but since we don’t know who has truly occupied it, we were sent to check it out. It might contain important pre-war technology or documents that Brotherhood could use,” Danse explained and Andrea opened straps of her holsters. “Adams, you should have borrowed someone else’s T-60. You’re vulnerable without it.”

“I’m better without it,” Andrea stated. “It just slows me down. Don’t worry.”

She let out an inaudible sigh as she noticed his puppy eyes. “Next time, Paladin.”

“Stay behind me,” he said.

As the duo approached the ship, Andrea remembered why it was so impressive. It was the most significant, most beautiful and oldest ship in U.S. Navy history — five hundred years old, more precisely.

Mr Handy approached them and stopped in front of Andrea.

“Scanning. Scanning. Accessing pre-war records. Record found. The U.S. Army, 5th Special Forces Group. Ahoy there, soldier. ‘Tis Providence, a member of the Congressional Army, is delivered to us in our honour of need.”

“What’s going on here?” she asked.

“Standing orders, ma’am. Proclamation 3: All members of the U.S. Army are hereby members of the Congressional Army. The Captain requests your presence on the bridge. At the double-quick, Captain,” Mister Handy finished its sentence and left.

“You never told you were a Green Beret?” Danse asked, looking surprised.

“You never asked, Paladin. Let’s go. The Captain is waiting for us.”

Mister Handies and Protectors had occupied the ship, and Danse found absurd. There was no single human on the ship. After they reached a bridge of the ship, Andrea’s eyes widened a little as she saw huge Sentrybot standing on the deck.

“You... You’re the Captain of this vessel?” Andrea asked.

“Yes, I am Ironsides, Captain of this fine vessel. I trust the First Mate didn’t give you a too hard time? Been too long since we’ve seen the Congressional Army. This is the pride of our navy. The USS Constitution. As her commander, it is my privilege to enforce a certain measure of decorum amongst my crew.”

“Your lookout told me to come up here. Why?”

“I confess, we need your assistance. You visit this fine vessel in trying times. Becalmed these long
years on her airy perch. Damn you Weatherby Savings and Loan! I spit at you!” The sentrybot said, and Andrea chuckled a little bit. Danse only raised his eyebrow. “What vexes me most is my inability to assist in the war effort. My gun decks have nought but mole rats and never-do-wells as targets. Enough pleasantries. The Constitution has systems that need repairs to carry out its mission.”

“As long as there won’t be terminals, I’ll help.”

“Good. Consult with the Bosun and Mr Navigator. They will realy your instructions. Dismissed,” the sentrybot said.

“Aye, Captain,” Andrea stated, and almost performed a salute of the Brotherhood. Then she looked up to smiling Danse. “Very funny, Paladin. I’m already confused which salute I’m supposed to use.”

“That was as a good sign. You used our salute first,” Danse said.

After fixing three power cables and power relay coil, thanks to Danse’s repairing skills, they were sent to get back stolen Guidance Ship from the scavengers. Andrea glanced building next to ship and put her hands on her hips.

“What are you thinking?” Danse asked her.

“Scavengers are civilians. I’m thinking about how we should approach them. They will attack us if we get too close, and I don’t want to kill scavs. I could sneak there, but we don’t know where the chip is,” Andrea answered and hummed. “I have an idea, but I have to go there alone.”

“Absolutely not.”

“Danse… Scavengers are scared, and it won’t help me if I go there with someone who has Brotherhood’s T-60..”

“No. I’m going with you. No objection, soldier,” Danse said sternly.

“Right. Could you at least stay a little further, please? I don’t want to scare them.”

After getting the chip back, Danse installed it into the machine, and they talked once again to Mr Navigator who approved their success. They got it back without killing anyone.

Then it asked them to repair or retrieve the Poseidon radar transmitter.

Andrea looked at Danse who glared transmitter.

“This is beyond my skills and knowledge,” he said.

“I don’t recall that we found a transmitter from Poseidon Reservoir yesterday,” Andrea stated and covered her eyes from the sun as she gazed Poseidon Energy Turbine. “Turbine isn’t far away.”

“Let’s go before night falls,” Danse pointed out.

The Poseidon Energy Turbine was an open building with catwalks to access the roofs and lower areas. Danse and Andrea double-checked area, finding only radroaches and bloatflies. Not a big deal.

Paladin sighed as he realised that catwalk inside the building was broken and said, “One of us must
jump there.”

“I can do that,” Andrea stated and holstered her pistol after making sure there weren’t hostiles around.

“Adams… That water is radioactive. It would be best if you took a pill of Rad-X.”

Andrea nodded and dug out a pill bottle from her backpack before the jump. She reached another side quickly and walked into the room at the end of the catwalk, finding what they were looking for.

“Found it!” she informed Danse.

“Good work, soldier. Now, can you jump back?”

“We will see that,” she said and threw radar transmitter to Danse.

“Adams,” a man said, scowling.

She jumped over the water effortlessly, and even though she didn’t even falter when she landed to the catwalk, Paladin grabbed her arm.

“See, nothing to worry about,” Andrea said, but Danse stared daggers at her before returning outside.

Rolling her eyes, Andrea followed him out but stopped walking as she reached the yard.

Something made her halt. Unexpected and distressing feeling overwhelmed her again, and she looked around. As if someone would have watched them.

“What it is?” Danse asked.

“I have a strong feeling that someone is watching us,” Andrea answered.

Her eyes locked onto Tucker Memorial Bridge. She narrowed her eyes to get a better look.

Suddenly, she saw a blink of flash from the north side of the bridge — a flash from the scope.

Andrea dodged gunfire before she could even hear it, foreshadowing sniper’s intentions. Bullet hit the old truck behind her, and she felt how Danse pulled her to behind cover.

“Where it did came from?” he asked.

“From the Memorial Bridge. I saw a flash of scope before shot.”

Danse suggested that they should quickly return to the USS Constitution and Police Station before someone would try to reshoot them.

“You two have been of service to our noble vessel. You have done your duty, and done it well. However, the Constitution requires Turbopump Bearings from nearby factories. It will undoubtedly be a dangerous mission. But I have faith that you will succeed. Known locations of this turbopumps are the Corvega assembly plan; the Fort Hagen and the General Atomics factory,” Ironsides said as Bosun gave Andrea a picture of the tech.

“The Corvega is full of raiders; I don’t know about the General Atomics factory,” Andrea said.
“However, the Fort Hagen is cleared.”

Andrea opened her Pip-Boy and showed Paladin its location.

“Still, it’s pretty far,” Danse pointed out.

“It’s the only one which is empty, sir. Except if the Institute occupied it again,” Andrea pondered as Paladin sighed and rubbed his head.

“We’ll spend the night at the Cambridge Police Station, and we’ll continue our way to the Fort Hagen tomorrow,” he said and looked at her. “Adams. Good work with the scavengers. Instead of kicking their asses, you showed a new side of yourself. I’m proud of you. Though you’re now a thousand caps poorer.”

Andrea hit friendly his exoskeleton arm. “Learning from the best, remember.”

On their way to Cambridge, Andrea thought about who that sniper could have been?

Kellogg was dead, and R.J. wouldn’t hurt her after what she did for him. Maybe it was just one of those other mercenaries that MacCready had mentioned. She had a bounty on her head, after killing Gunners and Triggermen.

However, it did not explain that ominous feeling which she felt before the shot. Someone was watching her, and she disliked it.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: About this chapter and why this mission is there; it was a perfect way to bring Andrea and Danse closer to each other, and the Last Voyage of the U.S.S. Constitution is one of my favourites, so I had to add it to my fanfic, and it's loosely connected to Fort Hagen.

Thanks for the reading!
Danse and Andrea had been on the road for almost four hours when they heard the sound of thunder. Andrea grunted as she saw radstorm approaching. Those storms just appeared out of nowhere, in the middle of a sunny, beautiful day.

“Let’s head inside and wait for the storm to pass,” Paladin suggested, and they decided to wait for the storm to pass at the old trailer estate. Danse looked trailers and asked, “People lived like this? In trailers?”

“Unlike some people think, the pre-war world wasn’t the most glamorous and optimal place to live and raise children. The world was too overpopulated. We didn’t have enough food, jobs or homes,” Andrea said, gazing rusty trailers. “Rich got richer; the poor become poorer. The military was the only way to get money for your family. However, sometimes it wasn’t enough. We weren’t so different from the people of the Wasteland.”

“Somehow I’m not surprised,” Danse commented on her story and unholstered his laser rifle.

The first feral heard them, and he shot it.

“Let’s kill these abominations before the storm reaches us. You don’t have your power armour, Adams.”

After taking care of ferals, the duo retreated to the main building of the estate just before the storm filled the skies. Andrea sat down on the old couch and drew her pistol from the holster.

Danse gazed her as she dismantled it and started to clean it with a ramrod. After a silence, he spoke, “Adams, about our conversation at the Prydwen. I just wanted to know that you’re okay. You’re under my supervision and sponsorship. If something happens to you—”

“Paladin, I know. That’s why I did talk with Cade. Because I don’t want to let you down, and I know what it is like to be a superior officer,” Andrea answered and looked up to him. “I’ve had this same conversation with my superiors before. I’ve reason to live, Danse. I don’t want to die.”

“Very well,” Paladin stated and finally sat down next to her. His suit’s and hers Pip-Boy’s Geiger counter still clicked as the storm raged outside.

“What is it like there? At the Capital Wasteland?” Andrea asked as she peeped inside the pistol.

“It’s mostly rubble and ruins. It’s home of inbred cannibals, super mutants, Chinese remnants, humans, raiders, wastelanders, hunters, merchants and scavengers. It’s home of East Coast Brotherhood of Steel,” Danse answered. “It was your hometown?”
“Yes. I moved to Washington at the age of twenty-two. White House?”
“A big radioactive crater,” Danse said and gave a woman a confused look when she snickered.
“Serves them right. Though staff probably fled to the safety of...” Andrea misspoke again.
“Arlington?”
“Cemetery survived. Chinese remnants live there.”
“Well, that’s… ironic. I mean, I’m genuinely relieved that Arlington survived, but that the Chinese live there? The Pentagon?”
“It’s a Citadel. Our headquarters,” Danse said, and Andrea’s eyes widened a little.
“You guys live in the Pentagon!” Andrea asked, her voice echoing inside the old building. “It survived a bombing?”
“Barely. However, it’s sub-levels remained intact and contained enough Pre-War technology and weaponry to keep our forces going indefinitely. Elder Lyons founded and built the Citadel. At this moment, it’s under Star Paladin Prince’s command as we are here.”
“It looks like the military has finally gained the upper hand,” she said.
It was good news though she didn’t approve everything that Brotherhood did.
“How did you end up there? To Brotherhood?” she asked Danse.
“My parents died when I was eight, and I ended up scavenging the ruins of DC alone, so I know a lot about that area. When I was old enough, I did open my junk stand in Rivet City. I met my friend, Cutler, during my trader career there and befriended with him. We joined together to Brotherhood of Steel.”
“Rivet City?” Andrea asked.
“It was a town located inside an old pre-war beached aircraft carrier.”
Andrea tilted her head a little bit. “Was?”
“It’s abandoned nowadays. Still located in the US Naval Yard.”
_Abandoned, huh? Who should we blame about it?_ Andrea thought as she assembled guns parts.
“The USS Enterprise,” she said. “I recall it was docked into Naval Yard for repair and amendment. It was also the most significant aircraft carrier in the Navy’s history in addition to the USS Constitution.”
“It could be it. I have _read_ about it,” Danse said, emphasising the word ‘read’ and smiled.
Andrea snorted as it had become kind of an inside joke between them. She twiddled 10mm pistol in her hand, checking every inch of it and gathered her courage to ask something from Danse.
“What happened to Cutler, Danse?”
Paladin gave her a gloomy scowl after the question, and Andrea scolded herself. She shouldn’t have asked it.
“I’m sorry, Da—” she said.

“Let’s continue our mission,” Danse announced as he stood up. He dressed his helmet and left.

*Well done, Andrea, well done,* Andrea thought.

“So you have been here before?” Danse asked as he gazed smashed turrets on the Fort Hagen’s roof.

“We tracked a killer of Nate here with my friend and Dogmeat. We faced turrets, Institute synths and their mercenary,” Andrea said as they climbed to the roof and gestured Paladin to follow her.

She opened a hatch on the roof and dropped down. After landing, she unholstered her pistol and checked their surroundings. Still no sounds or movement. She avoided Paladin as he fell with a loud thump.

“So, where this turbopump bearing could be?” she asked him.

“Inside machine or stock room,” Paladin pondered.

The first floor was utterly empty of turbopump bearings. They found only destroyed synths and turrets.

“Did you got him?”

“We did,” she answered shortly and stepped into the elevator.

Danse picked up fusion cells from the ground as they went deeper into the building. Then he took a few technical documents from shelves and said, “Look at this. Scribes would love to explore this building someday. It’s full of documents, blueprints and technology. This place has endured the war and two centuries pretty well.”

But Andrea barely heard him as she felt a little amount of anxiety as she walked there. She had been so furious about Kellogg’s presence when she last time was there, that she barely remembered anything about it.

Then Danse called Andrea by name and threw a stimpak to her. “Here. You may need this.”

Smiling, Andrea stared pre-filled syringe for a moment and put it to her backpack.

As they reached the command centre of the Fort Hagen, Andrea could smell the scent of the decomposed body. Kellogg’s body.

Danse smelled it too and stopped walking. “What smells so horrible? A body?”

Andrea tried to ignore the scent and rotten body or mutated mouses that ran around his swollen corpse. She went to search bearings and whistled as she found it from trunks.

She began, “Danse, I found—”

“Was Kellogg the one who killed your friend and kidnapped your godson?” Danse asked.

Andrea put bearings into her backpack and returned to him. She gazed mercenary’s blistered and eaten body. It was hard to recognise him anymore because of putrefaction.
“Yes, he was,” she answered.

“I heard stories about him. He had travelled from West Coast to here, and he had a reputation as a deadly mercenary. He wasn’t a threat to Brotherhood as we moved in groups. But if any of us would have been alone, it would have been a different story,” Danse said. “I’m just surprised that you managed to kill him. He was pretty strong and skilled in combat.”

“As one of Baldwin’s quotes says the most dangerous creation of any society is the man who has nothing to lose,” Andrea said as she watched Kellogg’s body. It did fit him. “However, I think the most dangerous person is someone who has something to lose. A will to protect something is one of the reasons why I fought the war. It’s a reason why we are here now.”

She glanced up to find a pair of light brown eyes staring back at her. Danse smiled and put his exoskeleton hand on her shoulder.

“I have to admit it; I’m very impressed. You surprised me again,” he started. “Now let’s get the hell out of here. Ironsides won’t wait for us forever.”

Andrea smiled a little bit, but then she noticed something on the floor. Andrea crouched and took a piece of technology from the floor. It was covered with dry blood and brain tissue. She stared Kellogg’s rotted body. Maybe they could use it.

She took it and his .44 pistol before following Danse.

Andrea stared at the sky as they reached the roof of the old fort. It was gorgeous, now, particularly.

“Here I first time saw Prydwen,” she said. “I had to admit it; she looked majestic.”

“Because she is majestic,” Danse stated. He was quiet for a while as she gazed up the sky. “Andrea?”

Andrea turned around to look at him.

He inhaled and rubbed his neck. “When you asked about Cutler...”

“Danse, you don’t have to tell me.”

“I need to. I have to,” Danse stated. “This isn’t going to be a formal conversation. After Cutler and I joined to Brotherhood, we watched each other’s back and earned our ranks with each other support. We were sponsored even by the same Paladin. Paladin Krieg.”

He took a deep breath.

“About a year after we were posted to the Prydwen, Cutler vanished during scouting op. It took some convincing, but I was able to persuade Elder to let me assemble a squad and search for him. It took almost three weeks, and we tracked his team to a Super Mutant hive. Those abominations had used their FEV and changed everyone into one of their kind. When I found Cutler, he was turning. He wasn’t Cutler anymore. I had to... it was my duty to put him down. As a soldier, as a friend and...”

He didn’t tell everything, Andrea knew it. She could feel and hear it from his voice. She felt guilty because she was the one who asked about Cutler in the first place.

“It haunts me. I don’t want to feel something like that again. That’s why I haven’t let anyone get
too close. Not even with my superiors, since I lost Krieg during a war with Enclave,” Danse continued and sighed between sentences.

“When Elder placed you under my sponsorship, I had some serious reservations about it. Maybe it was because of Cutler or Paladin Krieg. I was concerned about how you might embrace the standards of the Brotherhood or how I might succeed in teaching them. But I think I worried for nothing.”

Andrea smiled little. Those words were the best thing that she had heard after she joined into Brotherhood. Danse was the only reason why she was still there. “I’m… I don’t know what to say, sir.”

“Just… I trust you’ll keep this in confidence between us. Some of that information was a personal nature, and well, I’d like to keep it that way,” Danse said nervously, and Andrea grinned.

“Don’t worry, Paladin. I won’t say anything.”

Andrea glanced at his profile as they left from the military installation and sais, “You called me by my first name, Danse. Back at the Fort Hagen.”

“As I said, it wasn’t a formal conversation,” the man said defensively.

“What’s your first name then, sir?”

“Not today, Adams.”

Andrea grunted with frustration as they finally reached the USS Constitution after walking all way from Fort Hagen to East Boston. She took FLL3 turbopump bearings from her backpack and installed it with Danse’s help. Bosun explained it could deliver fuel to an enormously powerful engine.

Andrea thought it could be useful at Prydwen but then remembered Rivet City. Inside her, she didn’t want to give them another powerful device. It belonged to the crew of the USS Constitution.

“Trim the power on the starboard bow. Steady as she goes, Mr Navigator. Luck willing, at long last we’ll set sail. And our hero of the hour is to thank. You’ve earned a double share, ma’am. Well done.”

“Set sail?”

“On the eve of our voyage, the need for secrecy is long past. Our twin NX-42 rockets will alight an unmoor us from this dreaded Savings and Loan. The Constitution will launch into the heavens and after gently land in the ocean. Then we take our rightful place as defenders of the Atlantic.”

“You’re going to what?” Danse asked, confused.

“A thing of brilliance, is it not? Mr Navigator put her through her paces. We need to—”

An explosion interrupted the Captain’s sentence.

“Scavengers!” Danse shouted and unholstered his rifle.


“Those motherless curs. Prepare to broadside. Defend the Constitution until our last breath!”
Ironsides commanded.

Scavengers had planned the attack carefully since there were so many of them. Sound of their gunfight probably wafted all way to Bunker Hill.

At some point of the gunfight, Andrea switched her laser rifle to dual pistols, avoiding barely bullet of a scavenger.

“It’s calling shooting straight, rookie!” someone shouted from a distance, waving his pipe pistol.

“Rookie? Do they even know whom they’re talking to?” Andrea asked Danse.

“Apparently not,” Danse answered. “They’re the ones who don’t know how to shoot.”

It took a while but eventually, victory was theirs. Voices of the battle died quickly as last remaining scavs ran way and Ironside cooled down itself — the fight was over.

“This task, of many years, hinges upon those Turbopump Bearings. The boarders are repelled. All hands, prepare the ship to launch,” Ironsides stated victoriously, talking to his crew and then looked back to soldiers. “I shall give both of you a title of honorary Lieutenant of the USS Constitution for your service for us.”

Andrea raised her eyebrows. She hadn’t expected that.

“There is one thing, however. We need power from the auxiliary generator to commence our voyage. I fear I must call upon you one last time.”

There was always that ‘one thing’ left. “Where’s the generator?”

“On the top deck of the Royal Arms Apartments. Scavengers may yet remain, so have a care. Here is your amply deserved reward. Godspeed to you, lieutenants,” Ironsides wished, and Mr Navigator gave her a huge and heavy bag.

“Semper Fortis, Captain,” Andrea said.

They climbed to the roof of the ruined apartment, and Andrea pulled from the circuit breaker, hearing loud noises when the generator kicked on. Andrea’s eyes widened in surprise as she saw how the ship’s the twin rocket’s ignited and the ship rose.

She expected it to fall into the ocean, but instead, five hundred years old ship flew through the skies and crashed into a skyscraper. It wasn’t something that happened every day.

“Yes, yes. We did it. Victory at last! We are a quarter-fathom closer to the Atlantic, and with my calculations, it will take us a mere century to finally reach the ocean. Well done!”

“...Mere century?” Andrea whispered.

“Someone needs to teach that ship’s navigator a few lessons,” Danse murmured, looking a ship in the skyscraper.

“Someone should give flying lessons to our pilots, sir. You know, it doesn’t look that bad, Danse. I bet Haylen would have wanted to see this.”

“Come to think; the view was pretty clear to Prydwen see it too,” Danse pondered as he watched airship. “Despite all that, this turned out to be a rewarding experience… for both of us.”
“Let’s do this again sometime, Paladin,” Andrea said and smiled warmly.

Seven hours after this odd phenomenon, Paladin Danse and Knight Adams returned to Prydwen. They called Elder in unison as they stopped at the doorway of Observation Deck. And as usual, Elder looked them with his famous scowl.

“Where have you been?” he asked immediately; someone wasn’t on the good mood today.

Danse sighed and answered, “We went to check out the USS Constitution as Proctor Quinlan suggested. Radstorm slowed us down, but we managed to investigate the USS Constitution and Fort Hagen thoroughly.”

“And because of that, it took two days to complete the mission?”

Andrea noticed his irritableness, and she thought was it right time to report to him. Wait, Danse sent him a report this morning...

“No, Elder. We received another task which we handled too.”

“Paladin, you know precisely, what our mission here is—”

“It was me, Elder,” Andrea spoke suddenly, and Elder moved his gaze at her. She talked over him, and he didn’t like it, but she had to defend Danse. “Captain of the USS Constitution chose me to carry out their mission—”

“Knight,” Paladin stressed her title quietly.

“But I was the one—”

This time Danse raised his voice.

“Knight! Enough!” he yelled and stared daggers at her.

Andrea interpreted his reaction as a ‘shut your mouth and talk when you’re given permission’.

“Yes, sir. I’m sorry, sir,” she said.

Elder stared both of them first, then her and said, “Knight, go talk with Cade. That’s an order.”

“Yes, sir,” Andrea said and exchanged gazes with Paladin as she left.

After a lengthy discussion with Cade, Andrea decided to read Codex at the mess hall. Andrea took a sip from her Nuka-Cola and continued reading text.

*They named a state after you, Roger. Oh, dear lord, you would be proud,* she thought and smiled.

Her Pip-Boy peeped abruptly. Andrea looked at the clock. 2300. She hadn’t seen Danse since their arrival, and she wondered where he went.

She stood up and thought about what she should do now. Stefanie was at the forecastle, doing her sniping shift, and others were sleeping already. Andrea thought about Dogmeat and pondered if she could give a visit to the Airport with him, but his leg was still sore.

Then her gaze locked onto the door between two Brotherhood flags. Andrea dropped empty Nuka-
Cola to the trash bin and gazed the door. She had no idea what she should say to Elder without putting Danse into the worse situation.

Then she felt someone moving behind her back and evaded a person’s movement.

Andrea resisted the urge to roll her eyes as recognised her.

“Ah, you’re back. How was the trip, Paladin’s first choice?” DeShannon asked.

Andrea frowned. “The first choice? I’m his protegee, not a favourite soldier. Everyone here is equal.”

This reminded Andrea too much of her past life.

“It seems we do have one favourite now. You,” the woman bitched and glanced a book on her hand. “You don’t deserve to read that book. Neither does the one who gave it to you.”

Andrea dodged her movement as DeShannon once again tried to take a book from her. Then she asked, “Why not? I thought every soldier has to read it.”

“Soldiers must read it, yes, but you’re not one.”

“Then if you are a soldier, you should act as a soldier does.” Andrea walked in front of her. “I remember Paladin Danse saying that we aren’t soldiers of fortune. We’re an army, and we have dedicated our lives to uphold a strict code of ethics. That includes showing honesty and respect to everyone, no matter who is superior and who is subordinate.”

“Keep talking. You should know your place and it ain’t here, bitch,” a blondie hissed.

Andrea hoped she would give her a reason to kick her ass. But she couldn’t fall so low. Maybe in the Goodneighbor, but not here.

“Hey! That’s enough, DeShannon,” Ingram shouted from the other side of the mess hall.

DeShannon continued glaring at Andrea but finally turned around, and left.

“Don’t mind her, Knight. She’s sometimes a nuisance,” Ingram continued.

“Yeah, I know. I’ve dealt with tougher ones before,” Andrea recalled. “Usually, I kick their asses. However, it doesn’t work like that in the military.”

“Nope. We throw troublemakers down from here,” Proctor said scowling but then smiled. “Just a joke. They will end up scrubbing walls of Prydwen, or we will throw them to the guardhouse. Hey, I needed to talk with you about your pow—”

To their dismay, the sound of someone clearing his throat interrupted their conversation. Andrea felt her heart skipping a beat when she recognised the battlecoat.

“May I have a word with you, Knight?” Elder asked.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: omg, I love Andrea and Danse. In my story, Danse didn't find already
transformed Cutler. Instead, he found him when he was turning into Super Mutant. And in the future, he will remember it again...

Thank you for reading!
Peace Offering

Chapter Summary

Andrea plays another round of chess with Elder, after making sure that Danse isn't in trouble after the USS Constitution. Without even realising it, she approaches him this time.

But what happens when he questions her well-being and mental state?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Andrea stepped inside Elder’s quarters and heard him closing a door behind her. Taking a deep breath, she thought about how she could defend Danse. She glanced his room quickly, noticing that nothing hadn’t changed. He hadn’t even touched the chessboard after their game. Their pieces were in the same place where they left them.

“Knight?” he called her.

“No, he didn’t, and that’s why he made a mistake.”

“I’m solely responsible for what happened, Elder. Don’t punish Paladin because of this; they pointed out that task to me. However, I asked if Ironsides and his group could give us pre-war documents and technology as a payment—”

“His?” Elder raised his voice a little bit. “According to Danse’s report, the ship was full of robots, not people, Knight. Still, you two helped them and now the rockets, which Proctor Quinlan stated could be useful to us, are in the skyscraper. Could you explain why you let it happen, Knight?”

“Rivet City,” Andrea answered without hesitation. It had bothered her. “I know what Brotherhood’s mission here is, but I don’t think that taking every piece of technology from the wastelanders keeps them safe. Scavengers wanted to loot and scrap the whole ship into pieces, for the caps. So I installed bearings and sent it to the skies. Now no one can reach it. Their technology doesn’t belong to us.”

“It isn’t your decision to decide what belongs to us—”

“Neither yours. Sir,” Andrea fired back immediately.

For her amaze, a man didn’t explode like he usually did. This time Elder relaxed his shoulders and let out a sigh.

“We aren’t the Minutemen, Knight. Charity isn’t our task. Our task is to protect civilians and prevent the wrong usage of technology. Like happened with Rivet City.”

Andrea wanted to hear his excuse for their actions.

“I don’t know what you have heard and from whom, but they didn’t know the whole truth. I wasn’t Elder yet when they took the core. I didn’t like it, but it had to be done.”
"Why?"

"The core was unstable. They didn’t have people who could have fixed it, so it was a ticking time bomb. It was a miracle that it hadn’t exploded before we got it. In the hands of our Scribes, it will be stable."

It made sense, but Andrea didn't like it. Now the core was part of the Prydwen. They were flying time bomb.

"But what about the civilians of Rivet City?"

"Transferred to other towns. Capital isn’t as dangerous as it was ten years ago. Enclave is gone, and super mutants are retreating. We keep the city safe."

*And still, people fear us,* Knight thought as the man walked in front of her. He was so close that she could smell his scent. A mixed scent of cigar, leather and sweet. Whiskey. It reminded her of her father. Maybe because of it, she found it pleasant.

"You shouldn’t believe rumours, Adams. You aren’t that naive," the man almost whispered.

"Last time I trusted someone, they used me," Andrea stated in disbelief, giving him a blank look.

"We won’t. Give way your suspicious to the wisdom of thine Elder. Where he shows trust, so shall you. I want you to remember that,” Elder said, and went to his terminal desk.

"I hope Danse isn’t in trouble, sir. He sent a mission report before we went to Constitution and before Fort Hagen at the next morning. I stood right next to him when that happened."

"That’s what he said too, but those reports never reached my terminal. However, he isn’t in trouble, Knight, and neither are you. I gave him advice however to think twice before taking indiscriminate missions."

"I’m still a soldier of the U.S. Army, Elder. My task is to protect civilians and the last ship of the Navy. Even you can’t prevent me from doing it,” Andrea stated and swore that she saw a faint smile on his lips as he walked to his bar cabinet.

"You remind me of someone, and I bet he would have liked you.” The man took a whiskey bottle from the cabinet. “When you talked about dead speaking to you through your conscience, I realised that I am in the same situation... I can still hear Lyons talking to me. You just verbalised that feeling.”

"Owyn?" Andrea asked.

"Against the suggestion of others, I continued his tradition to recruit wastelanders into our ranks and sending patrols to the Wasteland. When rest of my family locked themselves into a bunker, I —” Elder rubbed his bridge of the nose. “I don’t know why I am talking about this with you.”

He was tired and lonely; she could see it from his eyes. If someone could see his eyes as Andrea did, they could understand him. However, they didn’t. They only saw the eyes of the supreme commander, not a person behind it. No one shouldn’t carry so much weight on their shoulders.

"It’s okay. I don’t still know why I did open to you a few days ago, but,” Andrea said, thinking their conversation at the Flight Deck. “You can talk to me if you want, instead of your cat.”

Then she gestured toward empty basked under his terminal. This time a man snorted a little bit,
which confirmed it. He talked to his cat.

“But if you don’t want to talk about it now, we can start a new game instead. I might tell more about our trip to the Constitution.”

Elder glanced the chessboard on the table and then her. “As you wish. Drink?”

“Sure. I would like to have... that.” She pointed a blue bottle inside his cabinet. Nuka Quantum.

“Not a fan of alcohol?”

“Fizzy drink is fine.”

Before she sat down, Andrea glanced at his bookshelf, and she instantly recognised a book. *The Book of Taliesin.*

“So that’s where this ship got her name from,” she stated. Then she remembered a movie that she had watched as a kid. “You can’t expect to wield supreme power just because some watery tart threw a sword at you.”

Andrea giggled after her citation and Elder gave her a puzzled look. She asked, “What?”

“Nothing,” he said.

“...then we fought against a herd of scavengers who wanted to loot the ship. My first thought was’ Oh no, you don’t. You’re not going scavenge the last ship of U.S. Navy, so get the hell of out my sight.’ After we gained the upper hand, the rest of the scavengers retreated, and you saw the rest. Five hundred years old ship flew through skies, straight into the skyscraper. That’s that,” Andrea finished her report and stared chessboard.

She calculated her chance to win the game but moved her piece in the wrong direction.

“Paladin also told about Fort Hagen. How did you find Kellogg?” Arthur asked.

“My friend knew him... or his reputation properly speaking. We ended up searching his apartment for clues, and with Dogmeat’s help, we managed to track him down,” Andrea explained as she thought about her trip to Fort Hagen. “I have never killed someone like that way before. In the war, I have killed people, but when your vindictiveness drives you to kill someone, it’s not the same thing.”

“As the old saying goes; ‘Human beings lose their logic in their vindictiveness’.”

“You’re right, but I would do it again,” Andrea whispered.

Elder crossed his arms and leaned against his chair. Andrea saw how he observed her with his eyes for a moment.

“What happened with Knight DeShannon?” he asked.

“I think... it was nothing, she just wanted to give someone a hard time. I don’t care about people like her.”

“But others will care. Moreover, DeShannon called you...”

“Bitch?” Andrea raised her eyebrow. “It’s not the first time I heard that or the last.”
She had heard it many times while in the army or while travelling in the Wasteland.

“I didn’t like it,” Arthur stated as he gazed her.

“Elder, as I said, I don’t mind what people say about me.”

“But I do, and the way she spoke to you—” he ended his sentence suddenly. “Soldiers aren’t supposed to talk to their brothers and sisters like that. Soldiers are supposed to trust their brothers and sisters, not to destroy that trust by bullying.”

“She will learn it someday.”

“I hope you’re right,” Elder said before moving his gaze back to the chessboard. “Checkmate.”

“Not bad, not bad,” Andrea said, smiling and began to collected chess pieces. Then out of the corner of her eye, she saw how a man leaned a little bit towards her.

“You let me win,” Elder stated, and Andrea fought against the urge to smile. “I can re-memorise our moves. You moved your knight in the wrong direction.”

“You didn’t notice it before the game was over. I don’t wanna get thrown out of here if I win you.”

“No, you won’t be thrown. Put those pieces back to the board, Knight. Let’s take another round and don’t lose purposely this time.” His words came out as order this time.

Anything you want, Maxson.

Andrea noticed how Elder concentrated entirely into the game this time. He barely talked during it and stared her when she made her move.

Andrea, however, knew that he tried to predict her movements. It wasn’t easy. They both were tacticians and good at planning strategies. They could visualise their moves in their mind before making moves on the It took a tremendous amount of time to think and plan the next step.

She had no idea how long they had played the game, but she enjoyed every second of it. Elder stared the chess pieces, or more likely scowled at them, as he thought his next move. Andrea found it quite amusing. It looked like he was in trouble. However, whenever Elder saw an opening in her defence, he smirked. He thought he could win this game.

In your dreams, Bobby Fischer, Andrea thought.

Then a sound of beeping Pip-Boy interfered their game.

“What now?” Elder asked.

“It’s my alarm clock. Is it 0500 already? We have been playing for the whole night.”

“I didn’t notice,” the man answered quietly.

Andrea exhaled and moved her gaze from Pip-Boy to him. “I think we should quit for this time. We have our tasks to do, sir, and I won’t let you lose this game.”

“What I said about losing purposely?”

“The game is few steps away from the draw, sir. If correctly played.” Andrea gestured the board
and stood up.

“But I’m not going to let you win me, Elder. I have my pride too,” she teased, and it made him smile.

The man dressed his battlecoat and walked over to her. While everyone else saw him as an intimidating and scary person as he approached them with his scowl, battlecoat and massive, muscular appearance, she didn’t.

Instead, she found him physically attractive. It had been difficult for her to concentrate on the game after he had undressed his coat.

Elder grabbed the door handle and sighed.

“Paladin-Commander told you’re leaving with his team to Everett Estates?”

Andrea nodded to his question.

“You probably heard about Knight Harrison?”

“You won’t let anyone go to Wasteland without a partner or team,” Andrea recalled what Anderson had told her. “Don’t worry. I won’t go there alone.”

She hoped she sounded confident. Sometimes she missed solo missions. Recalling how she acted last time at the Flight deck, Andrea lifted her hand to touch his scar on his cheek. His beard was prickly, and his skin was dry, wrinkled and rather hot, but not much so. He wasn’t ageing well.

“It would be best if you went to sleep, Elder. I’ve kept you awake long enough.”

Andrea pulled her hand back, but the man grabbed it and stared at her wedding ring. Then he asked, “Do you miss him?”

“Every day,” she answered shortly after thinking what to say.

One moment of silence and then he let go of her hand.

“Be careful out there; that place is full of super mutants. Thanks for the game, Adams.”

“You’re welcome, and my name is Andrea. And if you want to talk about your thoughts someday… I’m here.”

Maybe it was some kind of peace offering after she had tormented him enough.

“Arthur,” he introduced himself.

That was a good sign. Her eyes locked with his. When she gazed those tired and lonely looking eyes, Andrea could see kindness and concern behind the firm look. Without even realising, she dropped her gaze down to his lips and then looked back to his eyes.

However, when he started to lean toward her, she backed away a little bit and cleared her throat.

“I apologise,” Arthur said and opened the door for her, sounding ashamed.

Andrea wanted to tell him it wasn’t his fault but couldn’t speak out loud. Instead, she left and returned to sleeping quarters.
“Fuck,” Andrea whispered sat on the edge of her bed. She thought of a look on his face when she had touched his scar. No one had touched him that way in a long time. If not ever. “What I’m going to do?”

“To do with what?” Stefanie asked as she jumped on the top of Knight Lee’s bed.

Andrea rubbed her temples. “Forget it.”

“Where were you?” the girl asked and narrowed her eyes. “Did you sleep again at the storage room or the Flight Deck? You know, I don’t mind about it if you see nightmares.”

“Others mind. I’ll sleep for a few hours now. Goodnight.”

“Huh? We are leaving in two hours—”

“Goodnight, Stef,” Andrea stated and heard Stefanie grunting before she left.

Two other Knights sighed with relief after she had left.

_In another hand, this place would be a little monotonous without Stefanie._

Before they headed into their destination, Paladin-Commander changed a few words with Elder while Andrea, Ortiz, Fox and Stefanie waited for him a little further. The youngest Knights kept bantering over something after Stefanie had lost the rock-paper-scissors game with Fox, but Andrea didn’t pay attention.

She kept her gaze on Arthur but tried to hide it by watching him out of the corners of her eyes. Her thoughts returned to the conversation she had had with him last night. Arthur had revealed a new side of himself. He truly cared about the people he worked with. He had shown that he had a heart. No. She had realised that before. That man was…

Andrea cast a quick glance at him, and she realised Arthur was staring right back. Her heart thudded, and she dropped her gaze. What the hell she was doing?

“Hey!” Andrea startled Stefanie who waved her hands in front of her face. “We’re going to town which is full of super mutants. You have to stay awake.”

“It’s just…” Maybe she should have slept more. “I’m fine.”

“But don’t worry. We can take care of those muties,” Stefanie said, rubbing her power armour hands together. “Because me and my baby here,” she added, gesturing her anti-materiel rifle. “We are locked and loaded and ready to fire Behemoths!”

“It’s good to know that you’re eager about the mission, Knight Prince, but I’d be grateful that we would return in one piece,” Anderson stated firmly from the Observation Deck. Stefanie put her helmet on, murmuring something at the same time and went outside. Andrea smiled little and once again, she glanced Arthur. But he had already turned his back on them and gazed out of his windows.

Perhaps that what happened last night had been nothing. He just had wanted to talk to someone. That’s all. Though Andrea tried to deny it, she felt a tiny stab of disappointment in her heart.

And again, Andrea was relieved to have power armour, even if she didn’t like them very much. She also realised how much she hated Super Mutants. These motherfuckers had armours and freaking
turrets — and freaking missile launchers.

“Shit!” Fox swore when he heard launcher’s noise.

“Did you guys see where it came from? Prince?” Ortiz asked as he and Andrea approached the pre-war suburb from north, Fox and Anderson coming from the south. Stefanie was dug in on the higher ground and sniped enemies from a distance. Thanks to her sniping skills, the super mutant’s dropped one by one.

“It came from that light blue coloured house.”

“Is a mutant inside the house, Prince?” Anderson asked scouter.

“Yes, sir. I wish I could have X-Ray vision so that I could shoot it from here,” Stefanie murmured and killed a mutant hound that ran towards Andrea and Ortiz.

Andrea looked around them, hearing nothing more but rapid firing and yelling of super mutants. Then she noticed something that alarmed her. She pushed Ortiz down and dived down herself in the nick of time as a missile flew past them. Andrea called sniper by name and sharpshooter took care of the mutant.

“Thanks, Adams,” Ortiz thanked her, dusting the dirt off his helmet’s visor.

“Yeah, about that… run!”

Ortiz noticed the forewarn and the duo rushed behind cover before the missile hit the spot where they had been. During moment like these, she understood why Brotherhood collected the technology and weapons.

“I hate these guys. Give me an assaultron or herd of glowing ones, and I’ll be happier,” Andrea spoke frustrated. “Super mutant with a missile launcher is… at the kitchen, Prince.”

“Prince, what’s your location?” Anderson asked, and they heard a faint bump.

Andrea concluded that sniper had changed position.

“At the position, sir. I’ve clear sight, but you have to lure it to the outside.”

Andrea gazed a mutant which Stefanie had shot a moment ago, and Ortiz asked what she had on mind.

“What if we shoot it with a missile?”

Ortiz turned his head in the direction she pointed. But before he could say anything, they noticed how a small object dropped to the ground — a grenade. Knights dived to cover as the grenade exploded, power armours protecting them from worst harm.

“This is the stupidest idea ever,” Ortiz stated as he thought the same thing what Andrea did while they stared launcher in front of them.

“Yeah, I know. I’ll cover you,” Andrea said and managed to get super mutant’s attention.

After the missile had reached its target, the super mutant came out of the house. It shouted furiously and was about to shoot at them, but Stefanie took it out.

“Yas!” the sharpshooter exclaimed. “I’m best.”
“Buen trabajo, amigo,” Andrea said patting Ortiz on the back.

However, their celebration fell short when an angry voice called them, and Paladin-Commander approached the duo.

“What in the hell do you think you’re doing?” he snarled and Fox behind him tensed instantly.

“I’m sorry, sir,” Andrea started. “We acted recklessly. I’ll surrender myself for disciplinary actions, sir.”

They should have waited for his orders. However, the moment had been too critical.

“So will I, sir,” Ortiz said, still holding launcher on his shoulder.

“That was a genuinely reckless and impulsive act, Knights. It will be noted,” the higher-ranked soldier said, staring the duo, especially his protegee. “Search the area, soldiers. Now!”

Andrea followed Fox into the house, avoiding Paladin-Commander. It seems he wasn’t a big fan of her. However, she didn’t regret what she did. Ortiz could’ve died.

“You two destroyed this room with that missile,” Fox said, and Andrea huffed. “The house is clear, sir.”

“Is there anything useful?”

“No, sir. Just pre-war clothes, trunks, empty milk bottles, bones, meatbags,” Andrea reported as she examined the room. A typical super mutant hideout. She smiled a little as she saw Nuka Quantum on the table next to the chessboard. That was a sign, wasn’t it?

“Hey, look what I found,” Fox said, interrupting her thoughts as he appeared into the dining room. “Walkie-talkies. I hope these are functional. These could be useful when someone isn’t wearing power armour.”

“Like telephones, huh? I’ve always wanted to keep in touch with you and Stef when I am outside of the Prydwen.”

“I knew you miss us,” Fox said. “The range of these are pretty good too.”

“Up to 25 miles,” Andrea stated while reading manuals.

Fox took his helmet off and hummed. “Do you think these will work when one of us is inside someone’s quarters?”

Andrea turned her head slowly at him. “What?”

“I’ve ears of a fox and eyes of the eagle, Andie,” the man whispered. “And I’ve seen how he stares you when you’re not looking. Nice catch, mom.”

For her luck, he had removed his helmet, preventing others from hearing their conversation. Knight put his helmet on and walked out of the house, leaving her alone with Quantum and chessboard.

They reminded her of that nice catch. A slight blush appeared on her cheeks, and again, she was grateful for a helmet.

Andrea was lucky to be alone in the shower quarters. Sometimes she wanted to be alone for a
while. Sighing deeply, she picked up her dog tags and gazed Roger’s own. She tampered it while thinking the owner of the tag. Would he be proud of her? Would he forgive her if… if she falls for someone else?

Somehow it felt like cheating though Andrea knew Roger found someone else after the war. He fulfilled their promise.

She stumbled to Squire Ortiz after leaving from showers.

“Knight Adams, Elder Maxson wishes to speak with you. He is at the Command Deck,” Squire said.

Andrea thanked him and told the boy that he did an excellent job. She always tried to raise spirits of Squires. They needed it.

But then she thought why Arthur wanted to speak with her? She felt a strange sensation in her stomach; pondering was it nervousness or butterflies? Both? For some reason, she tried to fix her wet hair and correct her flight suit.

_I’m so screwed_, she thought and walked down the stairs to Command Deck.

“You wanted to talk to me, sir?”

Arthur turned around after she appeared to Observation Deck and glanced a guard at the doorway.

“Knight Hawkins, I would like to speak with Knight Adams in private. Remain close by.”

“Yes, sir,” Hawkins acknowledged and left her post.

Andrea waited until she was gone and then moved her gaze back to Arthur. The man glared her with his famous Maxson glare and walked in front of her.

“As you’re aware, I’m concerned about the well-being of my soldiers, Knight. Do you have something on your mind, soldier?”

Andrea frowned. “No. Why?”

“I heard from Paladin-Commander you used yourself as bait during a mission, to keep Knight Ortiz safe. Is that true?”

“Yes, sir,” Andrea admitted. “I kept super mutant’s attention on me, while Knight Ortiz prepared to fire the missile.”

“Did you talk about this with Cade?”

She nodded.

“I want a straight answer. Do you still have suicidal thoughts, Knight?”

This time he got under her skin. How did he know about her suicide attempt? Had Cade told him about it? Brotherhood hadn’t heard or knew of the obligation of secrecy. And what she almost did in the past, it wasn’t his business.

Unawares, Andrea pointed her finger directly at him in dramatic fashion, staring him with her own Maxson glare.
“With all respect, sir, I’m not going to kill myself. I have to find my godson. So, no. I don’t have suicidal thoughts anymore, and my personal thoughts, they aren’t your goddamn business!”

Maybe her behaviour and voice of tone were too threatening because Arthur grabbed her arm. In seconds Andrea’s heart beat faster, and her body tensed up because of the anger. In her rage, she always lost all sense of what she was doing. Andrea managed to cut herself loose and without thinking twice, she hit him once to face and kicked a man down with a single takedown.

But when Hawkins returned in a rush and ordered her to get down, Andrea realised what she had done. She had slammed the Elder of Brotherhood against the steel floor of Observation Deck.

Oh, shit...

Chapter End Notes


And no, Andrea isn't typical Sole who dislikes Arthur. She genuinely respects him, but as she has a problem with a specific disorder, she can do a stunt like this without having control over herself.

And once again, thanks for reading and don't fear to leave feedback!
Chapter Summary

Andrea and Danse are sent to find a missing recon team, but they are surprised by a predator.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Your orders, sir?”

“Take her to the guardhouse, Knight.”

Being in a locked, uninviting cell wasn’t anything new to Andrea. Though she was raised by military and respected people around her, she had been troublemaker during her teenage years. She was arrested several times by the police or military police for drunk driving and fights, not forgetting how many times she had sneaked outside from the military base.

However, after she had joined into Army, she hadn’t raised voice or acted threateningly towards her superiors, or maybe once, but Andrea didn’t count it.

But this? Andrea remembered how Elder’s surprised look had turned into a scowl after he had realised that she had knocked him down. Somehow it felt wrong, and she felt terrible about it. That she did something like that to Arthur. Then Andrea bridled at her thoughts.

A piece of shit. That’s what he was.

Instead of thinking what would happen next or what her judgment would be, Andrea tried to read a book which guard had brought her. Although sometimes her thoughts wandered to the woman who was sitting in her very own cell. DeShannon. Andrea thought about what she had done now. But when she heard footsteps, she lowered a book down and glanced the cell door.

Fox and Stefanie.

“How in the hell you guys did get in here?” Andrea asked.

The girl glanced around her and answered, “Knight Sergeant is an old friend of my brothers, so we got in here with connections. Of course, we can’t be here long.”

Andrea shook her head. Princes and Adams’s were the same.

“How did you do it?” the girl asked.

“What?”

“You punched and tossed Elder Maxson. You’re the first one who succeeded on that or more precisely dared to do it. He’s massive. I mean, you’re massive too but...”

“Martial arts aren’t about speed or strength; it’s about timing. I got him off guard,” Andrea said
and thought what would be the income of their actual fight. Men were physically stronger, but one beefcake wouldn’t be a problem for her. Then she heard how duo giggled.

“Elder has a bruise on his cheek, and his beard barely covers it. He looks so defeated,” Fox stated. “It has created discussion and astonishment among the crew.”

“Wow. It will create more discussion and astonishment when I am thrown down from here. I should break his nose or jaw before that,” Andrea remarked dryly.

The duo at the hallway giggled again, and the older woman rolled her eyes.

“If he had wanted to throw you down, I think he would have done it immediately instead of ordering Knight Hawkins take you to—” Fox responded, but he was interrupted by someone clearing their throat further.

Knights stood up quickly, calling someone ‘sir’ and gave ‘good luck-glance’ to Andrea.

Andrea knew who the guest was as she recognised the voice and his footsteps. At this moment, she wished that visitor would have been the executioner or Deathclaw Elder himself.

Mierda.

Danse wasn’t wearing his power armour this time, and it was odd. It was the first time when Andrea saw him without it. What wasn’t unexpected was his athletic appearance and the fact he was the almost same height as Ortiz was, whom on the other hand, almost hit his head into the door frame when walking in power armour. Andrea put the book away and stood up.

“I don’t have excuses for what I did, sir,” Andrea said. “I’ll accept whatever punishment Elder and Lancer Captain see fit. And, um, I’ll emphasise during a hearing that I am solely responsible for what I did.”

“I hope you do remember what I said about—”

“That if I go down, we go down together. I do remember it, Danse. I, uh, understand if you want to quit your sponsorship with me. Especially if it can save your career, then I suggest you do it. I won’t hold a grudge about it,” Andrea stated but wanted to add something. “I’m genuinely sorry about this.”

Maybe she has tormented him enough. Danse crossed his arms, still scowling, but he became less tense.

“I went to see Elder Maxson immediately after hearing about this. Not only because my career was on stake, but because I don’t want to see you waste your life. You’re good soldier, and even a better person, Adams. It was a relief to hear that Elder Maxson didn’t discharge you from Brotherhood. Instead, he sent you here,” Paladin explained, keeping his firm stare on his protegee. “Why did you do it? What happened? You aren’t that kind of person who could punch their superior.”

It hadn’t been the first time. Andrea touched the bars while she thought about what happened ten years ago. Ten years ago, in her timeline, at least.

“I have done it. Once.” Andrea smiled a little bit to memory and leaned against bars.” There was one certain lieutenant... He came to me one day and began to drill me with stupid questions. His constant questions started to get on my nerves, and after annoying me long enough, he asked me out. Then I, um, I punched him. I didn’t know that he was my superior, so it mitigated my sentence. Eventually, they let it be because my husband didn’t press charges against me. However, after that,
I haven’t raised my voice at my superiors…”

A vivid flashback of how she yelled at her uncle crossed her mind.

*I am not a tool of government… or yours! I’m not going to kill people because you or some fucking four-star generals orders me to. I’m not a weapon! I have feelings!*

“Then why you did it now?” Danse asked. This time he sounded less firm.

“You know my opinion about the military. I don’t say Elder isn’t trustworthy, but when he started to question me about my suicidal thoughts, something just snapped in my head. What I think or what I almost did… it just… Whatever I have here.” Andrea pointed her head, meaning her memories and thoughts. “They aren’t his business.”

Then she sighed and turned around. “I wouldn’t mind about sleeping now, Paladin. I’m tired.”

“Well, as you did bring it up, I came to release you from here. You have a bed in the sleeping quarters. Besides, we have a mission tomorrow, so I need you to be prepared.”

Andrea turned around to look at him, meeting his confident eyes. She rubbed her forehead and glanced bed in the cell.

“I wouldn’t mind sleeping here. This bed is harder than my own, and this place is quieter. Stefanie isn’t here. She snores.” Andrea smiled before sitting down on the bed. “Goodnight, Danse.”

“Good night.”

After Paladin had left, Andrea sighed and rubbed her temples.

*For now on, count to ten before you do something stupid again, Andrea. Do it for Danse.*

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*Do I have to wear this again?* Andrea thought while staring her repaired power armour and touched its chest plate, painted insignia of Brotherhood.

“I had time to fix it since you were somewhere else.” a voice said, and Andrea glanced Proctor. “You should do those stunts of yours more often at the Command Deck; it gave me more time to repair yours and Ortiz’s power armours,” Ingram said, and a few scribes sniggered at the background. “Don’t break it radically.”

“No, I won’t,” Andrea said and heard a few soldiers walking on the catwalks above her, seeing how they watched her like a hawk.

“While a few of us found your stunt amusing, some of us didn’t,” Ingram added while eyeing soldiers.

“I’m not surprised,” Andrea murmured, thinking should she talk about her aggressiveness with Cade before something terrible happens. “I wonder how I am still alive?”

“Maybe Maxson was just confused since this was the first time in our history when someone has guts to hit Elder of Brotherhood, or maybe Danse persuaded him to spare you. He’s fond of you.”

That feeling was mutual.

“Paladin. Knight, welcome back to duty,” Kells spoke as he gaped Andrea.
Knight nodded politely, holding her blank military look on her face. Maybe she should keep a low profile for now on.

“Has Paladin Danse informed you about the upcoming mission, Knight?”

“A little. Danse told me that we’re looking for missing recon team Artemis.”

“The Brotherhood has been monitoring the Commonwealth for some time now, ever since we learned of the synth threat. We’ve dispatched several reconnaissance teams. Paladin Danse’s squad was far from the first. The previous unit before them was dispatched three years ago. They never reported back. Officially, they’re missing, presumed dead,” Kells said, observing the duo front of him. Mostly Andrea.

It wasn’t surprising after what happened yesterday.

“The recon teams at the field have to rely on their skills and training to survive. They know the risks. However, we honour those who give their lives in the line of duty. I want you two to find what happened to them. Their insertion point was in the hills near Malden. Survey the area and see if you can pick up their trail from there. Monitor your radio for distress signals. All recon teams are issued distress pulsers that put out a short-range homing beacon. Is that clear, soldiers?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Lancer-Knight will drop you two to Malden. Be careful out there.” Lancer Captain wished them good luck.

The duo walked towards the front door of Command Deck when someone called them. Elder, more precisely. It was the first time when Andrea saw him after their little accident. The bruise on his cheek wasn’t big as she had imagined, but it was still there.

*Maybe it was good I didn’t hit him too hard...*

“Report to Lancer-Captain Kells about your progress. I’m not a fan of sending you two there alone, but if someone from Recon Squad Artemis is still alive somehow, we don’t want them to get startled by a huge platoon of Brotherhood soldiers. However, I’m not overly confident that someone is alive after three years.”

“We will bring them home, sir,” Danse said.

Andrea knew what he meant. If not bodies, they would return with their story and holotags.

“I know you will. You two.” Arthur gazed both soldiers. “...return here safely.”

As they turned around to leave, Andrea felt someone staring at her, and she turned to look over her shoulder. Arthur wasn’t scowling anymore. Instead, the man looked a little concerned, just like at the Flight Deck. She nodded politely and followed Danse.

He wasn’t even mad after what happened.

The duo continued their way after drop off, avoiding a few hostiles along the way. Andrea noticed the old Med-Tek research building in front of them and declared they were at the Malden.

“I was born here,” Andrea stated and gestured towards Medford Memorial Hospital, thinking about her past again. “And so was Nate.”
“Where did you meet him?” Danse asked.

“I think I was three years old when his parents introduced him to us, or so I have heard. His father always thought we could end up becoming a couple someday, but I just got the fifth brother,” she answered and glanced at the two-story building next to them. “That’s the research building of Med-Tek, pre-war medical and pharmaceutical facility. I believe there might be a good amount of technology or documents for our scribes.”

“You sound like a soldier of Brotherhood.”

“I’m, Danse,” Andrea said before resuming walking. “the signal is getting stronger. We’re near.”

They arrived at their destination, seeing a massive crater inside remnants of the house and destroyed power armours lying on the ground.

Danse snarled a little bit and walked to the house, gazing around. He eyed their surroundings and focused his attention on isolated power armour. He lifted the helmet to see who it was and for their dismay, soldier’s skull came off and rolled down to the crater.

“This soldier is a source of the distress signal,” Paladin said as he found the holotags. “Knight Nick Varham. He was one of Paladin Brandis’ subordinates, part of Recon Squad Artemis.”

Danse shut down the soldier’s distress signal and found a holotape. “Can you play this?”

“I have to get out from power armour, though,” Andrea said. She felt a little better after getting out — damn claustrophobia.

“...ambushed on the road. We’re outnumbered five to one! Varham, report.”

“Core’s down to 5%.”

“We will have to scuttle the armour. We can’t let them have it-” An explosion.

“Varham!”

“Dammit. Astlin, Faris, fall back. I’ll set up the self-destructs. We will head for the old military base, then try to make it to our holdout. The code will be our callsign. All right, move! Move! Move!”

“What a choice. With no armour and no supplies, their odds of survival were low. However, it was the right decision. Technology must be protected. No matter the cost,” Danse told and gazed a crater while Andrea took her radiophone.

“Here. Make contact with Prydwen with this,” she said.

“Is that one of those radiophone’s which you guys found from Everetts, isn’t it?”

“Yes. Fox, Stefanie and B.J. have their own. The good thing is we don’t need to worry about being too far away. We’re able to make contact with Prydwen probably from anywhere in the Commonwealth, and calling a vertibird is cheaper this way. Since vertibird signal grenades aren’t cheap.”

“That’s clever,” he stated.

While Paladin gave his report about their findings, Andrea browsed her Pip-Boy’s map.
“Adams,” Paladin called her, and she looked up to him. “Lancer-Captain asked, do you know where this old military base is?”

“National Guard’s training yard? Yes, I do. It will take about sixty minutes to reach it.”

Paladin nodded and continued his report. Andrea examined a ruined house for supplies, noticing a little amount of radiation coming from the crater as her Pip-Boy’s Geiger counter beeped. She took a pill of Rad-X just in case. Invisible bastard.

“Pip-Boy found another distress signal,” Andrea stated.

Signal got stronger as they approached the building of National Guard.

“Turrets,” Paladin said, gesturing the roof.

“There is also National Guards sentry bot.” Andrea looked at the concrete shack. “Hopefully, it’s not anymore active. How many turrets you do see, Danse?”

“Three. Why I do have a feeling that there are more of those things?”

“This was U.S. Military’s building, thus heavily guarded. During the Sino-American war, they deployed soldiers of National Guard to front-line alongside with us, then straightly back to the mainland to look for spies after the war. Georgetown used to be full of their soldiers,” Andrea stated. “What happened to it? Georgetown?”

“It used to be full of Super Mutants,” Danse answered. “You lived there?”

“Yes. Our home was a two-story townhouse, built in the 1800s. We had a huge kitchen, a large room with a fireplace that we converted into a library, two bedrooms and a swimming pool at the backyard,” Andrea said. “We had a garden that was full of different kind of flowers; red roses, tulips and lilies. I still can remember the sound of birds and the smell of recently cropped grass. When the winter came, we had to keep that goddamn pool covered, and in the summer we had to keep it clean.”

Then she realised she had fallen into her thoughts.

“Yeah, I lived there. Shall we continue?” she said and resumed walking.

“Adams,” Danse called her suddenly. “You’re the most complex person I have ever met. Sad and little lost, but still, you manage to keep going after all of this.”

“I’m not here alone, Danse. I may say that dead speak to me behind their graves, but I keep going because of the living.”

A reminder for herself. She couldn’t dwell in the past when she has to look after those who were still alive. But it became harder day by day.

After Andrea had taken care of the landmines, the duo opened the front doors of the building and double-checked the entrance hall for mines and hostiles. Signal was getting stronger, but they also heard noises from the second floor. Ferals.

One of them dropped down from the second floor, and others crawled out behind desks, rooms and stairways. This time feral ghouls were the weak ones, so they weren’t a problem.
After the fight, she opened a door into a smaller office and saw two dead feral ghouls on the floor. And then someone’s corpse. This one wasn’t fully skeleton, but more like mummified.

Andrea noticed the bite marks on the body, feeling her stomach turning around. She realised that this soldier had been eaten alive by feral ghouls. This soldier had had the same fate as Lucy.

Then she thought about MacCready and this soldier’s family. Nobody knew what happened to them. Even this unlucky squad didn’t know if anyone would come looking for them. They had been away from home, alone and without back up.

“I found someone.” Andrea took a holotags and read the name. “Knight Tara Astlin.”

“She was in my company years ago. Second best marksman after Knight Prince. Damn it.” Andrea turned off a distress signal and noticed a broken holoplayer on the floor. Holotape inside; it was still intact.

Then she went to the window and pulled the shredded curtain from the rod. She placed it top of a deceased Knight, covering her corpse.

“I hope we will retrieve their bodies,” she said as she inserted a tape into her Pip-Boy.

“We will.”

“This is Knight Tara Astlin. Brotherhood of Steel Recon Team 429- Alpha. Serial number 3431. It’s been five hours since Brandis and Faris left. Three hours ago, I set my distress pulser. There’s been no word from Paladin or Faris. Their objective was a satellite array on the coast. They may be out of range; I don’t know. My orders were to hold this position at all costs. The entire site has been overrun. The door won’t last much longer. Paladin Brandis, sir. It’s been an honour, sir.”

“A soldier to the end. Well done, Knight.” Paladin said as he saluted.

“They went probably to Revere Satellite Array. It’s not far away. My guess is they tried to make contact with Citadel from there. The Army used it to communicate with other Commonwealths.”

After exiting the building, Danse stated he wanted to speak with Kells. Andrea gave him walkie-talkie and saw Paladin taking his helmet off, grunting while doing so.

If Andrea were interested in him, he would be pretty hot with that sweaty skin and messy hair. Alternatively, if he would be interested in her…

Andrea snorted a little bit and took her helmet off. Finally, she was able to breathe fresh, radioactive air.

I hate this suit, she thought.

“Affirmative, sir. We found remnants of Knight Astlin at the National Guard building. She mentioned in her holotape Brandis had gone to Satellite Array with Faris, while she remained here to keep holdout safe. Paladin Brandis probably tried to get contact with us through satellite array.”

“Is it far?” Andrea heard Lancer-Captain asking.

“About 20 minutes by walking,” she answered.

“We will continue our mission. Paladin out,” Danse said and shut down a radiophone. “That thing is pretty useful.”
“It’s not for sale, sir,” Andrea replied amused.

“Super Mutants,” Andrea said and stared at an old array. Those things were everywhere. Had Gunners and Raiders disappeared into thin air?

“They even have mutant hounds and Suicider,” Danse pointed out.

“Well, two of them have missile launchers,” Andrea stated and swore in Spanish after it.

Then her Pip-Boy began to beep again.

“It located another distress sign—” Andrea whispered, but the noise behind her interrupted her thoughts.

She turned around as quickly as she could, and she witnessed how radscorpion surfaced from the underground. It stared her with those ugly eyes of its, screeching loudly and prepared to attack with its stringer.

Andrea stood up and jumped aside to avoid the attack. She could make it, but Danse didn’t know it. He pushed her away, and Andrea saw how stinger hit his bend of the arm, breaking a fabric of power armour in progress. It struck its stinger into the most vulnerable place in the power armour.

Then she remembered something — the poison.

Danse grunted in pain and cursed when he fell to his knees, but he didn’t blackout. While creature kept its attention on Danse, Andrea stood up quickly and punched a radscorpion with her exoskeleton fist. A radscorpion backed away, protecting its head with pincers.

*It should hurt, you piece of shit.*

A whoosh.

The missile hit the ground next to the radscorpion. A loud shrieking had attached the attention of super mutants. The creature flew into the air and retreated under the ground, severely injured.

“Fuck,” Andrea swore and turned to Danse. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” he answered quietly.

Andrea glanced his arm. “We have to get away from here. Can you walk?”

“Yes, Knight. I can.”

*Good. He is still trying to act tough. However, moving will spread venom faster through the system,* Andrea thought as she put his other arm over her shoulders.

Then she heard a noise of the missile launcher again. This time it was poorly aimed. Andrea shot down two approaching mutant hounds and soldiers managed to get into the shoreline, behind a hill. They were safe from a missile launcher, for now.

“Paladin?” Andrea called him when Danse fell to the ground. She took his helmet off and gasped. He was white as a sheet, sweated profusely and would probably lose his consciousness soon. Andrea bridled and took her radiophone.

He didn’t have time. The poison was spreading faster than she assumed.
"Why it didn’t hit me with its stinger?"

“B.J!” Andrea called out Ortiz via her walkie-talkie. He was the only one who was undoubtedly at the Prydwen. “Respóndeme!”

“Qué está pasando?”

“We need immediate evacuation. The super mutants attacked us—” Andrea explained and shot another mutant hound.

Then she realised that she had a bigger problem. Sound of beeping got stronger, and she noticed blinking, red light at a distance — the mini-nuke.

Andrea took her helmet off and leaned against the ground while concentrating her attention into approaching suicider, and peered through sight of 10mm pistol. No time for panicking. She tried to forget everything else for a moment: Danse, noises coming from her walkie-talkie and sound of the battle. Her hands trembled. She tried to calm her breath, relax her shoulders and closed her another eye.

It’s now or never.

Andrea took a few deep breaths and pulled the trigger. Blam. A tremendous explosion shook the ground after that, and she drew back behind cover. She took a deep breath and mentally thanked RJ for his sniping lessons. Her body still trembled, and she tried to gather herself. Danse needed her.

“Adams, are you okay?”

“Yeah... It was just that stupid Super Mutant Suicider,” Knight responded after picking up her walkie-talkie from the sand and heard after-explosions. “I hate this place. Listen, Paladin doesn’t have time.”

“What do you mean by time?” This time she heard Arthur’s, Elder’s voice.

“We were surprised by a radscorpion, and it struck Paladin about five minutes ago with its stinger. He’s already fallen unconscious. Also, these Super Mutants have two missile launchers, sir. We need an evacuation, but a vertibird can’t land...”

Andrea hissed once again when the missile hit the ground heavily near them. The super mutants approached them and came closer and closer. If Danse were okay, this wouldn’t be a problem. Andrea glanced Paladin next to her.

Danse doesn’t have time. We don’t have time. If they get to him...

She heard via radiophone how Elder ordered an evacuation. Andrea exhaled deeply, reloading her twins and Righteous Authority. Maybe she would end up to guardhouse after this.

It wouldn’t matter. Only Danse’s safety did matter now.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thanks for reading!
“There! Knight Adams used one of Paladin’s vertibird signals!” the pilot reported.

Anderson looked at the satellite array area. The signal was coming from the shoreline.

“She marked Paladin’s location with a signal,” he stated. “Adams herself is there. She’s using herself as bait again, keeping Super Mutants attention on herself.”

The man murmured under his breath and turned to look at the pilot and others. “Lancer-Knight, drop Knight Ortiz and me closer to her and go to Paladin. Once Knight-Sergeant has transferred Paladin to the vertibird, leave immediately. Understood?”

Soldiers nodded simultaneously.

In the distance, Andrea heard the faint sound of rotor blades approaching and saw how vertibird named Valkyrie landed down to the shoreline. They had sent Elder’s vertibird here, and it made sense. It was the fastest vertibird in their Air Force.

She focused her fire on a super mutant with a missile launcher, hoping it wouldn’t shoot down the bird. Andrea switched her laser rifle to 10mm pistols and threw a grenade to an upper stance of a satellite.

Then the sounds of miniguns interrupted her thoughts, and few super mutants dropped quickly. They had sent backup for her.

“You okay, Adams?” Ortiz asked.

“I have been in a worse situation,” she said. No, she hadn’t been in a worse situation. “You didn’t bring Stefanie’s anti-materiel rifle with you?”

“Nope.”

“Figures. Let’s keep their attention on us.”

Anderson had already killed the first mutant with a missile launcher and kicked another down from the higher platform. Valkyrie departed immediately and headed toward the Airport, flying behind the highways.

_They will be at the Airport at any minute now, _Andrea thought.

Danse was safe and sound, and now they just needed to clear this place from these disgusting creatures. There weren’t many super mutants left. One heavily armoured super mutant had
occupied one of the satellites and kept soldiers busy with missile launcher and an assault rifle.

“I don’t get it. How many missiles this thing has?” Ortiz pondered as he and Andrea ducked behind cover.

“Three left. Armoured one is a menace,” Anderson said as he joined them.

“It has a higher ground, heavy guns, and we have a terrible angle. How about if we climb those stairs and we will kill it at close range?” Andrea suggested.

“It was my thought too,” Paladin-Commander said. “Adams, I want you to stay here. Ortiz and I will go. You have done enough. That’s an order, Knight,” he added after sensing her hesitation.

As men left, Andrea kept up the suppressive fire and heard something behind her. She bridled when one of the super mutants tried to attack her from behind.

“Not twice today,” she said and used her elbow to hit it in the stomach, and shot a bullet to its head.

Soon after it, Andrea heard how the super mutant at the top of the satellite dish screamed something about ‘stupid tin can’, and then silence fell to the Array.

Andrea picked up a few fusion cells from the ground and stared at her surroundings. It seems they won. Only distant noises of feral mongrels echoed through the air.

“Knight, why you and Paladin Danse were here?” Anderson asked her as they came to her.

“Kells gave us a mission to find out what happened to Paladin Brandis and his team. According to Knight Astlin’s holotape, Paladin and Faris came here,” Andrea answered, still hearing a distress signal beeping.

“Where is Knight Astlin?”

“Dead. Her body is inside the National Guard’s building. Another distress signals led us here.”

“Let’s check it out,” Paladin-Commander said, and men followed Andrea to satellite tower. They found another mummified corpse. Holotags and holotape stated body belonged to Scribe Faris.

Andrea stared a mummified corpse and then late soldier’s holotags. “That leaves only Paladin Brandis.”

Anderson asked mourning, “What about others?”

“Dead. They lost Knight Varham and four others at Malden. Brandis is the only one whom we haven’t found yet.”

“He was always a survivor, but after three years,” Anderson murmured, sounding bitter and sombre at the same time. Andrea stayed quiet for a while until hers and Ortiz radiophones turned on.

“Ortiz? Adams? How are things out there?” Fox.

“We’re fine. The place is secured. What about Paladin?” Andrea asked.

“He was taken to the infirmary right after we landed down to Airport. He’s under Cade’s treatment now. More, I don’t know,” Fox explained. “Elder Maxson ordered all of you to return here immediately.”
Andrea grunted as she took her helmet off and climbed into a vertibird. She breathed the air through her nostrils and glanced down to the ground. Out of nowhere, she thought about that sniper who had tried to kill her at the Memorial Bridge. If someone wanted her dead, they were doing a lousy job.

Knights followed Anderson to Command Deck. Instead of giving a report, Andrea just wanted to walk straight to the infirmary to see if Danse was truly okay.

“We are relieved that all of you came back alive from this mission,” Kells said confidently, looking at the three soldiers in front of him and Elder. “Especially Paladin Danse and you, Knight Adams.”

Andrea noticed that Elder was looking at her direction, observing her.

“What happened, Knight?” he asked.

“After we discovered that Paladin Brandis and Scribe Faris had gone to Revere Satellite Array, we went to check out the old array. Paladin Danse and I found out that Super Mutants had occupied the place. However, before we were able to plan the approach method, we were ambushed by Radscorpion,” Andrea answered.

“It managed to hit Paladin with its stinger, and then it attracted the attention of super mutants. Paladin and I walked to the shoreline, but he lost his conscious after. Paladin wasn’t able to defend himself in his state, and Super Mutants were getting closer. I threw a vertibird signal grenade next to him, and I went to face Super Mutants by myself. Next, Paladin-Commander and Knight came to my aid. We cleared the area from Super Mutants and found a body of Scribe Faris. No trace of Paladin Brandis, sir.”

“This was what I feared. It will be a miracle if we find Brandis alive,” Kells muttered.

“But I’ll return there to find—” Andrea started, but others gave her a grim look. “But not today, of course. Do you want their holotags, sir?”

“Thank you. I’ll see that they make it to their next of kin.”

“This wasn’t easy a mission, Knight, and I believe that battle at the satellite array wasn’t any easier,” Elder spoke this time.

“No, sir. However, I did what I had to; it was necessary,” Andrea said as she met his worried gaze.

“Admirable act, soldier. I suggest that you’ll talk to Knight-Captain, Adams. Today. Dismissed, Knights,” he said, and Andrea sighed relieved, thinking she was spared from reproach. He wasn’t mad at all.

However, after she returned her T-60 to Power Armour Bay, Andrea heard loud thumps against the steel floor.

Oh no, Andrea thought. There was one person on board who would kill her after this.

“What did I say to you when you left in the morning, Knight?” Ingram asked, and her scribes fled from the scene.

“Uh, don’t break it radically.”

“And you did it anyway?” Proctor asked, and Andrea glanced at her power armour.
One of its armour pieces had fallen off after taking too much damage, and the rest of it was in terrible shape. Helmet’s visor had cracked, and the lamp had fallen somewhere. As if an elephant would have run over it.

“I’m sorry, Proctor,” Andrea apologised. “If it eases your burden, I can try to repair it myself—”

“How about no? I hope they won’t send you to the battlefield as this may take time,” Ingram hissed sternly, gazing both Knight and left. “Now, get the hell out of my sight.”

“I know her insomnia causes her irritableness but don’t ask her out now,” Andrea whispered to Ortiz, and a man rolled his eyes in turn. “Or you can ask if Emilio could help her. Kari likes him.”

“I’m not going to send my son close to her if she’s pissed off. That woman’s like a lion in a cage.”

For her relief, Dogmeat had healed quickly, and Andrea decided to take him down to Airport. The dog needed fresh air and rehabilitation, and so did she. After getting permission from Elder, she made her way towards the Aiport.

Brotherhood had built the infirmary inside a smaller gatehouse of the Airport, and the place was heavily protected. But it also has protection for the forces of nature. While most of the roof of the building had collapsed and did not provide proper shelter, this place had an intact roof.

Andrea remembered how it had been once full of coffee shops, fast food restaurants and gift shops. Now it was full of beds, partitions made from curtains, medical tools and equipment. Who would have known that it would eventually become a hospital?

“Excuse me, Knight Adams? Bringing dogs to the infirmary is forbidden,” a voice said.

Andrea turned around, seeing how one of their Senior Scribes glared her and Dogmeat. Her dark, brunette hair was tied up, and she wore the same outfit as scribes did. She had somehow gentle looking face, but it fooled people around her.

The woman was well known for her strict attitude and behaviour. She wasn’t kind and gentle like Haylen, or other scribes were. Good medic but bad with people.

“I’m sorry, Senior Scribe Gregson,” Andrea apologised and looked at the dog. “Dogmeat, go outside and wait for me.”

“Let this be the first and last time, Knight,” Gregson said, putting her glasses back on and returned to her duties.

After searching for a while, Andrea found Danse. He was lying in his bed, still out of cold, and someone had inserted IV cannula into the back of his hand. Andrea padded next to him, took a chair and sat down. At least, he had already gotten his colour back and most importantly, he was alive. Not even Radscorpion couldn’t kill him.

“Moron,” she whispered.

“Calling your superior ‘moron’ is one way to get an insubordination note and end up back to the guardhouse,” Danse said suddenly, still keeping his eyes closed.

Andrea smiled little. “You feeling all right?”

“Lot better, if you don’t count serum sickness,” he answered, and opened his eyes. Then he
furrowed his brows as she saw her bruised, stitched face. “What happened to you, soldier?”

“I gave those Super Mutants something to think about, and Ingram another set of power armour to fix,” she said, clearing her throat. “After you lost your consciousness, I requested evacuation via radiophone and kept those super mutants away from you. After Valkyrie arrived, Paladin-Commander and Knight Ortiz came to my aid, and we finished what we started. We found Scribe Faris body.”

“You kept those super mutants away from me, all by yourself?” Danse asked firmly.

“What else could I have done, Danse? If I had stayed with you, they would have found you. You could not defend yourself.”

“So you exposed yourself—”

“Risks are part of our lives, Paladin. I would risk my life for anyone of you. And by the way, you were a one who saved me in the first place.”

They were both silent for a moment.

“I should thank you for that, sir. Thank you, Danse,” Andrea said.

“You’re welcome,” he said. “And thank you for what you did for me. But don’t—”

“I would do it again in a heartbeat,” Andrea stated and squeezed his hand. “I’ve got your back. Our task is to look after our commanders.”

Then she remembered Recon Squad Artemis. Andrea clashed her hands together, startling Danse. She dug the holotape out of her pocket and inserted it to her Pip-Boy.

“We found holotape from Scribe Faris’s belongings.”

“It’s been… two hours since the Paladin left. My leg… I can’t stanch the bleeding. The bullet must have hit an artery. Brandis… if you get this… I hope you make it back to Astlin in time. There was nothing you could do for me. Get to the bunker up north. You’ll survive. That’s all that… all that matters… Ad victoriam, Paladin.”

Danse rubbed his hand across his face.

“Brandis broke the first rule of small-group tactics. Stick always together. Always. He should have known better,” he said, criticising fellow soldier’s decision. “They all end up alone. And they all got killed. Dammit.”

Andrea was about to say something, but someone interrupted her before she had the chance.

Cade pushed the curtain away and entered into ‘room’. If they could call it a room as it was made from medical curtain partitions and didn’t offer much privacy.

The doctor glanced both of them and asked, “You’re still bothering him, Knight?”

“I just keep him up to date before we continue our mission, Dwight,” Andrea explained. “When you’ll let him go?”

“Not yet. I’m giving Paladin antihistamines, pain killers and steroids to treat his serum sickness. You still have a fever and polyarthralgia, Danse. And my order stands,” Cade said to Danse and then looked at Andrea. “And you’re no exception, Knight. When you’re done, return to my office.”
“And don’t leave without me, Knight,” Danse commanded, and Andrea raised her hands.

“I won’t. This is our mission, Danse. I would not do this without you watching my back,” Andrea claimed cheerfully, and Paladin smiled little. “We’ll continue our mission after you’re healed up, sir.”

“Please, just one card game,” Stefanie begged and tried to prevent her from leaving from the Mess Hall. Andrea shook her head and said she wasn’t interested now. She wasn’t in the mood to socialise. Sometimes she wanted to be alone.

Moreover, she didn’t feel well.

Andrea had found a better place to read a book and be alone. It was easy to focus on a book in the silent guardhouse. There were no people around, and the silence was what she needed. The only thing that broke that silence was the quiet humming of Prydwen’s machinery.

But then she heard a conversation at the door of the guardhouse. Andrea bridled when she recognised the voice and glanced him as he appeared in front of her cell.

“You don’t need to be here anymore,” Arthur declared, staring her firmly.

“No, I don’t. The door isn’t even closed. The guardhouse is just a perfect place to be alone and read a book,” Andrea stated, gesturing her book and returned her attention to it. “What do you want, sir?”

“I wanted to talk about your and Paladin’s mission. I didn’t like what you did at the satellite array. It was a venturesome act.”

“Well, you don’t have to order someone to bring me here now. I’m sitting inside my very own cell,” Andrea said dryly.

He scowled once again. It seems her answer didn’t entertain him.

Sighing, Andrea stood up and walked over to him.

“I already told Danse that I would do that stunt again without hesitation. And no, I didn’t do it because I had once suicidal thoughts,” Andrea said. “I did it because it was my duty. Duty to protect others.”

“So that you wouldn’t hear the ghosts or dead speaking to you?”

He begged for another punch.

“I’ll say this one more time; it’s none of your business. It isn’t your concern if I once thought about killing myself,” Andrea stated and closed the door of the cell between them before turning around.

She sighed deeply when the door opened again. “Listen—”

Her stomach flipped when she saw his look.

His expression exuded concern and worry. It was something he didn’t often show to others.

But Andrea had seen it. At the Flight Deck when they had spoken first time unofficially and before she left to Malden.
He walked in front of her as his eyes examined her face — her wounds and bruises.

“You’re right. What you did or thought before? It’s none of my business,” Arthur whispered as he touched her bruised chin. “But I’m still worried that you have suicidal thoughts. After what you said at the Flight Deck...”


“Because I care about you — because I care about what happens to my soldiers, Knight. I almost lost two of my best.”

What he almost said, didn’t go unnoticed by her.

Then she said, “Perhaps we took a risk, but risks are part of our lives.”

“I know,” he whispered.

“Me, Danse, anyone... we are soldiers.”

“I know.”

“And you can do nothing about it.”

“I know.”

His voice lowered every time he repeated those words.

“Good, because we take risks, even without suicidal thoughts,” Andrea stated. “I am not going to kill myself, but if I die protecting someone, then it’s the way I wanna go. But I will not die, not until I have found my godson.”

“Then it is settled,” Arthur stated evenly, without breaking their eye contact. “Return to your quarters, Knight. This isn’t a public place.”

“Yes, sir,” Andrea acknowledged as a man turned on his heels.

However, she had one more question. “Why DeShannon was here? Did she do something?”

It wasn’t her business, but it had bothered her.

Arthur stopped at the doorway and glanced her over his shoulder.

“Yes, she did. She called you bitch,” he answered. “Nobody talks to you like that.”

Andrea’s cheeks flushed, and she knew that her heavily freckled face couldn’t hide the colour. Then out of nowhere, she felt strong the urge to tell him everything. Tell him about her past and Roger. He deserved to know.

“Arthur...”

But when he turned around again, that strong urge flew out of the window, and she lowered her gaze. She couldn’t.

“It’s... nothing. Thank you,” Andrea said.

Arthur gave her a questioning look but nodded and left.
Andrea leaned against the washbasin and stared herself from a mirror. She was only thirty-one years old, but she looked ten years older with her wrinkles and eyebags. She looked dead tired and worn out.

She wasn’t beautiful. No one hadn’t called her beautiful after her… transformation.

Not even her spouse.

What did Elder saw in her?

There were younger, happier and prettier girls on the board. Some of them had a perfect slim body, bigger breasts and were more feminine than she was. She didn’t have breasts, and her body looked masculine. She was too bulky, but couldn’t do anything about it.

Andrea couldn’t understand.

And even if he was so nice to her and showed concern for her… she couldn’t tell him about Roger.

Did she fear him that much?

Then Andrea grunted when the room began spinning around her, and she leaned against the mirror with her forehead. She wasn’t…

‘You have been given an order, Captain. Kill him!’

‘He’s just a three years old kid, Colonel!’

‘Kill him, or you will be prosecuted for treason, Maxson. We have been given an order to kill every Red.’

‘Red? He’s just a boy. A child.’

‘Sergeant! Escort Captain Maxson out. Keep an eye on her until military police arrive.’

Andrea heard the sound of the gunshot before she flinched awake and opened her eyes.

The first thing she noticed was a steel wall and IV pole next to her bed. Then the mixed smell of disinfectant and steel filled her nose, and she finally recognised the room — the clinic.

“Adams?” a voice called her.

Andrea turned around on the bed to look behind her. Cade.

“How are you feeling?” he asked.

“Um,” Andrea said and touched her head. “For some reason, I have a headache.”

“Well, you presumably hit your head into washbasin or steel floor after collapsing, so it explains your symptom.”

Andrea nodded once and glared around, asking, “How did I end up here?”

“Elder Maxson brought you here.”

He did what?
Andrea scratched the tip of her nose to hide her blush as she imagined him carrying her with those arms of his. He has to be damn strong if he could lift her.

“Have you slept enough, Knight? As much as I recommend you to?” the doctor asked.

“You know the answer, Cap. No, I haven’t. The nightmares keep me awake. You know that.”

Cade walked to the medicine cabinet and returned to her. He gave her a pill bottle and said, “I recommend sleeping pills for you. And it would be best for you if you wouldn’t use alcohol at all. It messes up your sleeping rhythm, quality of sleep, and it causes insomnia. Your tiredness is one of the reasons why you fainted in the first place.”

“That’s what I thought too,” Andrea said and took the bottle.

“Also, no gym or missions for a few days, Knight. And that’s an order.”

Andrea raised her hands in the air, giving up. She examined the pill bottle on her hands and thought about her nightmare.

Then she asked, “Has Brotherhood ever killed a child?”

The question interrupted Cade, and he gave her a questioning look. “No. It’s forbidden. Why?”

“It’s just…” Andrea began and kept a break. “I saw a dream about what happened before the Great War. Sort of flashback. I was sent to clear a small stronghold of Reds, and I found the child. I think he was a son of a high ranking Chinese officer, but I don’t know why he was there. All I know that he was scared as hell. I can still remember the horror in his eyes.”

She twiddled a pill bottle on her hands and thought about the boy. Her superiors had said ‘he was just a Red’ but to her, and some others, he had been only a child.

“We were given an order to kill every Red we met, but I refused to carry out my orders. After the strike team came in, my closest superior told I would be prosecuted if I wouldn’t perform my task. I didn’t, and I was escorted back to headquarters by military police.”

“Did they press charges?”

“No. My family saved my sorry ass. While any other soldier would have been executed for treason, I was allowed to continue...” Andrea answered and scoffed. “That gunshot which I heard before military police came, it has haunted me ever since. It reminds me of why I don’t trust the military or its leaders. It reminds me of unfairness toward others...”

Elder didn’t press charges against her even she punched him — attacked the superior officer.

DeShannon was sent to the guardhouse just because she called her bitch.

Special treatment. It wasn’t what Andrea wanted.

If it were up to Andrea, she wouldn’t tell them about Roger.

Chapter End Notes
A/N: You're losing this fight, sorry Drea. I'm losing it too when it comes to Arthur.
Strangers In the Night

Chapter Summary

Stefanie has a surprise for Andrea.

Chapter Notes

A/N: Badly written fluff incoming.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Also, no gym or missions for a few days, Knight. And that’s an order.

Now if not ever, Andrea was ready for the battlefield.

Her body trembled and muscles tightened time by time as if it were on fire.

And now she hadn’t a chance to ease that feeling at the gym and shooting range.

She needed to feel something else — adrenaline and excitement.

She missed the emotion she felt under stress. The emotion she felt when she fired the gun... or killed someone: the best and worst parts of the war.

A need to fight.

It was an indescribable desire and insurmountable need.

And she hated it.

Andrea grunted frustratedly and glared soldiers at the gym.

What the hell she was supposed to now? Should she help Ingram with her tasks though she wasn’t good repairman, compared to Danse? Should she go to Airport help Lucia at the Logistic while DeShannon was there?

Then Andrea thought about giving a visit to Goodneighbor, but Brotherhood saw its citizen as unstable and dangerous.

She will walk out soon if this continues.

“Morning!” a high pitched voice said.

“Morning, Stef,” Andrea murmured, leaning against the railing of catwalk and glared soldiers at the gym.

“How are you feeling today?”
“I’m perfectly fine,” Andrea said dryly. “Why?”

“I was thinking...” the girl said. “Are you busy this night?”

“No, I’m not. I’ll probably help Ingram, and I’ll pay a visit to the Infirmary with Dogmeat.”

“You still rebel against the order not to bring dogs to Infirmary, hm? You might end up back to guardhouse because of that.”

“Dogmeat’s presence helps wounded soldiers. I’m doing it for them,” Andrea answered. “And answer to your question; I would rather be in the guardhouse than here,” she added and gestured Prydwen.

“Well, that’s good, because... don’t plan anything else,” the sniper stated and walked away, rubbing her hands together mischievously.

Andrea watched her and thought about what she had on mind.

Yet another sleepless night behind. Arthur had spent his whole night reading reports and sending messages to Citadel, but still, his workload piled up. Without Star Paladin or Sentinel, he had to manage alone. He had thought about giving the rank of Sentinel to someone after this war, but now, more than ever, he wanted to give it to—

“Good morning, sir. Requesting permission to leave from Prydwen,” a voice said.

Arthur closed a folder in his hand and glared Knight Prince at the doorway.

“What for?” he asked.

“I thought about going to see Knight-Sergeant Kershaw because she’s a solution to my problem and I have a surprise for Andr... Knight Adams!”

Arthur narrowed his eyes. “Prince.”

“It’s not a surprise if I say it out loud—”

“Prince,” Arthur called her again. “I don’t have to remind you about a promise I gave to your father. I’ll send you straight back to Citadel if you don’t follow my orders to the letter.”

“I know,” the girl said. “I was thinking about going to hunting mission with Knight-Sergeant, sir. Radstags.”

Arthur furrowed his eyebrows, but only a little. She wasn’t a big fan of hunting missions, not even when her girlfriend participated in them. “Why would you go hunt Radstags?”

“We’re on low on a radstag’s meat, and I know you like it,” the sniper faltered as she tried to come up with excuses. “And your birthday is coming soon...”

“My birthday is next month, Knight.”

He knew when someone spoke bullshit, especially in her case. Arthur had known her almost his whole life. When other soldiers at the Citadel had treated him like an adult when he was still Squire, Stefanie and that another vault dweller had treated him like a child. They had teased him and had brought him comic books and toys.
She and Cole had been like siblings to him — siblings he never had.

“I thought about surprising Knight Adams somehow. Um, she has seen nightmares lately, more than usual,” Stefanie stated. “She says those dreams don’t bother her, but she wakes up many times at night and sleeps somewhere else than in her bed. So I thought that you— Maybe you could surprise or cheer her up somehow?”

Arthur stared at her for a moment and approached her, seeing how the girl tensed up a little bit. He was well aware that people close to him feared him, and it made him somehow uncomfortable.

“I think she likes you… sir,” the girl added.

Does she?

“How many others know, Prince?” he asked.

“Jenkins, Ortiz and Knight-Sergeant Kershaw. I told them to keep their mouth shut. Um, if you want to punish someone for this, punish me. Others don’t have anything to do with this, sir,” the sniper explained.

Arthur resisted the urge to smirk but managed to hold his scowl and walked back to his usual spot.

“That was all. Dismissed, Knight. You have one hour.”

“Yes, sir. Don’t worry.”

“Be careful,” Arthur reminded, and Stefanie performed a salute.

Ingram had finally calmed down after what happened at the satellite array, and she let Andrea help her with power armours.

Andrea couldn’t go to the field or gym, so she didn’t have anything else to do. Engineering wasn’t her speciality, but it was a better option than being at the kitchen with Reyes or at the Logistics with DeShannon.

*Maybe I should take this with me to Infirmary and fix this with Danse. He’s losing his sanity down there,* Andrea thought.

She was focusing on replacing the glass of helmet when she heard a faint voice — beeping more likely.

Squire Hales.

“Knight Adams, ma’am,” the girl said.

“Yes, Hales?”

“Elder Maxson is requesting your immediate presence at his quarters, ma’am,” Squire said.

Andrea thought about what Arthur wanted. They hadn’t talked much after their conversation at the guardhouse.

She walked straight to Elder’s door and waited for permission to enter after knocking. But instead, Arthur opened his door. Andrea frowned and stepped inside.
“Is there something wrong, sir?” she asked, confused.

Then she froze when she saw candles, two meals, Nuka-Cola Quantum and bottle of his favourite whiskey on his table.

Andrea put a strand of her hair behind her ear and resisted the urge to scratch the tip of her nose. “Um, what’s this?”

“A dinner,” Arthur answered.

Though she had fought against her feelings, this melted her heart. Arthur was showing a new side of himself. He surprised her every day.

“I’m... honoured about this. Or are you going to eat that all by yourself?” Andrea smiled little.

“No, I’m not. Sit down.”

Somehow it sounded like an order, but Andrea assumed he didn’t notice it himself. He mostly talked with that kind of tone of voice. Then she looked around as Arthur sat down on his chair.

“Something is missing,” she said suddenly. “Music.”

Arthur gave her a confused look as she looked at her Pip-Boy.

“I’d give this machine in return for one holotape full of old rock songs, but Diamond City radio has to manage. So what are we celebrating? Or more importantly, what do we have here?” she asked.

“A grilled radstag, carrots, tatos, InstaMash...”

“Not bad. You told someone to bring two meals here, and no one blinked an eye?”

“No. I told them that I would be eating a double meal tonight,” Arthur answered and took a sip from his whiskey and Andrea chuckled a little bit.

His men probably believed him — hell, who wouldn’t believe a man with high charisma.

“You give an order, and they follow it.”

“It’s better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both. Niccolo Machiavelli.”

“Those who love to be feared, fear to be loved. Saint Francis de Sales,” Andrea said, grabbing her drink and opened the cap using her teeth.

“Next time I’ll open that beforehand,” Arthur said. “Teeth are for chewing, not opening bottles.”

“Oh, there will be a next time?” she asked and started laughing when she saw his scowl.

After their meal, they talked about their childhood, sharing their view of lives as a military brat and about Arthur’s famous fight with Deathclaw.

Andrea was surprised at how thirteen years old Knight could kill a Deathclaw. She barely survived with her pistols and power armour.

She asked, “How did you finally kill it?”

“With Danse and another’s Paladin help. Their primary purpose was to keep me safe and sound, so
they kept Deathclaw’s attention on them. Against Danse’s order, I took my hunting knife, climbed the top of Deathclaw, and I struck the blade of the knife into its head. It didn’t die right away, so it threw me onto the ground but died after others finished it with guns. That’s how I got this,” he explained and pointed his scar. “So unlike Quinlan says, I didn’t do it alone.”

Andrea hummed and leaned toward him, looking him into his eyes.

“Did I just heard that you, great Elder Arthur Maxson, what was the word, ah, disobeyed the orders of his superiors? Huh?” Andrea asked, playfully and snorted as the man almost rolled his eyes.

“What about that the super mutant? Shepard was its name?”

“After Brotherhood destroyed Enclave and ended a long war between us, we found out that Shepard had started to assemble all of its fellow brethren under his authority,” Arthur told. “Their goal was to gain the upper hand and take control of Capital Wasteland. His plans, however, failed after I organised an attack to their stronghold, lead a strike squad there and put it down along with other Super Mutants.”

She scrutinised him with a certain degree of awe.

“And I wondered, why they gave a rank of Elder to sixteen-year-old teenager,” Andrea said, smiling. “And then you reunited two factions back together,” she added as she remembered a text about his and Protector Casdin’s debate.

“It wasn’t easy. Protector isn’t the easiest person to persuade.”

“It was probably an easy task for you. You are charismatic,” Andrea said, and he blushed a little bit. “Your charisma worked on me...” she added whispering.

He lifted his gaze and gave her a long, thoughtful stare. For a moment their eyes locked together and it sent shiver down her body. She dropped her stare to the table as her cheeks flushed slightly in turn. Damn, she was like a teenager now.

“My biggest problem at the age of sixteen was how to get into the army,” Andrea said as she changed the subject. “Then a year later Nate and I enlisted in the army together.”

“Nate?” Arthur asked. “He was the one whom Kellogg shot in the Vault?”

“Yes. He was,” Andrea was quiet for a while.”...my childhood friend, a brother from another mother and Shaun’s father. More importantly, he was my best friend. We were inseparable. He saved my life when I almost drowned as a kid, but I couldn’t save his life when that time came.”

She hadn’t forgotten things what happened at Alaska, or Fort Marleen. But Vault 111... It had been personal. She would forever carry the guilty over it she couldn’t save him.

“What’s your most significant achievement, sir?” Andrea asked suddenly and pointed Arthur with her empty bottle. She wasn’t going to ruin this night with her babbling. “If we don’t count promotions, a fact you killed Deathclaw and Super Mutant leader and truce arrangement with Outcasts?”

“I wrote a book.” Arthur thought for a moment, and Andrea raised her eyebrows.

“Can I read it?”

“No.”
“Please?” Andrea begged.

“No.”

“Keep your secrets then, Maxson,” she said, grinning but made a mental note to shut her mouth. “Sorry, sir.”

“Why do you apologise?” he asked.

“It wasn’t polite,” she answered and put the bottle down to the table.

“You don’t need to worry about formality when we’re alone, Andrea.”

“You don’t mind if I do call you stubborn?” she asked and briefly touched his leg under the table.

“I am stubborn,” Arthur stated, leaning over the table and grabbed her hand.

Andrea smiled little, and with her hand, she stroked his fingers.

“Yeah, I have noticed that,” she said.

She thought once again how it came to this and could she… leave after this? She wasn’t going to raise Shaun with Brotherhood. However, when she thought about leaving, it hurt her. Andrea had no idea what she was going to do. Maybe it would be better for him if she just left.

Then the sudden sound and movement woke her from thoughts. Andrea lifted her gaze to Arthur as he stood up from his chair. She frowned when he stopped just in front of her.

“Would you like to, uh, dance with me?”

Andrea stared at him, confused as she tried to process in her mind what he just asked. She scratched the tip of her nose and smiled. He surprised her again.

Finally, she nodded and stood up. She let him place his hand on her left hip and felt her heart thudding. Her face grew red when she realised how close he was. She recalled they hadn’t been this close to each other since their conversation at the guardhouse.

“Are you okay?” he asked, his face a few inches from hers.

Andrea gazed back to his eyes and nodded.

“Yeah, I just...” she answered and put her left hand on his shoulder. Suddenly Andrea chuckled as she realised something. “What is this? Intimidating and feared military leader know how to dance?”

“We’re not savages; we have reunions. Even if I’m not a big fan of them,” he said.

“People out there say that you’re warmonger, but they haven’t seen this side of you. Though I don’t believe this myself.”

“Not even half of East Coast Brotherhood hasn’t seen this side of me,” Arthur whispered. “Maybe nobody...”

“So you don’t dance in Brotherhood’s reunions?”

“No,” he said.
Andrea stared him wistfully. “Why not?”

“Because I don’t like dancing.”

Andrea smiled a little bit but then continued staring him thoughtfully, asking, “Then why are we dancing, sir?”

“Maybe because you mentioned dancing in your interview with Cade. You said dancing helps you to forget your flashbacks.”

That’s why he knew about her suicidal thoughts.

“Did you stole or borrowed that holotape from Knight-Captain?” she asked.

“Both. Everything in this ship is technically mine.”

“Ah, I’m sorry, no. You don’t own my dog or my twins,” Andrea stated, meaning her dual pistols. “Why did you borrow the holotape? You do that often?”

“Only when I’m worried. I did the same thing after Danse killed Cutler,” Arthur answered. Then he pulled her even closer to him as they danced. “I was worried about you.”

Andrea swallowed and asked, “Why?”

“If it hasn’t been too obvious, I care about you.”

“Why me? Prydwen and the airport are full of younger, more beautiful women than me.”

“It’s true. They are younger and more, uh, beautiful than you. But it’s not about the looks. They’re not you,” Arthur faltered and glanced her nervously. “You’re different. You’re—”

She lifted her eyebrow. “Special?”

“You’re a puzzle. Mysterious. You’re the only one who doesn’t fear me and talks to me like a normal person. You’re not like others.”

Who doesn’t fear you? You don’t even know.

Andrea lowered her eyes to his chest and fell into thoughts. She probably looked submissive and secretive, as she deliberately avoided eye contact with him. But when he kissed her cheek softly, her heart jumped in her chest. Andrea raised her gaze again, and his icy blue eyes locked onto hers.

Once again, Arthur was showing a new side of himself.

They stared at each other in the eyes and lost track of time while Strangers in the Night played in the background.

Andrea glanced his lips and then again, his eyes. He was nervous and unsure of what to do next. No wonder why. Every time he had tried to approach her, she had scurried off. Now, she couldn’t do it to him. Andrea pushed herself against him, her arms now wrapped around his torso. She just wanted to be near him.

“You drive me off the edge, Andrea,” he whispered in her ear.

“Well, that was my intention,” she whispered back.
Her eyes roamed his face, scar and eyes. Then her gaze fell to his mouth again, and without realising, she bit her lower lip.

Arthur tightened his hold of her and leaned closer... Then closer...

Her heart began beating faster when their lips were only a few inches apart, and she closed her eyes. Yeah, she was nervous too.

Finally, Arthur made his move and clashed his mouth against hers. It surprised her, but only a little bit. His lips were on hers, and she tasted the whiskey on his charred lips. His kiss was clumsy and awkward, but she didn’t care.

She had to admit it; she had wanted to kiss him ever since he had rebuked her for the first time. Just to shut his mouth.

Andrea placed her arms around his neck and answered to kiss, feeling his massive neck muscles through his flight suit. She felt how he caressed her with his strong arms and grasped her. He touched her back, her lower spine and then her buttocks and thighs.

She let out a soft moan of pleasure as Arthur pushed her slowly against the bathroom door behind her, his lips on hers. He didn't give her a chance to take in a breath.

She let her hands wander around his chest, and he growled. She knew it drove him wild.

And her too, but…

This time it wasn’t the ghosts that speak to her through her conscience. It was her dishonesty.

“Arthur… We should stop,” she said, breaking their kiss and tried to balance her voice and breath. She hated to say it, but she wasn’t ready for this.

Arthur looked her confused, maybe a little disappointed, which was obvious. “Did I do something wrong?”

“No. It’s just, I’m sorry,” her voice faltered. “I can’t do this...”

“Do you fear me?” Arthur asked suddenly, looking sternly at her.

Andrea knew he wanted an honest answer. She couldn’t be entirely honest with him, but he deserved this answer.

Andrea took a few deep breaths, as he did and glanced a floor underneath them. “Yes.”

Arthur sighed after hearing her answer and ran his hand through his hair, pulling it back.

“You don’t need to fear me,” he said suddenly. “I have been Elder four years, and I can tell you; that promotion was too much, even for me. Elder Council, my parents... No, my whole family tree has decided my future for me. If you’re Roger Maxson’s descendant, you will be Elder someday, you wanted it or not. Sometimes this family feels like a curse.”

Andrea glanced at his profile and moved nervously when he said his name.

“My soldiers trust I’m making the right choices, but sometimes I doubt my choices. Especially when soldiers who I send to the battlefield, return dead or not at all. For the past four years, there hasn’t been anything in my life except for the burden and responsibility,” Arthur said, but then he looked at Andrea. “Until you came around.”
He reached up and stroked her cheek gently.

“I like being with you. You make me smile and believe me; it’s not something I often do. With you, I can be Arthur, not an Elder. I can’t get you out of my head, Andrea.”

Then she felt him touching her scarred chin with his finger and looked into her eyes.

“Whenever you’re ready, you can talk to me. My door is open to you. I’ll give you all the time you need, Andrea,” he said and smiled.

As he smiled at her, she felt the warmth growing inside her chest. Then Arthur leaned to kiss her cheek.

She resisted the urge to scratch her nose and smiled widely. “Thank you, Arthur.”

The look he gave her told her more than thousands of words. He didn’t hear words like that often.

But their moment was interrupted by the sound of a terminal which woke up even Emmett, Arthur’s cat.

“Maybe I should let you continue your duties. I’ve already held you awake one night. Thanks for the dinner and dance,” Andrea said, thinking how she ruined the whole date in the first place.

Arthur glanced her and walked to the terminal.

However, his whiskey glass on the table stole Andrea’s attention, and she had an idea. Why the hell not. Andrea took a glass and drank its content at one go.

“What if I stay here overnight?” she asked after drinking the liquid and put the glass down to the table.

The man gave her a confused look. She hadn’t probably ever seen him so confused except after she punched him.

“Um, too soon?” she asked.

“No. You can stay if you want,” Arthur said and smiled a little — answers that she wanted to see and hear.

“If you try anything, I’ll kick your ass once again. You should answer to that message of yours; it might be important,” Andrea said and poured herself a glass of whiskey. “After that, I want to know how good a dancer you are.”

Then she raised her eyebrows in wonderment as Arthur pulled off terminal’s power cable. He walked over to her and took a glass from her.

“I think they can manage one night without me.”

“They should put you into the guardhouse. You’re showing me a bad example, Elder,” Andrea teased while Arthur slid his hand through her hair and leaned against her forehead with his own.

“Who keeps company with wolves, will learn to howl.”

Andrea forgot that indescribable desire and insurmountable need she had felt earlier in the day.

With him, she could be Andrea, not a beast.
A/N: Aand you guys don't know how much I hate and love this chapter, but I had fun when I wrote it down. How much I love and hate those two. They are a pain in the ass to write.
Lost Patrol Part II

Chapter Summary

Andrea, Fox and Danse find someone who has been missing three years and returns to home - but they also find traces of someone who has been gone for ten years.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“The bunker has to be here, somewhere,” Paladin Danse stated and surveyed their surroundings.

They were middle of the Wakefield, close to Lake Quannapowitt and tried to locate old bunker that Faris had mentioned in his holotape.


Andrea saw him pausing his walk and heard him grunting. “Danse, are you okay?” she asked.

“I’m fine. Let’s go,” the man answered and continued walking.

Andrea stared at him, thinking should she inform Cade about this. Cade believed Danse wasn’t in good shape, and Andrea started to believe that the doctor was right. But still, the doctor let him go.

“Are you sure that bunker is here, sir?” Fox asked Paladin.

“It was part of my original mission brief, Knight Jenkins. It was said to be near Lake Quannapowitt, up north,” Paladin said as they continued their way toward the northeast.

Then Andrea noticed Fox taking his helmet off, and he leaned a little bit toward her.

“I saw you leaving from Elders quarters last night. Again.” Fox grinned, and Andrea rolled her eyes. “Did something happen? Like the birds and the bees?”

Andrea looked up to Danse, making sure he was alright and was far enough. “No.”

“No? What have you done then?”

“We read books, played chess and drank. That’s all.”

“Seriously?” Fox asked disbelief. “When I was his age, the only thing I had on my mind was...”

“You still only think about it. He is—”

“Are you both done with talking?” Paladin asked sternly and cast another glare their way.

Andrea nodded and picked up his pace as he told them to follow him. They travelled for quite a while, but the only thing what they saw was rock hills, dead trees and sand. She lifted her hand to check out her Pip-Boy.

“My Pip-Boy doesn’t pick up the distress signal,” Andrea stated. “What are you thinking, Danse?”
“It has to be here. Let’s move out.”

Knights followed him, and Andrea gazed her Pip-Boy just in case if the signal would appear. Then she heard something else behind her and frowned.

“Radscorpions!” Andrea yelled, and two radscorpions jumped out of nowhere, screeching loudly. “Not you guys again!” she bawled and avoided the first blow by jumping aside.

“Send them back to hell! Adams, take higher...” Paladin said, but she had already climbed to the cliff as if she would have read his thoughts.

They emptied their magazines into the creatures, and their screeching echoed between rocky hills. Ordinary radscorpion dropped quickly; however, the glowing one didn’t care about their effort.

“Knight, it spreads radiation damage. Stay there!” Paladin ordered, and Andrea nodded, hearing clicks of a Geiger counter.

Suddenly, she heard the sound of a third laser rifle and gazed up to the hill.

On the hill stood a man she didn’t recognise. However, the symbol on his combat armour and the black flight suit were a big giveaway. After they had killed the creature, Andrea jumped down from the cliff and walked over to Fox and Danse.


“Who knows,” the man answered. “People used to call me like by that name.”

Andrea noticed how exhausted and dirty he was. He looked more like a raider than a soldier. He was an older man, with dirty long hair and a messy grey beard.

Then the man continued, “I didn’t think I’d see Brotherhood soldiers anymore. How did you get in here? Why you are here?”

“We followed the distress beacons left by your team. Their holotapes led us here,” Andrea explained. “My Pip-Boy picked up the signals; we followed them. However, it didn’t pick up yours, Sir.”

“It’s inactive. I thought no one would come looking for me,” an older man said but looked back to the trio, like realising something. “The others. What happened to them?”

“They’re dead, Paladin. I’m sorry,” she said.

Brandis looked now even sadder after hearing the news and murmured something sorrowfully. Andrea felt sympathy for his remorse. He was a sole survivor, just like she was.

“I thought so. I tried to go back for them, you know, but there was nothing I could do, not alone,” Brandis explained faltering, his expression sad.

“What happened, Brandis?” Danse asked.

“Our mission failed. Six hours after insertion, my company was ambushed. We lost five Knights and exhausted our Power Armor reverses. We dismantled the armour, then retreated under fire, abandoning our supplies. I was separated from my team within a week. I hoped they would find a way here, but no one came,” the older man explained, and this time Danse felt sympathy for his remorse, considering his own team’s fate.
"I have their holotapes which they left behind. You want them, Sir?" Andrea asked after a moment of silence.

Brandis nodded.

Andrea took Astlins and Faris’s holotapes from her pocket while she slowly walked over to him.

"Thank you; this means a lot to me," Brandis said. "Do you have their holotags too?"

"Their holotags are already at the Prydwen. I gave them to Lancer-Captain Kells."

"Prydwen? Is she here too?" Brandis looked surprised. "Why?"

"Institute,” Paladin said. “My recon team detected odd energy readings after we arrived, and we suspected they were coming from the Institute. We contacted Citadel and not soon after that, Prydwen showed up with cavalry. However, we haven’t had luck with the Institute. It’s always a dead end.”

Then he continued, “Come back with us. You’re still a member of the Brotherhood, Paladin. You deserve a chance to return home.”

"What? No, no. I could not. Not after what happened to my team."

"We need your knowledge on this, sir.” Andrea stared, and she got a questioning look from old Paladin. “No one knows the Commonwealth better than you. We need your help, your knowledge and your skills."

"I’ve been here too long. Three years… all alone. I’m not myself,” Brandis said. "Would... they still take me?"

"That’s why we have Cade. He will help you as he did help me. And the Brotherhood will honour the memory of your team. Shouldn’t you be the one to tell their story?" she asked and flashed him a little smile.

Brandis sighed deeply, but his look in his eyes cleared a little bit.

"Unless I go back, their sacrifices, everything we went through. It’ll be forgotten. I can’t let that happen. I’ll do it. For them.” He sounded now more confident. “All right. I’ll… I’ll get my things, wait for me.”

On their way back, Danse suggested a pilot land down to Poseidon Reservoir facility. Then Paladin jumped down from the vertibird, walked to the pre-war truck and examined it.

Andrea frowned and followed him. "What it is?"

“Nothing. Return to vertibird, Knight,” Danse said sternly.

Andrea backed away as Paladin walked to the rear of the truck, trying to open the door.

“Uh, sir...”

“Knight. Do I have to remind you about the order which I gave you a few seconds ago?”

“No. But I have an easier solution, Sir,” Andrea answered and showed him a bobby pin. Instead of prying it open, they could pick the lock.
Danse didn’t answer but took a few steps back and gave her space. They opened the door and noticed the truck being full of boxes and metal barrels. Andrea climbed inside the truck.

“Knight,” Danse called her.

“You’re looking for that bullet which sniper shot? Don’t worry, I’ll find it,” Andrea said and scrambled over boxes and barrels, looking for a bullet.

“I found it!” she informed Paladin about her discovery and returned to him. She glared the bullet on her hand closely. “It has letters U and S engraved into it.”

“What?!” Danse asked.

Andrea glanced serious-looking Danse as he tore bullet from her hand.

He examined for a moment and then said, “Give me your radiophone.”

Andrea frowned at the sudden stern and strict tone but gave the machine to him.

“This is Paladin Danse, does Prydwen copy?” Paladin spoke into radiophone.

“Knight Prince here. What is it, Sir?”

“Give your radiophone to Elder Maxson or Lancer-Captain immediately. It’s urgent.”

“Yes, sir.” They heard girl walking through steel hallways and cleared her throat before calling Elder. “It’s Paladin Danse; he has an urgent message.”

“Paladin?” Arthur asked.

“Elder, we have a problem. The sniper who tried to shoot us not a while ago... Sir, it’s them. The bullet has letters U and S engraved into it.”

“Return here immediately and give bullet to be examined by the research team,” Arthur ordered after few seconds of silence, and Danse agreed.

“What does this US mean, sir?” Andrea asked Danse who glared a bullet in his hand.

“Unknown Soldier. It’s the title, given by Enclave to their assassin.”

Her heart thudded in her chest and her breath caught in her throat. One of them was still alive?

“I thought Enclave was defeated ten years ago? Enclave Remnants?” Andrea asked.

“We aren’t sure.”

“We aren’t sure? What do you mean?”

“No one hasn’t ever seen assassin because the only thing what they leave behind are dead bodies. Dead people don’t tell facts. This assassin appears out of nowhere and disappears without a trace. They can kill entire squads, and no one survives. They’re a one-man army. They kill people without mercy; children, civilians and soldiers,” Paladin explained. “We don’t know anything about them. Not their gender, age or height. We don’t even know are there multiple assassins or just one.”

“Entire squads? There has to be more than one soldier,” Andrea pondered.
Danse stayed quiet for a while, evading her question. “We should get going. I don’t like being here... Let’s move out.”

Andrea watched after him and then glanced the bridge. Something, maybe her sixth sense, told her she was their target.

Andrea noticed how nervous Paladin Brandis was when they approached a door to Command Deck though she tried to encourage him. The man sighed again before stepping inside and murmured something behind his beard.

Danse went first to greet Elder and Lancer Captain who waited for them. Knights followed him and Andrea looked behind her, making sure Brandis was with them. However, for her surprise, Brandis had straightened his back and bypassed her and Fox. They stared at him and let him go first as he was a higher rank.

“Paladin Brandis, reporting for duty, sir,” Brandis said as he walked to line with Danse.

For a little brief moment, Arthur and Lancer-Captain looked surprised when they saw him.

“This is… unbelievable,” Arthur said. “Where have you been, Paladin? What happened here?”

“After our arrival to Commonwealth, we were ambushed by Gunners near the Malden. They shot our vertibird down and attacked us. I lost five Knights during that fight. I had never seen such a fierce group of Gunners before,” Brandis said, sounding bitter.

“We scuffled the power armours so that they couldn’t loot them. We left our supplies and retreated to an old military base. It was sturdy and had a large amount of ammunition and weapons. Then Scribe Faris informed me about his finding; satellite array. I managed to reach a satellite array with him, but we were attacked by raiders who had a stronghold near the array. Faris was wounded badly, and at the same time, Knight Astlin set up her distress signal. We had agreed to use the signal only if we were in trouble,” Brandis said.

He remembered every moment like it would have happened yesterday.

“I left Scribe Faris alone and went to military base, only to find that ferals had overrun the base. I tried to return to the satellite array, but I couldn’t do anything for Faris. However, I hoped they would have survived somehow and waited for them at Recon Bunker Theta. But none of them returned. They all died alone there,” Brandis said, sounding apologetic, sadness exuding from his entire presence and body due to the lack of self-confidence. “I kept my distress signal active for a while, but I wasn’t surprised that Brotherhood didn’t send a rescue team.”

“And still you survived there, alone, three years?” Kells asked this time.

“I tried my best to avoid other people, everyone, everything. These three...” Brandis gestured Danse, Fox and Andrea. “were probably my first human contact for a long time. I did hear their gunshots, and at first, I didn’t bother to leave from the bunker. But then I heard a familiar voice,” Brandis said and glanced Danse.

“They told me they had found my dead team and that Prydwen had arrived here because of Institute. At first, I wasn’t sure should I return...”

“What changed your mind?”

Brandis hummed after Kells’s question and looked at Andrea.
“This young lady persuaded me back. So, thanks belong to her,” he stated.

Andrea smiled warmly, though mentally, she smirked.

*A young lady, huh?*

*Give way your suspicions to the wisdom of thine Elder. Where he shows trust, so shall you, Arthur had said to her once.*

*How am I supposed to tell him the truth?* Andrea thought, staring the Codex in her hand.

Andrea leaned against the railing of the second-floor catwalk, watching people at the gym and saw Danse walking toward her.

“Danse? Can’t you sleep either?” she asked him.

“No. I talked with Paladin Brandis and tried to fix my power armour,” a man said wiping his greasy hands on a rag. “This stuff doesn’t wash away easily.”

“Water and grease do not mix. That’s why the rain won’t flush the grease from power armours either. Is Paladin okay?”

“He’s little confused, and it’s going to take a while before he’s fit for duty again. But even now, he should be an asset to us. I’m glad to have him back,” Danse said confidently.

“He’ll recover. I’m sure about that. Give him time.”

“You’re talking from experience?” Danse asked a little concerned.

Andrea nodded. It was true. “Did you talk to him about what happened to your team?” she asked.

Danse rubbed his neck and said, “Yes. I told him what happened. I feel empathy for him because of his team’s fate. Hell, my team almost face the same fate as his team did. I don’t know if I’d survived alone three years after losing my team. He is strong, even without realising it himself.”

“Anderson said that Brandis has always been a survivor.”

“He is a survivor like you. That’s why you two are still here. I suggested him to talk with you. Talking with professionals helps, but it’s also good to share thoughts and feelings with someone who has the same kind of experience. You don’t lack compassion, Andrea,” Danse said, sounding confident.

She smirked when he called her Andrea again.

“I taught you everything Krieg taught Cutler and me. At this point, honestly, I don’t feel like there’s anything else I could teach you about being a Brotherhood soldier that you don’t already know,” Danse added. “Rest you have to learn yourself.”

Andrea smiled, but then she sobered up again and asked, “Are you sure there wasn’t anything you could have done for him? Cutler I mean.”

For a moment, Danse wore a scowl on his face, but then his expression softened. “The FEV effect is irreversible. No one could have done anything.”

Andrea let out exhale and touched his arm. “I’m sorry.”
“Ever since Cutler died, I’ve seen other soldiers come and go. Some were brave; some were honest, hell, some were even downright heroic. But I’d never considered any of them to be a friend, a friend like Cutler was until now.” Danse said, and Andrea tilted her head. “It’s a good feeling, but it frightens me all the same. Having a bond with someone then losing them. It changes you. I don’t want to go through that again.”

“Danse...”

“I just thought you deserved to know how I felt,” he said, touching her shoulder gently.

“That’s why I kept you safe at the satellite array, Danse. I know how you feel. But I still expect you to command me around,” Andrea stated and gave him a friendly hit to the arm.

“You can be sure of it, soldier,” he said.

Andrea remained rooted to the spot after Danse had left and fell into her thoughts. Her thoughts once again drift to Arthur. There was no room for other thoughts. Her dishonesty suffocated her slowly, but still, she couldn’t tell him the truth.

Suddenly, someone hit her back, and Andrea startled at the sudden touch.

And of course, it was Fox.

“Are you okay, Andie?” he asked, looking at her with genuine concern.

“I’m fine, Fox. It just, ah, nothing. I’m just an old woman, that’s all, babbling and thinking.”

“Should we go down to the Airport? I think Dogmeat needs his daily walk and you need some fresh air. You look like shit.”

“Thanks,” Andrea said and resisted the urge to give him a friendly hit. “I’ll get Dogmeat.”

For Andrea’s please, under the excellent care of Scribe Connor, Dogmeat had healed nicely. He was feed regularly and brushed by Squires. It melted Andrea’s heart how Arthur had permitted Squires to help Connor with dogs.

Knights and Dogmeat went to the destroyed waiting room at the other side of the Airport, that still was full of benches, reception desks and carpets. Dogmeat sprinted down the shoreline, attempting to catch every radbird he saw. It seems he was ready to return to the field.

“We are actually outside of the Airport at the moment,” Andrea declared after she sat down to the bench. “Should we get permission for this?”

“Nah. Knight-Sergeant Kershaw saw us leaving the perimeter, so that was enough,” Fox said, waving his hand.

“You’re such a criminal, you know.” Andrea shook her head and stared the Old North Church. “Can I ask you something?”

Fox knew almost everything so that he could give her answers.

“Now this might be personal,” Fox stated but shrugged. “Fire it.”

“How Sarah Lyons died?”

“Her team, except one Paladin, was killed not long after she was promoted to Elder. Someone, or
something, butchered them,” he said. “And the only one who survived disappeared into thin air
after her death. Some of us think he was behind it, but I don’t think so. Paladin Cole was loyal to
Lyons, and even Elder Maxson looked up to him.”

“Arthur has— stop looking at me like that, Fox,” Andrea stated as she noticed how Fox resisted
the urge to laugh. Sometimes he reminded her of Nate. “He has Sarah Lyons holotag within his
own...”

Fox burst into laughter.

“Are you serious? Okay, fine. I have seen his holotags because I’ve slept—”

“Oooh! You lied! You two did it!”

“No! Not like that, you know, you can sleep with someone without having...”

“Sex?” Fox filled her sentence.

“Yes. You haven’t slept with someone without having sex?” Andrea asked, and he shook his head.
“Of course, you haven’t. Forget that.”

“I think Maxson loved Sarah. That may be the reason why he has her holotag,” Fox pondered after
he sobered up. “And he still carries on Owyn’s will. Owyn wanted to protect people of Capital
Wasteland more than collect technology, and that’s how— Andie?”

Andrea stood up and glanced around them. She had once again feeling that someone was watching
them. Then she heard something or someone moving at the shoreline and shifted her gaze there.

Then they heard shrieking of Molerats.

“Dogmeat!” Andrea called him, and the dog returned to them, his snout covered in blood. “Are you
done, killer? Come on if—”

A second later, she felt Fox pushing her down the ground, covering her body with his and heard a
distant sound of the rifle. Right after it, they stood up hastily and hurried behind a cover.

“What the hell just happened?” Andrea asked.

“You had a laser sight aligned to your chest,” Fox answered, and Andrea stared at the bench the
bullet had hit.

They tried to kill her again.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I like Brandis. He’s one of my favourite characters in Fallout 4. But I started to
like him more after I wrote about him, how he shares the same struggle with
Survivor’s Guilt like Andrea and Danse does. What a trio.
The sound of the gunshot lifted an alert inside the Airport, and they contacted the Prydwen via power armour communication system, which rarely happened when it came to highly important and confidential cases. It was clear that someone, or some groups, listened to radio frequencies, even Brotherhoods.

This time contact interrupted the meeting of higher-ups. Anderson woke up to the sound that came from his helmet and frowned.

Arthur stopped browsing a file in his hand as the older man answered to a radio call.


"What is?" Kells questioned.

"It was Paladin Russell," Anderson said and took his helmet off. "Unknown tried to kill one of us. Russell found a bullet and reported it had its usual engravings. Knight Jenkins said that Custom House Tower could have been a place from where assassin shot. However, he wasn’t sure. All happened too fast."

They were too close. Too close to Airport.

"How many casualties?"

"Zero. Knight Jenkins pushed Knight Adams down just in time. He said assassin used a laser sight, which helped him to save her before lethal shot. Without it—"

Arthur held his scowl though he felt his heart missing a beat when he heard that Andrea had been there too. For a moment, he thought what could have happened if Fox wouldn’t have been there. She could have... No, that didn’t happen, and she survived.

"We must inform the personnel about the danger. Assassin is getting too close Airport. Captain, send an information message to all staff. Paladin-Commander, gather a search team and investigate a Custom House Tower. Though I highly doubt assassin isn’t there anymore."

"Yes, Elder," Kells affirmed and left from the scene.

Then Anderson hummed, pondering something.

"Paladin-Commander?" Arthur asked.
“If I remember correctly, the last time when assassin attacked, they tried to kill Knight Adams. There must be a reason for it,” Anderson stated. “Something tells me that she’s hiding something. We should question her.”

Arthur sighed and spoke, “When Knights return, order them both into my quarters for the report.”

Ten years and now assassin appears once again, not single shot or traces of them during the past the decade.

Something tells me that she’s hiding something. We should question her.

Arthur wasn’t a fan of the idea because of his feelings, but he had noticed Andrea’s secretiveness. She has been mysterious since the day she arrived at Prydwen, avoiding telling too much about her past. Maybe she didn’t want to talk about it.

But perhaps for a stake of his crew, he should question her anyway. It was his job to make sure everyone was safe.

“Come on in. Close the door, Jenkins,” Arthur said as he heard a knock on the door and Knights stepped inside his quarters. They both called him by title and Arthur studied them with his icy blue eyes.

Usually, both of them were lively and noisy, but times like this, they both were silent.

“What happened, Knights?” he asked.

“We headed outside to the Airport because Dogmeat needed to get out. During our conversation, Knight Jenkins noticed a sniper’s laser sight, and he pushed me out of the way just nick of time. We went to behind cover after that, just in case, if sniper would try to reshoot us but we never heard a second gunshot,” Andrea reported.

Then Jenkins continued, “I concluded bullet was shot from Custom House Tower, judging from its angle. But I’m not a hundred per cent sure where it came from, Sir.”

They barely had survived from the assassination attempt, but they were still calm. Sometimes Arthur was amazed how tough one vault dweller and wastelander could be.

“Paladin Russell told bullet had U and S engraved into it. This was the second time when assassin attacked us, or more precisely, tried to kill you, Knight Adams,” Arthur said and moved his gaze to Andrea.

“I’m well aware of that, Sir,” Andrea said. “Is there a chance that this assassin is working for Institute now after Enclave is gone?”

“What do you mean?”

“Institute might see me as a threat as I killed Kellogg. Maybe they believe that Kellogg told me something, so they sent an assassin after me,” Andrea reasoned. “I don’t have other explanations for these incidents, Sir.”

It sounded reasonable. She was able to kill Kellogg, so they sent a more skilled assassin after her.

Arthur narrowed his eyes and began pacing around his room. But why the Institute would use assassin of Enclave? Didn’t they have more people like Kellogg at their disposal? And how this
Then he remembered Andrea’s report about Kellogg.

*You don’t find Institute, Institute finds you, and that’s how people end up there,* Kellogg had said.

Arthur looked both Knights, who quietly waited for his order or question.

“That’s all, Knights. You’re dismissed.”

Arthur stared Andrea as they left from his quarters. She looked back to him, telling him that she was fine and there wasn’t anything to worry about.

This time, however, it didn’t work. Arthur feared for her. No, not just for her, but for all his soldiers.

It didn’t matter if assassin works with the Institute or not; Unknown Soldier was highly dangerous even alone.

And Arthur hadn’t expected this.

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*Fr: Lancer-Captain Kells KS-390LC  
To: Entire Crew  
This is a priority alert. During and after our arrival to Commonwealth, we have faced many hostiles forms, but lately, we have encountered even more dangerous enemies. What happened to Knight Harrison and who attacked at him is still unclear. It is still under investigation.  
For entire crews notice, Unknown Soldier is now in Commonwealth and is behind yesterday’s attack. Luckily assassin’s attempt ended up in failure, and we survived without casualties. However, after yesterday’s incident, Elder Maxson declared martial law and from now on, the East Coast Brotherhood is under a state of war.  
All personnel have permission to carry weapons all the time. Order not to leave from Airport without a partner or team holds. Any suspicious activity must be reported to a superior officer. Ad Victoriam, brothers and sisters.*

After reading Kell’s message, Andrea went to the mess hall and filled her plate.

“Morning,” Stefanie said as Andrea sat down next to her.

“It’s 1100, Stef.”

“I know. I had a night shift.”

“I know. I slept at Knight’s quarters,” Andrea whispered.

Stefanie raised her eyebrows and glanced Arthur who sat on another table with Paladin Danse and Russell before asking, “Say, have the birds, and the bees happened?”

“No,” Andrea answered and took a sip from her coffee.

The girl frowned at her and then checked again that nobody wasn’t listening to them.

“What’s wrong with you?” she asked, and Andrea shrugged. “You need help, Andrea.”
“No, you need. What’s the rush?”

“Are you kidding me? There is airship full of female soldiers, probably men too, who would have been with him like that already dozens time. Hell, they would have married him already. But no, you,” Stefanie whispered and rubbed her temples. “You are one piece of work, Andrea. Are you sure he’s going to wait for you—”

“He said that he would wait as long as it takes,” Andrea said evenly and continued her lunch.

Stefanie’s jaw dropped.

“Uh, are we talking about the same man?” the girl asked baffled.

“What man?” a voice asked, causing both of them to jump.

“What kind of gossip club have you set up here? Whispering and babbling like old ladies,” Haylen asked again as she sat down next to Andrea.

“Well, we have an old lady here,” Stefanie said, and Andrea kicked her under the table. “Ouch! Crabby like an old lady.”

The girl moved her legs under the table and lifted them onto the chair, avoiding her next kick. Then Stefanie realised that she was the one whom everyone watched. She chuckled nervously and glared Andrea behind her eyelashes.

Haylen sniggered and said, “You never change. Hey, have you heard how things are at Citadel?”

“Dean answered to my message yesterday,” Stefanie answered. “He told me it was quite calm there, but reputedly dad is anxious.”

“Why?”

“Well, dad is there, and we’re here. After Elder declared a state of war in the Commonwealth, dad has been restless.”

“I bet Star Paladin wants to come here?” Haylen asked.

“I bet he has said; ‘I don’t like that Prydwen is in Commonwealth as it’s probably the most dangerous place in East Coast now. And now under a state of war?’” Stefanie imitated her father with a deep voice. “He’s uncomfortable with the fact Elder Maxson is here, and he isn’t. Dean joked that maybe dad would come here and he sends me back to Citadel. A legend says Prydwen can contain only one Prince at the time.”

“I would like to see you as a first-in-command there,” Haylen joked.

Andrea snorted.

“And you shut up,” Stefanie said to Andrea. “We Princes are natural leaders.”

“Well, I think that trait stepped over one family member. Maybe they should let Paladin-Commander Prince take care of leadership,” Haylen taunted.

Andrea smirked as Stefanie finally quieted down. But then she frowned when Squire Ortiz walked past them.

“Emilio, where are your carrots?” Andrea asked and glanced Squire’s plate.
“I don’t want to eat them,” the boy murmured.

“I know you dislike vegetables, but as a soldier, you should be ready to eat whatever you can find from the Wasteland,” Andrea pointed out. “There was once saying *an apple a day keeps the doctor away.*

Squire grunted frustratedly and tossed his head. He disliked Cade and needles.

Then Andrea continued, “You can also take care of Dogmeat and other dogs if needed; all you need to do is eat more vegetables. I can talk to Scribe Connor about it.”

The boy grunted once more but turned around to pick up his carrots. Bribery always worked.

“You know, Andrea, you would become a good mother someday,” Haylen said and smiled.

Stefanie grinned, leaning a little bit toward the older woman and whispered, “Yeah, I can’t wait to see if the next generation of Maxson’s will have freckles too.”

Andrea stopped her eating, losing her appetite. She glared a sniper in front of her and thanked them for the company before she left.

“... to keep you at the battlefield, so only the mission and war would matter.”

Andrea sighed as she thought those words and took another drag from her cigarette. She gazed Atlantic and blew smoke out. Then she heard footsteps behind her.

“Adams?” a voice called her.

Andrea turned to look at Danse who sat down in front of her and tossed her cigarette over the edge. He didn’t like smoking.

“I heard you talking to Haylen and Prince at the mess hall,” Danse began. “That what Scribe Haylen said about...”

“Let it be, Danse,” Andrea said quickly, maybe too quickly, as it raised Danse’s concern.

He stared at her for a moment and asked, “Did you have kids before the war?”

“No,” Andrea answered. “I... I can’t have kids, Danse. What Haylen said... it just reminded me of that I’m incapable of having a child.”

“May I ask what is causing that?” Danse asked carefully.

Andrea gave him a sad little smile and shrugged. “I believe it has something to do with my ovaries. I don’t know.”

“I’m sorry, Andrea,” he apologised.

“Apology accepted, Sir. I have to live with that...” Andrea whispered.

“You shouldn’t keep everything inside you,” Danse said. “Talking helps. I’m here for you if you need to talk, day or night.”

“I’ll try to remember that.”
And of course, unintentionally Danse had reminded her of her dishonesty. It was what bothered her most.

“You did love Cutler, didn’t you?” she asked and looked at him.

“Yes, I did. I still do,” Danse answered and dropped his gaze to his hands.

Just like her, he carried holotag of his loved one with him. Andrea sat down next to Danse, giving him a friendly hug and held her head on his shoulder.

“I’m here for you, Danse.”

“I know.”

At night, Andrea sat at Power Armor Bay and fixed her power armour’s leg. She thought about the assassin, her friends around her and then Shaun. She hadn’t progressed with the mission. Shaun was still out there, somewhere.

Andrea cursed Kellogg and the Institute in her mind. How could the Institute possibly give him a loving home?

Her thoughts were interrupted as Squire Hales came to her once again.

“Elder Maxson wants to speak with you, Andrea.”

Andrea resisted the urge to smile when the child called her by the first name and thanked her.

She rubbed her greased hands into the towel as she walked toward Command Deck. Andrea noticed that he wasn’t there, so she walked straightly to his door.

Arthur opened his door this time and let her in, asking, “How are you feeling, Knight?”

“Fine, Sir,” Andrea answered, sounding little unsure. She heard it from her voice, and so did Arthur.

Pair of icy blue eyes stared at her, observing her every muscle movement. “Why that doesn’t convince me?”

Andrea sighed and crossed her arms. “What do you want me to say?” she asked.

“What is bothering me?” Andrea asked. “Shaun. Because I don’t even know where Shaun is and how to get to him! It’s just— I don’t want even to know what the Institute has done to him! And I can’t find him if I’m locked up in here!”

Then she continued, “And what about the others? Fox and Danse almost died because they were with me when assassin attacked. I’m frustrated because I’m locked up in here when others are out there in danger also! Where is equality on that, Elder?!”

Andrea began to take deep breaths as she tried to calm herself. Then she rubbed her face with her hands and sat down to the chair.

“I wish that assassin is here just for me and not anyone else, Arthur,” she added.
Then Andrea heard sounds of his combat boots as he moved toward her. She felt a strong hand grab her arm, and raised her gaze to him, seeing his compassionate and understanding expression.

“You’re not locked up here. We’re just worried. That assassin is a one-man army and extremely dangerous,” Arthur answered and brushed a lock of her hair off her face. “You’re free to continue your missions. However, talk to Cade after every mission.”

“I... I’m sorry that I yelled.” Andrea nodded ashamed and looked down. “I shouldn’t have.”

“You’re worried about your godson and friends. It is understandable,” Arthur said and lifted her gaze to his.

He then leaned towards her and pressed a soft kiss to her lips. Instead of pulling himself away, Arthur wrapped his arms around her when she answered to kiss and held her close to him.

Again, Andrea felt fluttering butterflies in her stomach, and her feet felt like jelly as he took her into a tight embrace and kissed her.

But no matter how much Andrea enjoyed it, she broke the kiss. Her dishonesty hurt her. She wanted to tell him about her past but she couldn’t. She feared.

Andrea dropped her gaze as a single tear trembled in the corner of her eye and fell.

“Andrea? What...”

“It’s nothing. Just my mood changes,” Andrea stated and gave him a flustered smile. “Typical middle-aged woman and her problems.”

Arthur observed her little uneasy. “If there is anything you want to talk about, tell me. I’ll listen.”

“I’m just trying to cope with this, with all of this—” Andrea faltered. “I, um, I should go, sir.”

“Stay with me, Andrea,” he said and stopped her walk.

“You want me to stay overnight?” she asked, and Arthur kissed her cheek as an answer.

She studied his face carefully and tilted her head little to the left, moving her attention to the scar on his cheek.

“Is this ever sore?” she asked, touching it.

“When someone punches my face or touches it with greasy fingers, yes,” Arthur answered.

“Ah, shit. Don’t tell my face is,” Andrea stated horrified when she realised that her hands were still greasy and she had rubbed her face more than once. Then unawares, she scratched the tip of her nose and huffed.

“Why I scratched my nose?” Andrea asked herself and looked up to Arthur. “And you didn’t say anything.”

“I didn’t care,” Arthur said, wiping her nose with his sleeve and gave a kiss on her freckled nose.

Andrea’s cheeks flushed red, and she looked down so she could hide it. Then she sighed defeated and leaned against his chest with her forehead, closing her eyes.

She had tried to fight against her feelings because Arthur had no future with her — not the future
he wanted. Ordinary things always tempted extraordinary men. But she lost that battle.

She fell for him.

“Can I wash this war paint?” she asked suddenly.

“You can use my bathroom.”

“Thanks. For your information, this is the face of someone who works during their leisure time. Next time, I’ll head to Diamond City before Ingram turns me into Scribe,” Andrea joked.

Once again, her joke made him smile, and whenever she saw his smile, her stomach felt all fluttery.

Yeah, she was once again 15 years old Andrea.

“Andrea,” Arthur called her suddenly, and she turned to look over her shoulder. “We’ll find your godson together. I’ll help you. You’re not alone.”

She looked back at him and smiled, saying, “Thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thanks for reading.
Anchorage

Chapter Summary

What happened at the Anchorage? And Andrea finally realises something...

Chapter Notes

The chapter contains mostly dream/flashback.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sometimes mornings at the Anchorage were beautiful. When the sun rose from the east, rays of the sunshine made snow and nearby ocean glitter. It gave soldiers hope. Hope for the new day. It was a sign that night was over. The dawn always came after night. The nights were coldest as the wind blew from the North Pole and froze everything.

Even winterised combat armours weren’t enough to protect soldiers from freezing wind and snow. The sun and campfire warmed up soldiers little during the daytime. Sometimes, however, it wasn’t enough. Not as long as the war continued, they weren’t able to return to their families.

“Commie sons-of-bitches,” General Chase exclaimed loudly and cursed even more after that.

Andrea raised her eyebrow as she moved her gaze from campfire to U.S. Army field headquarters’ command tent and others followed her gesture.

“Someone woke up with the wrong foot,” one of the Sergeant’s said.

“Shut up, Wynn. If Chase hears you, he shoves that combat boot of his into your ass,” Whitney said. “Whatever happened, he isn’t pleased.”

“Sergeant Montgomery failed to get inside the Cave. He lost several men when Chimeras showed up,” Lieutenant Lowman answered and took a bite from his meal.

“Goddammit, those tanks. Did they return already?”

“About an hour ago. Sergeant Montgomery, Lieutenant Morgan and Major Maxson are in the tent too now.”

“Why they didn’t ask help from us?” Wynn asked.

“Jarheads,” Whitney said with a mocking voice. “Why to ask help from the Army when Marines can obviously ‘handle’ assaults themselves.”

“We are all hungry, tired and annoyed, Whit,” Lieutenant Lowman reassured and glanced Andrea next to him. “Do you know what they are talking about, Captain?”

“Probably about Chimera Armor Depot,” Andrea answered, staring towards trenches where most
soldiers were fighting at the moment. Days and nights.

Lowman sighed and said, “There is Ice Camp, plus many other strongholds between us and Armor Depot. We have tried that before.”

Andrea put her coffee cup down to the ground. She wasn’t hungry.

“Chase knows it. However, we have to do something to Chimeras. If they are on our way, we can’t get close to artillery guns,” she said and saw a group of soldiers returning to headquarters. Nate among them.

He was walking with a severely wounded soldier, helping him to get into the infirmary.

Andrea sighed as she stood up and walked to them. “Nate, what happened?”

Nate gave her cheerful look even though he was dead tired, wounded and full of mud. His winterised combat armour and helmet were almost broken too.


Andrea stared at her childhood friend and grabbed his hand, hearing how he grunted. Probably because of pain. She glared bloody bandage around his arm and moved her gaze back to him.

“Go to Dr Adami,” she said.

“C’mon, this isn’t that serious...”

“Now,” Andrea raised her voice, but then she sighed. “Please, Nate...”

“Okay, ma’am, I will go,” he said and peeked over her shoulder. “Well, someone isn’t happy either.”

Andrea turned her head and saw a pair of icy blue eyes staring at her. And their owner didn’t look happy.

“It seems I have to go,” she stated and turned to look at Nate. “And you...”

“I’ll go to see Dr Adami,” Nate promised.

Andrea gestured with her fingers that she would watch him like a hawk and walked over to Roger.

“General wants to talk to you,” he said, scowling.

“Morning, Major.”

And when he didn’t answer, Andrea knew he was pissed off.

She stepped inside a command tent and saw General Chase, Lieutenant Morgan of Intelligence Corps and Gunnery Sergeant Montgomery of Marines standing next to the substantial computer-controlled map.

“Morning, General. Sergeant. Lieutenant,” Andrea greeted them by nodding, staying neutral.

“You wanted to talk to me, sir?”

“Yes. What do you know about our last mission?” Chase asked and fixed his overcoat’s collars, like making sure his four golden stars were still attached to coat’s shoulders.
“Only what I’ve heard. That our attempt to occupy the Caves failed because of Chimeras. My condolences about your losses, Sergeant,” Andrea answered and turned to look at the marine. “I believe we have to do something to this Chimera problem and that’s probably a reason why I am here, sir?”

Roger changed his position nervously next to her. Jackpot. That’s why he was pissed off. General bridled and began to pace around the room, but Andrea saw a smirk on his face.

“Yes, we need to do something. As long as Chimeras are moving around Anchorage, protecting those commie strongholds, we can’t do anything. Our tanks can’t fight against Chimera’s laser cannon. Our only weapon against them is locked down in Pentagon’s basement,” General Chase explained and paused his walk to lit up his cigar.

Andrea had heard that Liberty Prime wasn’t combat-ready. Its weapons systems were offline. Pentagon hadn’t even figured how to get the robot to work. They hadn’t found enough small and powerful power source for it.

“Do you want me to infiltrate Chimera Armor Depot, sir?”

“It’s what you do best, Captain.”

“Do we have intel about the base, lieutenant?” Andrea asked and moved her gaze to Morgan. He was part of counter-intelligence corps, so he knew everything about the area and Chinese troops.

“We don’t have a full intel about it, nothing about the size, layout... We only know that Chimeras are repaired and refuelled there. There are probably approximately thirty soldiers in the base. We sent a patrol there a few days ago, but we haven’t heard about them. I fear the worst.”

“I assume we have to destroy their fuel tanks and Chimeras along with facility?”

“Yes. What do you suggest, Captain?” Andrea bit her lip. Someone, or a few people in this room, would not like her idea.

“I volunteer to go there alone first, sir, to gain more intel.”

And of course, she got a look of daggers from someone who stood next to her. Chase almost dropped his cigar but held his position.

“Andrea—”

“Major Maxson,” Chase said firmly, and the younger man shut his mouth.

“If I go there with others and we’ll be captured, the mission will be jeopardised. We’ve heard about their interrogation methods. An average soldier can’t stand up it, but I can. Solo infiltration is the best choice for this mission at the moment, sir,” Andrea explained and stared General, who rubbed his chin and walked around the map for a while.

“When do you think you can commence your mission?”

“By afternoon. I should reach Chimera Armor Depot by night. Easier for me.”

“Admitted. However, only to gain intel, Captain. If someone sees you, get the hell out of there. Do not engage with hostile,” Chase said finally, addressing his last order.
Agreeing with him, Andrea saluted before leaving and exhaled when she heard someone following her.

“You’re not seriously thinking about going there alone?” Roger asked when she walked towards the personnel’s tent.

“General Chase accepted my request. End of the story.”

“Without asking my opinion!”

“Your opinion? Or do you mean your permission? Do I need your opinion or permissions for my missions? Chain-of-Command, Major. General’s order.”

A few soldiers glanced them and fled from the scene. They knew they should avoid Maxson’s when they both seemed to have their daggers drawn, barking like dogs at each other.

“Yes, but I have an opinion about should we sent you to die, or not.”

“Die? Jesus, Roger, why you are so dramatic? It was my own decision, and General approved it. We do know the risks, Major. You won’t change my mind,” Andrea stated as she finally reached the personnel’s tent.

The soldiers sleeping in the tent awoke to their debate, and one of them gave them stink eye.

“Major, what—” he murmured but startled a little bit when a pair of angry icy blue eyes stared daggers at him.

“Get out. All of you,” Roger commanded.

The soldier nodded and disappeared quickly from the scene with others. Speedily and quietly as mouses. Roger watched them leaving and then moved his gaze back to Andrea.

“Look at me,” he said, but Andrea kept her attention on her pistols until the man took the gun from her hand.

“You’re not serious?” Andrea asked irritated.

“I’m talking to you, Captain.”

“Yes, I can hear you, Major, but there isn’t anything you can do at the moment. I’m leaving. End of fucking debate.”

“Why are you so goddamn stubborn?”

“Oh, what are you then?” Andrea spat as she finally turned around to face him, seeing his angry face glaring back at her. “Am I complaining about your missions when they order you to battlefield trenches? No, I don’t.”

“Because you’re always there too.”

“This is my job too. I won’t put others under risk. I’m going there. Alone,” Andrea stated and gave a stink eye to another soldier who tried to enter the tent. The soldier made U-turn immediately without saying anything.

After taking her guns from the table, Andrea made her way towards the tent’s door, but the man grabbed her hand to stop her. Andrea felt how he pulled her back, pushing her against the wall
behind her.

“That’s what I mean. You always put other people’s safety above your own. Like now, you don’t want to take others with you because the risk of getting caught is high. I don’t care what the General said. You are not leaving,” Roger scoffed, but Andrea expressed her frustration with grunting. “You have been like this after Lucas—”

Andrea snapped immediately. “Don’t bring him into this. He has nothing to do with this!”

“Do you think it didn’t hurt me too? We both felt the same loss.” Andrea swallowed the lump in her throat, trying to keep her emotions still. “And I almost lost you last time when you infiltrated —”

“You can’t always protect me, Roger. I’m soldier, superior, and I have my duties. This is my fucking job! I’m not only your wife here,” Andrea said. Roger hit the wall behind her and stared her with his icy blue eyes, his eyes penetrating hers.

“I don’t care what you are, Andrea. First and foremost, you’re my wife.”

“First and foremost, here I am a soldier, and I have duties as you do,” Andrea continued. Roger sighed as he rubbed his bridge of the nose. Finally, they calmed down.

“If,” Andrea stressed the word and cupped his face with her hands. “If Chase’s nuke tossing robot would be here, in working order, we wouldn’t even have to be here. But we are, and we can’t abandon our duties. I want to do this for the others. I was trained for this. If Pentagon sent me here...”

“Andrea, your uncle doesn’t care what happens here.”

“I’m not doing this for him, Roger,” Andrea hissed. “I’m doing this for us... for us who are here. Every soldier here are in danger, and we can’t destroy those artillery guns as long as Chimeras are protecting the Caves,” Andrea reasoned and stroked his cheek gently.

“Reds won’t even know that I was there. I’ll be fine.”

Roger kissed her hand and stared at her wistfully. “Maybe I should...”

“Your squad can assault the factory after I’ve returned with the intel, okay? I’ll be back by tomorrow morning.”

“If you don’t come back, I’ll personally knock down the door of Depot and kill everyone there,” Roger said. “Just... Be careful.”

Andrea pressed a light kiss on his lips and felt how the man rested his forehead on hers. “They can’t catch me that easily.”

“Are you two done, sir?” Lowman asked, keeping his eyes on the book as Roger returned to others. “It’s dangerous to keep you guys together.”

“I’ve seen how you fight with your wife. You know women aren’t easy.”

“Yes, I know, but at least I’m not under wife’s thumb.” Lowman snorted as Roger took the book from him and hit his second-in-command with it. “Hah!”

“Who said you could read my books, Brian? I should give you a note because of stealing.”
“Look who’s misusing his authority,” Lowman stated with a mocking tone and was ready to get another hit. Roger shook his head and gave the book back to him.

“It’s a good book. I want it back in one piece,” Roger said as he left and saw Nate sitting at the chair next to the medical tent. Roger noticed he stared Andrea, who was now discussing with Montgomery.

Nate asked about her when Roger approached him. “She’s going there, isn’t she, sir?”

“I tried to talk to her but…”

Andrea had already changed her winterised combat armour to her black infiltration suit. It protected her from hypothermia and damage with high-level ballistic polymer weave and aramid fibres. All courtesy of her top-ranking equipment went to Pentagon and DARPA.

Though Roger despised Pentagon after what happened to her, he was somehow grateful that they gave her best equipment what they had in their hands. He knew that was selfish. But she was Secretary of Defense’s pride.

And most importantly, she was his wife whom he almost lost.

“Well, she is like… She is Taurus, sir. Stubborn, smart, trustworthy and honest.”

“It seems you have fallen for your wife’s zodiacism too, Sergeant,” Roger stated, raising his eyebrow in wonderment.

“I heard Andrea talking with Nora about zodiacism on the phone. Be careful that she doesn’t fall for it too. You know, soon she starts practising palm reading, uses mood rings and other stuff like that,” Nate said but stopped when he saw Major’s baffled look. “Just kidding, sir.”

“Don’t give me a heart attack, Nate,” Roger stated, but then he frowned.

He heard General talking to someone via the radio. Andrea had heard it too and walked to the doorway.

“What’s going on?” Roger asked her.

“Hadfield and Bringmann ask reinforcements,” answered Andrea. “They’re at the mining area. Chase ordered signal corps to make contact with Pentagon.”

“They’re behind enemy lines… And that place swarms with Reds,” Roger stated, but Andrea didn’t answer. She just stared at Corporal of Signal Corps, or more likely, the phone on his hand.

A soldier turned to look over his shoulder, lowering the phone slightly as he spoke, “Pentagon says it’s too dangerous—”

“Give me that,” Chase said, taking a phone. “This is General Chase; two of our best are there. We can’t—”

Then he clenched his teeth together and smashed the phone back down.

“Sir, the backup?” Captain Hadfield’s asked via the radio.

Chase answered, “Captain, you’re on your own. Pentagon said there are too many Chimera’s close to the mine, and you’re behind enemy lines; we can’t send backup—”
Roger couldn’t believe it. Air Force could send fighter jets to support them, but it seemed oil was more important than the lives of men. He cursed Pentagon in his mind but then he noticed that someone didn’t stand next to him anymore.

No, he thought and turned around quickly as he could.

“Andrea, no! Don’t!” Roger shouted in terror before her.

Forests of Anchorage were almost destroyed after ten years of war. Trees and hills were gone, and they didn’t give proper shelter to soldiers. But there was something that even war couldn’t destroy or change — the snow. More snow fell from the sky, covering everything with a white blanket.

Everything. Even the roots into which Andrea stumbled as she ran toward the mining area.

She didn’t know if she would be there on time. But the only thing she knew that man who led the whole U.S. military didn’t care about those who fought and gave their lives for this country. She knew General Chase and Roger wouldn’t be thrilled about her decision, Roger specifically.

Finally, Andrea reached the cliffs of the mining area and saw two Red soldiers standing near the edge of the cliff. After catching her breath, she made her move before they were able to see her. At first, she kicked first unaware soldier down from the cliff and then she took down another with her knife, stabbing him to death.

Then Andrea saw Captain Hadfield and Lieutenant Bringmann fighting at the bottom of the mining area, facing a herd of Reds. There were only a handful of their squad members alive, and they tried to make their way back to the entrance of the mining area. However, the entrance was already re-occupied by Reds.

She shot two hostile soldiers with pistols after she reached the entrance, knocking down two more with hand to hand. Hearing hostiles above her on the roof, she opened a window and climbed on top of the roof effortlessly. Then she kicked hostile down from the roof and shot another.

She glanced remaining U.S. soldiers and barely avoided surprise attack of the Red. Despite her effort, enemy overpowered her and threw her against the hard steel surface.

Andrea fell, and the back of her head hit the surface. The enemy unholstered his gun, and Andrea saw how he pointed it toward her and fired a bullet into her chest.

If it weren’t for her suit’s ballistic polymer weave, she would be dead by now. Ignoring the feeling of ‘like being hit with a sledgehammer’, Andrea kicked the man down and shot him with her 10mm pistol.

She breathed heavily for a moment, grunting as she felt pain lingering on her chest. She had possibly more than two broken ribs. Her body told her to stand down, take it slow as it trembled like a leaf in the wind. But she couldn’t. Others needed help.

Then the sound of the P-80 fighter jets echoed through the skies, and Andrea looked up the sky. No fucking way. Did SecDec send them now? After she came here?

Explosion, however, cut off her thoughts, and she realised that Reds were shooting U.S. soldiers with grenade launchers.

Andrea witnessed one of the hostiles killing Bringmann while he protected his men. They were outnumbered, and yet, so close the entrance. Andrea ran towards them after jumping down from
the roof, ignoring the pain on her chest and took assault rifle from the ground.

Other soldiers tried to deal with incoming Reds while one of them aided severely wounded Corporal. Then from the corner of her eye, Andrea saw hostile aiming his grenade launcher toward injured soldiers.

She called soldiers, but noises coming from the sky dampened her voice, and at the same time, the Red pulled from the trigger of the grenade launcher.

“No!”

Once again, Andrea woke up before the explosion, waking up others with her scream. She apologised from others as she collected her stuff and walked away from the sleeping area. The airship was quiet as usual during the night. Only the patrolling soldiers and those who couldn’t sleep either were awake.

Like Brandis.

He sat in the mess hall, reading an old book when Andrea appeared there.

“Morning, sir,” she said.

Brandis gave her gentle, friendly smile as she sat down in front of him.

“Oh, you have shaved off your beard and cut your hair? Looks good,” she added.

He looked younger and brighter but only a little bit. Hell, he looked younger than Arthur.

“Though you should have left your beard, or maybe little stubble…”

Brandis chuckled a little bit.

“I have lived with beard past three years, so it was time to cut it off. I believe it was full of bugs. You should have seen Cade’s face when he examined me. It was a miracle he didn’t but me into quarantine,” he continued. “What are you doing here? Did nightmares wake you up?”

Andrea nodded.

“The Vault?”

The mining area,” Andrea said, rubbing her face. “I’m so tired. Why our conscience has to remind us about our failures and problems?”

“We try to bury those failures and problems deep into our mind and therefore, our conscience can bring them back up, reminding us of something that we are trying to forget. That’s why I am sitting here, with this book and you. Once again,” Brandis stated and gestured the book. He faced the same problems as she did.

Andrea smiled faintly. “Stupid conscience doesn’t have a sleeping schedule. Have you slept any at all?”

“Few hours. Not much. Maybe it is good that Cade doesn’t let me go down there.”

“At this rate, he will deny field from me too,” Andrea pondered.
“Well, we can’t block our memories. We remember them, wanted we it or not. Those memories are saved into our minds. Like we do save something into our terminal’s hard drive,” Brandis said while changing the page of his book.

_Memories… Saved into our minds… Like into hard drive._

Andrea gasped and hit her forehead. Paladin gave her a confused look. “I have been so stupid. Jesus…”

“What?”

“I have to go,” Andrea said suddenly and stood up. Before she left, Andrea squeezed his hand and thanked him, leaving perplexed Paladin there as she disappeared from the Mess Hall.

Arthur was at the Observation Deck, reading reports as usual. He was one of those who couldn’t sleep. He turned around as Andrea came down the stairs.

“Elder. I would like to change a few words with you if I may?” Andrea said politely. Arthur stared her and then nodded back without saying a word. “I think I have found a way to learn something about the Institute. Maybe.”

Andrea didn’t keep her hopes up.

“What do you mean, Knight?”

“Kellogg. I took a piece of artificial brain from his head. Maybe someone can read or examine it,” Andrea explained. “I think… my friends would be able to help us. Maybe. They know this city better than I do.”

“I suggest that you gather your equipment and head there,” Arthur said finally, and Andrea nodded.

“I have everything I need, sir.”

“Not now, Knight. At the morning.” After a sigh, he walked to her, closing folder in his hand. “I order you to go to sleep immediately.”

“I can’t sleep when I only dream about failures and horrors.”

“I do know what you are going through. Ask sleeping pills from Cade if needed. I want my soldiers to be at their best when I am sending them to the field.”

Andrea looked at him.

“Do you use those sleeping pills yourself, sir?” Andrea asked, without moving her gaze from his.

“Return here at the 0800, soldier,” Arthur commanded, evading her question and Andrea nodded finally. She gave him a little smile and wanted to kiss him, but that wasn’t possible where they stood.

“I just sleep better next to you,” Knight whispered and turned around to leave.

“Likewise,” Arthur stated but then cleared his throat. “Andrea, give me your hand.”

She gave him a pondering look and saw him taking something from his pocket. However, Andrea offered her hand to him, and he put something on her palm. When she realised what it was, her cheeks flushed a little bit, and she scratched the tip of her nose once again.
A key.

“If it helps, you can sleep in my room,” Arthur said and glanced behind her, making sure there wasn’t anyone.

Andrea smiled before thanking him.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: This chapter is the writer's own personal favourite. I have to admit it, I fell for Roger before Fallout 76 just by simply writing out about him, giving him a persona, but after the game was out and I heard his holotapes, my mind just blew up.

Also, notice this, he was Major here...
The Memory Cocoons

Chapter Summary

Andrea and Danse visit Diamond City and Goodneighbor, hoping they could gain intel about the Institute, but they end up gaining intel about someone else too.

_Dangerous Minds_-mission.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Fenway Park. The same place which had given Andrea so much entertainment and happiness was now home of Commonwealth’s people. When she had seen it for the first time, she had felt sorrow. But now, she felt relief that the same place gave people protection and the chance to have a normal life. The people needed it.

“It’s a shame these people have to live in fear, sheltering in this old stadium when all those perfectly good buildings are still standing outside,” Danse stated as he gazed Diamond City.

“They have working lights, security and clean water. I think they have a good reason to live here. This place has stood here for almost two centuries,” Andrea said.

_As long as someone won’t steal their power cores_, she thought and crossed her arms.

_“Blue!”_

Andrea snorted when she heard Piper’s voice and glanced reporter who stood at the end of the stairs. Andrea gestured Danse and Dogmeat to follow her.

“You will not go anywhere before you give me that interview! You have escaped five times after —” Piper said but frowned a little. “What the hell happened to your vault suit?”

“It’s inside my locker.” Andrea sighed and then said, “What if you interview me while we eat at the Power Noodle? The bill is on me, Piper.”

“Fine by me,” Piper said and glanced questioningly at Danse.

“Oh, this is Paladin Danse, my sponsor and superior,” Andrea introduced Danse to Piper. “And this is Piper Wright, reporter of Publick Occurrences.”

Piper studied him for a few seconds, and then her eyes dropped to the notebook on her hand that she always carried with her.

“Care to give an interview about Brotherhood, Paladin?” the reporter asked.

“I’m not a fan of the press, civilian.”

“Too bad,” Piper said and turned her attention back to Andrea. “So, MacCready didn’t fool around. You did join the Brotherhood, huh? Have you given up your own free will for your Elder?”
“No, I haven’t. I’ll walk my path,” Andrea said. “I can still make my own decisions. Also, they respect them.”

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw that Danse was gone and looked around her. She furrowed her brows together as the man walked towards Power Noodles and gazed its bartender.

“Nan-ni shimasho-ka?” asked Takahashi.

“You are very suspicious. Identify yourself.”

“Nan-ni shimasho-ka?”

“Sounds like an Asian language... wait for a second... maybe it’s Chinese!” Danse exclaimed. “All right, robot, you can drop the act. Whom are you working for? What’s your mission here?”

Andrea sighed and then said, “Danse, it’s not Chinese... It’s...”

“You might think you’re smart, but if you step out of line, I’ll melt you into slag. I’ve got my eyes on you,” Danse said and gazed around suspiciously.

“This is what I meant,” Piper stated, gesturing Danse. “Do you want to end up like that? Do they shout at the toaster too?”

“No, they don’t.” Andrea rubbed her combat helmet, and it fell over her face. “He’s just cautious on the foreign ground.”

“You should leave before something happens,” Piper gave her a bit of advice before she walked to the bar and ordered three noodle cups.

After finishing her lunch, Piper thanked Takahashi and then turned to Andrea.

“So like we agreed, your life story in print. You ready?”

Andrea nodded. Now or never. Danse was impatient. He wanted to continue their mission.

“So, I know you’re from Vault and time before the war. How did you survive for two centuries?”

“We’re placed into these...” Andrea thought about how she could explain it. “...stasis pods after Vault-Tec told us they used them for decontamination, but in reality, they just put us into cryo. Vault-Tec wanted to test the effects of long-term cryogenic suspended animation on unsuspecting test subjects or something like that...”

“That’s... horrifying and little interesting too, but not unexpected. They also did other experiments in other vaults, so you’re not the only one. You’re lucky, I think,” Piper stated and wrote down all the things Andrea had just told. “What did you do before the War?”

“I was in another war. I was a soldier.”

“Why I’m not surprised. Tell me what happened?”

“What happened? We fought, we won, or we thought we won, but we lost anyway when bombs fell,” Andrea bridled and took a sip of fizzy drink. “It doesn’t matter anymore.”

“From where you’re standing, I guess it doesn’t,” Piper said. “Tell me. The world back then. What was it like?”
“If you don’t include the wars that raged all over the world, the world was quite beautiful. We had… four seasons, clean streets, signing birds, ice cream trucks, baseball games, homes with a bunch of silly appliances, friendly neighbours… or mostly friendly,” Andrea described her view of pre-war life. “My marriage was the most important thing in my life.”

“Do you know what happened to your husband?”

“I think… he died shortly after the Great War,” Andrea said and thought about her now-deceased spouse. “He was my greatest love, but now he is just a memory.”

Last words came out as a whisper as she tried to hold her tears. Even talking about Roger hurt her. Dogmeat poked her arm with his snout, trying to comfort her. He was the only one who sensed her feelings.

“But even if he’s gone… I’ll carry on. When I was fighting with my cancer, we made a promise. I told him that even if cancer would kill me, he has to continue his life. It was my wish, and he did it. Maybe it’s my turn now,” Andrea sniffed. “I miss him terribly.”

“I’m sorry, Blue, that I asked about him. Sometimes I’m too enthusiastic about these interviews,” Piper apologised. Andrea sniffed and tried to stop the tears rushing into her eyes.

“What is this? A soldier crying in public?”

Andrea and Piper realised who it was as they recognised synth’s voice. They gazed each other horrified. Paladin was still with them, and they had no idea what would be his reaction — knowing Brotherhood, not good.

Almost like in slow motion, both women jumped up on the seat of the chair. Piper ran to Nick and Andrea, just in the nick of time, caught Paladin’s arm before he pulled his gun.

“What are you doing, soldier? That is a synth!” Paladin snarled and tried to take his weapon, but Andrea held his hand still.

“Good point,” Nick said dryly, staring them with his yellow eyes. Andrea was about to say something to Danse but then noticed that people, including Diamond City Security, had gathered around them.

“Uh, Paladin?” Andrea gazed the guards who had aimed their weapons at them. “I think we are outnumbered here, sir.”

Danse scoffed and moved his attention at Piper. “Why do you protect that thing?”

“He’s a resident of Diamond City.”

“He? It’s a synth! Institute’s handiwork.”

“Nick Valentine is a resident of Diamond City,” one of the guards spoke this time. “And we have a duty to protect the inhabitants of this city.”

Danse gave them a disbelief stare and then moved his gaze to Andrea. “Did you knew?”

“Nick was the one who helped me to find Kellogg. He’s a detective of Diamond City I told about.”

“That is… a detective?”

“Hm, I thought my fedora and trench coat would be enough to give someone a hint but obviously
“Have you all lost your mind?” Danse yelled at the guards.

“Diamond City Security has shot every synth who has come here. Everyone except Nick. We trust him,” Piper answered on behalf of the guards.

“Unbelievable. You know what Institute can do—”

“Yes, we do! Unlike you, we have a first-hand experience of what the Institute can do! So don’t come here—”

“Enough!” Andrea shouted. “Piper, we know that you, and all people of Commonwealth, fear Institute more than no one else.” Then she looked at Paladin. “Danse, Nick has been here over a hundred years. He’s a detective of this city and Brotherhood can’t do anything about it.”

Danse raised his hand in a sign of giving up. Finally, after thinking for a while, security guards lowered their weapons too.

“I think we are good now,” Nick stated. “So why were you crying, doll?”

“I was thinking of someone,” Andrea answered and looked at reporter. “Should we continue that interview? I hope you won’t write about what just happened.”

“I believe whole Diamond City knows about that by now.” Piper cleared her throat and sat down in her chair.

“We should get moving,” Danse suggested.

Andrea looked up at him. “Just… a few more minutes, please. I hardly ever get a chance to see them.”

Paladin remained quiet for a little while. “Very well.”

Andrea smiled faintly and touched his arm. “Thank you… and I’m sorry,” she apologised about her behaviour a moment ago.

For Danse’s relief, the interview was over quickly.

“...For the last part of our interview, I did like to do something different. I was hoping you could make a statement to Diamond City directly. I know you’re looking for your godson. What would you say to someone out there who’s lost a loved one, but might be too scared, or too numb to the world, to look for them?”

Andrea thought for a moment what to say. “No matter how much you want to give up, don’t. You have to have hope. That you’ll see them again, or at least, that you’ll know the truth.”

“Thanks, Blue. That’s everything. It’s going to take some time to put this all together, but I think your story is going to give Commonwealth plenty to talk about,” Piper stated, but then she asked. “Can I ask, what did bring you here, Blue? We haven’t seen you here for weeks.”

Andrea dug her pocket’s and gave Kellogg’s implant to Nick.

“I found this from Kellogg’s body after re-visiting Fort Hagen. Do you know anyone who could help us?

Of course. Scientist of Goodneighbor. Andrea wanted to do a facepalm.

“To Goodneighbor then,” Andrea declared but hesitated when she saw Nick’s stern face. “Nick?”

“I should go there first. It would be better for you to travel without a synth by your side.”

He was right. Andrea glanced at a dog next to her and said, “Take Dogmeat with you.”

“Kid, I’ve survived out there over one hundred years. I think I can manage without Dogmeat.”

“Take him with you, Nick. He’s like one of those boys of Baker Street Irregulars. Please.”

A synth rolled his yellow eyes after Andrea said ‘please’. Finally, he gave up and gestured Dogmeat to follow him.

After Nick had left, Piper spoke, “You know, Blue. If one of your new friends finds out that you have synth friend, well...” she sighed and glared Danse. “You still have a small chance to run.”

“It would be treason more likely. I did what was necessary to find Kellogg and Shaun, and I don’t regret anything I did,” Andrea stated and turned around on her barstool. “Hm, while we wait, I’ll go to the barbershop. It’s time for me to get a cut.”

Piper watched her leave and then shifted her gaze to Paladin. “If Blue gets into trouble because of this...”

“I’m not going to hurt her, civilian.”

“You better don’t.”

“Safeties off. I don’t like the look of this place one bit,” Danse said after they entered to Goodneighbor. He shook his head and glared at residents of the town.

“Danse, just let me do the talking. I know these people,” Andrea stated, then saw MacCready. “Follow me.”

Before she was able to call RJ, she heard another voice. Duncan’s voice.

“Auntie!”

That was the voice which Andrea wanted to hear. She crouched down to hug the boy who came rushing into her arms. Then he started asking questions.

“Did you come here to pick up dad? Are you going to blow up more places of the bad guys? Where have you been? What are you wearing?”

“Slow down, kid. I’m not going to blow up things today. Though I kicked asses of Gunners on our way here,” Andrea explained, and Duncan gasped.

“A bad word!”

“Hey, boss. Nice to see you again. And Duncan, ass isn’t a bad word,” MacCready stated as he appeared to the scene and glared Danse. “Oh look, the first tin can has arrived here.”
“Butts. I kicked their butts,” Andrea corrected, ignoring Danse and RJ.

“Butts!” Duncan said to his father and Andrea giggled. “Where have you been, auntie?”

“Uh.” Andrea thought a few seconds. “I’ve been inside the airship.”

“Awesome,” Duncan said excitedly. “Did it swallow you?”

“Yes, just like Monstro swallowed Pinocchio. I’ve been inside it for almost a month, and then, buff, I got out.”

“Did it sneeze you out?” the boy pondered.

“Yes. This big and strong fella lives there too.” Andrea gestured Danse. “But it’s a friendly whale.”

“I hope that the whale doesn’t cause harm,” the hoarse voice said.

Andrea shot a look toward the speaker. Hancock.

“I assume Nick told you what we are doing here?” Andrea asked.

“Yeah, he did. If this helps you get closer the Institute, I’ll help you,” Hancock said, then he glared Danse. “However, under other circumstances, I would kick him out of here.”

“Don’t worry, mayor. We’ll not cause you any harm,” Andrea promised. “Let’s go, Danse.”

She waved at Duncan before she followed the mayor. However, the boy ran to her and hugged her leg.

“You’re my hero,” he said.

She felt a motherly love for Duncan. Her body and soul was full of warmth and happiness whenever he was around. But those feelings awoke something inside her that hurt her.

For a moment, Andrea thought someone who would be his age now. She still felt a deep feeling of sadness in her heart — the grief which revived whenever she thought about Lucas.

That feeling would never go away. The feeling every mother was afraid of.

Nick was waiting for them in Memory Den. Andrea gazed those so-called *memory cocoons* in the lounge and touched one of them, thinking should she use one of them someday.

She shook her head when she noticed a familiar-looking man inside the machine. He wore sunglasses and farmer clothes this time. How could he be everywhere at the same time?

Danse seemed to be a little suspicious of their companions and the place and kept a watchful eye on them.

“Doctor Amari,” Hancock called the woman as they reached downstairs.

“Mayor.” Amari glanced other people with him. “I take this isn’t a social call?”

“We need a memory dig, Amari, but it’s not going to be easy. The perp, Kellogg, is already cold on the floor,” said Nick this time and doctor huffed.

“Are you all mad or do you keep me as some kind of sorcerer? Putting aside the fact that you’re
asking me to defile a corpse, you do realise that the memory simulators require intact, LIVING brains to function?”

“This dead brain had inside knowledge of the Institute. The most significant scientific secret of the Commonwealth. You need this, and so do we, Amari.”

“Fine, if it’s about the Institute... I’ll take a look, but no guarantees. Do you have it with you?”

Andrea took an implant from her pocket and gave it to the doctor.

Amari examined it a few seconds. “What is this? This thing isn’t a brain! It is, wait, that’s the hippocampus. And thing attached to it. A neural interface?”

“Kellogg mentioned that the Institute created mechanical augmentations at some point,” Andrea recalled.

“I’m not surprised. The Institute created this. From what I’ve seen, all Institute technology has similar architecture. Even third generations synths. A synth component, for example. Metallic implant in their neck,” Amari explained. “If we’re lucky, Nick could be compatible. But even if this works, mister Valentine would be taking on a tremendous amount of risk. We’re talking about wiring something to his brain.”

“Don’t worry about me, Amari. Let’s do it,” Nick said confidently.

“Nick...” Andrea began.

“We got your godson on the line, Andrea. That’s worth of the risk.”

Amari gestured Nick to sit down and began to attach the implant into him.

“Let’s see here. I need you to keep talking to me, mister Valentine. Any slight change in your cognitive functions could be dire. Are you feeling any different?”

“There is a lot of flashes… static… I can’t make sense of any it, doctor.”

“That’s what I was afraid of. It appears the Institute has one last failsafe. There’s a lock on the memories in the implant,” Amari said after finishing her task. “The implant encoding all the mnemonic activity in the hippocampus. Think of it as computer encryption. And we don’t need a password. Let’s see. A single mind wouldn’t be able to crack it, but what if we used two?”

Andrea knew what she meant and glanced over her shoulder, seeing Danse’s firm and concerned look.

“If we want to find the Institute, Paladin, then we do what we have to do, sir. I’m ready.”

“We load both you and mister Valentine into memory cocoons. Run your cognitive functions in parallel. He will act as host, and your consciousness drives through whatever memories we can find.”

Andrea nodded and sat down inside the cocoon.

“Knight,” Danse called her.

Andrea gave him a little smile and said, “Don’t worry, sir. This isn’t my first time as a lab rat.”

Nick followed her gesture and sat down inside another cocoon.
“See you on the other side, Sherlock,” he said.

“I’ve always wanted to stay in everlasting limbo with a synth.”

“We can stay there until an end of the world, icicle, though the world has ended already.”

“Sun hasn’t exploded yet,” Andrea smirked.

After the memory cocoon’s cover had lowered down, Amari spoke, “Initiating brain-wave migration between the transplant and the host. Mnemonic activity coming from the transplant. We’re going to load you into strongest memories we can find. Just hold on!”

They saw glimpses of Kellogg’s past. His father had been violent and abusive toward him and his mother. Young Kellogg eventually shot his father using his .44 revolver after this had beat his wife to death.

Despite it and his career as a thug, Kellogg managed to develop a healthy relationship with a woman named Sarah, and after the birth of their daughter, they moved to San Francisco.

Somewhere inside her, Andrea felt sorrow, and maybe even regret, when she saw how Kellogg played with his daughter. Even a man like him had loved someone.

After seeing what happened to his family, Andrea no longer wondered why Kellogg had chosen his path or why he was cold and ruthless or hadn’t shown sympathy toward people. Someone had made him watch how his wife and daughter was violated and killed. Andrea had no idea how he had lived with all of this. Kellogg had been a lot stronger than she was.

Part of Andrea felt relief. He was with them now. Maybe she had rescued him by killing him.

However, those feelings disappeared and flew out of the window when she recognised the place where she was — Vault 111.

“Open it,” Kellogg commanded after reaching Nate’s pod. Andrea felt her stomach twist. This moment wasn’t a dream or flashback; she had to relive it through Kellogg. She heard Nate asking ‘are we save now’ and she wanted to yell ‘you’re not’.

When a scientist tried to take Shaun from him, Nate yelled, “Go to hell. I’m not giving you Shaun!”

Andrea tried to stop Kellogg, but she had no control over his body in the memory. All that she was able to do was to watch how she as a Kellogg shot Nate coldblooded. Kellogg ordered a woman to take Shaun and turned towards Andrea.

“At least we have a backup. Freeze her.”

The memory altered suddenly, and Andrea noticed she was inside in his apartment. Travis voice on the radio brought her to reality and then, she saw someone whole stole her attention.

A dark-haired boy was lying on the floor on his stomach and read comic books. Shaun? Could it be? He looked a little bit Nate.

Then suddenly Kellogg pointed his pistol toward the door as a figure in long leather coat appeared at his front door. Somehow figure looked familiar. Andrea had seen that coat somewhere before.

“Kellogg.” The man’s voice was stoic and cold. As if he wouldn’t have any feelings.

“It’s okay, Shaun,” Kellogg said to the boy as he startled. “One of these days you’re going to get
your head blown off, X6. Just bargain in here like that.”

“Minimising my exposure to civilians is a priority—”

“Forget I said anything. So, what’s the big crisis this time?” Kellogg asked as he stood up.

“New orders for you. One of our scientists has left the Institute. He’s gone rogue. Doctor Brian Virgil. We know he’s hiding in the Glowing Sea. Here’s his file.”

“Wow. Some heads are going to roll for this. Capture and return or just elimination?”

“Your only mission is to locate and eliminate Virgil. He was working on a highly classified program.”

“No, kidding. One of the top BioScience boys. Damn. So, I guess you’re taking the kid back with you,” Kellogg stated as he browsed files. Through his eyes, Andrea recognised one word on the paper — F.E.V.

“Then… are you going to take me home to my father?” Shaun asked. Father?

“Yes. Stand next to me and hold still,” the man commanded.

“Kellogg, there is one thing. Vault 111 opened again.”

“Mother?”

“No. Someone else. You have to leave from Diamond City. Immediately. She’s coming after you and believe me; you don’t want that. X6-88, ready to Relay with Shaun.”

Shaun said goodbyes to Kellogg before he and a man in leather coat disappeared from the scene into thin air with two blue flashes.

“Teleportation. Now it all makes sense. Nobody’s found the entrance to Institute because there IS no entrance. Let me pull you out of there. Wait,” the doctor stated then, sounding surprised. “There are memories left.”

Andrea found herself from Fort Hagen’s command centre. She and Nick hadn’t arrived there yet, but Kellogg watched her and Nick through Fort Hagen’s security camera.

‘I knew it was a mistake to leave her alive. We’re a fool when we assumed she was Shaun’s mother as her pod’s information stated she was ‘Nora Jensen’. We kept someone else alive. Someone more dangerous. Andrea Maxson. A war hero. A wife of Roger Maxson. I was cocky enough to assume that Wasteland and its dangers could handle some kind pre-war war veteran. And now, she’s knocking my door. Coursers can’t do much to her but he can.’

He snorted.

‘At least I know those Institute bastards will soon get what’s coming to them, too. If she found me, they won’t be able to hide from her for long. I understand that kind of vindictiveness.’

Next and the last memory was about Kellogg’s final moments. Andrea defeated him in close-quarter-combat and kicked him in the chest that almost knock him out of the game.

“Your kick broke something inside me… One hell of a kick, Maxson. You kicked me to the same place where I shot—”

His last memory was a view of vault dweller, who stared him with her stoic, yet bloodthirsty eyes
before she shot him without hesitation.

They weren’t alike, but somehow they weren’t different.

After the memory program ended, the only person who Andrea could think about was Nora. Only because of the Vault’s mistake, Andrea was alive instead of her. It was unfair.

She opened the cocoon’s door by force, though Amari tried to calm her. They had done something that Amari hadn’t tested before; she was unsure what kind of side-effects this could cause.

But Andrea didn’t care. She wrenched herself free of her grip and power walked out of the building, not listening to Paladin nor Nick. She wanted to be alone for a moment. She wanted to cry and let it all out.

Andrea left the building, walked along a side street until she stopped and burst into tears.

*Why me?!* Andrea thought, burying her face to her hands and leaned against the brick wall. *Why?!

“Auntie?”

Andrea flinched when she heard Duncan’s voice and glanced at him.

“Why are you crying?”

“Uh,” Andrea faltered and dried her tears. “I’m sad.”

“Do you need a hug?” the boy asked.

Andrea smiled, though tear still ran down her cheek. She crouched down and hugged the boy.

At that moment, she realised she couldn’t think ‘what ifs’ and ‘why’. She was there, and Nora wasn’t. But she knew what she could do for Nora.

Find Shaun and bring him back.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I like Kellogg; he’s one of the most interesting characters in the game. Also, X6-88 is one of the most misunderstood characters in the game, hands down, addition to Cait and Arthur.

Thank you for reading.
On their way back to Airport, Andrea thought about what they had learned about the Institute. They used teleportation to move around the Commonwealth without having an exact front door. No wonder why the Institute’s synths had a habit of appearing out of nowhere. But where they were? Underground? In the space?

They could be anywhere, and the only person who knew more about the Institute was at the Glowing Sea. That green, invisible devil. An excellent place for suicide if someone wanted to die painfully and quickly.

Andrea stared the glowing beast and listened to the sound of the rotor of vertibird. Once again, her thoughts wandered back to a person who should be here instead of her.

Nora should be here, looking for her son. Considering Shaun’s future, it would have been a better option. Nora had been a lawyer, not a soldier, and she could have raised a child without the need to be on the field. But would Nora have survived from a duel with Deathclaw or Kellogg?

She flinched a little bit when Danse touched her shoulder.

He asked, “Adams? Are you all right?”

“I… I feel dizzy. Maybe it is because of that experiment,” she answered, still glaring Glowing Sea. From the corner of her eye, she saw how Danse gaped her and took off his T-60’s helmet.

“What Kellogg said about your friends... I’m sorry.”

Danse didn’t know how much she appreciated his words.

“Knowing you, I know what you’re thinking. If I had been given a chance, I would have died for Cutler or Krieg. I could die for anyone who is under my command. I won’t say ‘don’t blame yourself’ because that’s what I do too. But what happened at the Vault, it wasn’t your fault, Andrea. Only Vault-Tec’s.”

Andrea knew he was right. She moved her gaze to Dogmeat next to her and scratched his head.

“Sometimes I think what would have happened if Nate or Nora would have survived instead of me. Would they have done things differently? Nora had supernatural luck, and Nate just had his
positive nature, which helped him through the hard times.”

Until Vault 111.

“Nate would have probably joined Minutemen instead of Brotherhood,” Andrea said while stroking Dogmeat’s head. “After all, Nate was a history nerd. He used to drive me crazy with Rog—”

Andrea bridled and mentally berated Kellogg. How in the hell he even knew about her?

“Why you didn’t tell us about your marriage?”

“Because it doesn’t matter.”

“But you were the wife of our founder. You’re Maxson—”

No, she wasn’t. That surname and family belonged to someone else.

“No, I was his wife two hundred years ago. Now I am just me. I’m not even sure was he the same man I knew before the war. He changed after—” she stopped her sentence abruptly. She hadn’t told them everything. “Brotherhood keeps him as a holy figure or something like that, but to me, he was just a son of farmer and teacher.”

“He changed after what? Andrea, what happened?”

“It’s ancient history, and so is my marriage. Now I’m just Adams. Nobody. I didn’t tell anyone, because I want to stay like this,” she answered, evading his question. “Maybe, I didn’t want to talk about him because it hurts me. You know how I feel.”

A stern and yet sorrowful look crossed his face, and Danse turned to look outside again. He stared into the distance, and his eyes had a haunted look. “Danse, I’m sorry, I didn’t...”

“No, you’re right. I do know how you feel. It just—”

A distant sound of loud blast disrupted their conversation, and the duo moved their attention to South Boston. Danse informed Prydwen and patrols about the explosion and continued their conversation. This time his stare was stern.

“I hope you understand that I have to write everything down. I have to report about the detective too.”

“Give way your suspicions to the wisdom of thine Elder. Where he shows trust, so shall you. That’s so you, Danse,” Andrea said and then stared Prydwen.

She had made up her mind. She has to be the one who tells about him to Arthur.

“Welcome back, soldiers,” Arthur greeted them and then glanced Andrea, who lowered her gaze down immediately.

Andrea remained quiet as Paladin gave his report about their journey. He told Arthur about Diamond City and their trip to Goodneighbor.

“So what kind of town it was?” Arthur asked.

“The town is full of criminals and other dregs of society, but the mayor of town took us in with caution. He was with us even at the Memory Den because he didn’t trust us. Residents itself didn’t
“What about this Memory Den? Did you find anything about Institute?” Arthur asked once again and narrowed his eyes when Andrea once again avoided his gaze.

“We discovered through Kellogg’s memories that the Institute uses teleportation. There is no entrance.”


“In Kellogg’s memories, one of their synths used it. It said ‘ready to Relay’ before disappearing. I assume the Institute calls teleportation by that name,” Danse answered.

“Inform Proctor Quinlan about this. Did you find anything else?”

“A synth gave a mission to Kellogg. He was supposed to eliminate a rogue scientist who has escaped from the Institute. Did he succeed on it, it is unclear.”

“Did they mention where this scientist was or where they went to?”

“Glowing Sea, sir,” Danse answered.

“From all the places,” Arthur whispered, running his hand through his hair with frustration. He seemed lost in thought for a moment and then he spoke again. “We have to send someone to the Glowing Sea. That scientist is our only lead.”

“I’ll go, sir,” Andrea spoke finally. “This has been my mission from the start, sir. I won’t quit now.”

Arthur shifted his gaze to Danse, then back to her. No. He wasn’t going to dismiss her now so that he could talk with Danse.

“And there is something I want to tell you, sir.”

At first, Andrea couldn’t say anything as she met his stern look. However, she gathered her courage.

“I knew... the founders of Brotherhood personally. They were with me at the Anchorage, and most of them were my friends. I knew them, because... I was married to one of them.”

A deep breath.

“I was married to your ancestor.”

Only the sound of her racing heart and Danse’s breath broke the silence between them, and the oppressive silence weighed on Andrea. She had no idea what would be his reaction.

Arthur gave her a long suspicious, doubtful look. But after he glanced Danse, he knew she was telling the truth.

Andrea walked over to Arthur and opened her flight suit. She removed her pre-war dogtags and pressed the steel tags in Arthur’s hand.

“I’m sorry that I haven’t told you before,” she whispered and returned to Danse. She watched how Arthur scrutinised her dog tags and looked at her.
He gazed at her with a look she couldn’t decipher.

“Where did you get this?” Arthur asked, meaning the third steel tag.

“Roger gave his second tag to me before he left to Mariposa. He said he would come back for it,” Andrea said and smiled faintly, but it faded quickly. “As a promise to return—”

“Dismissed, Knight,” Arthur ordered, showing no emotions, only his scowl.

Andrea stared him and nodded before she left from Command Deck with Dogmeat.

This time, she couldn’t read him — or didn’t want to.

Arthur had disappeared after her revelation and sealed himself in his quarters. Andrea grunted and rubbed her forehead while staring the door between two Brotherhood flags. She had no idea what would be his reaction. She wondered if she should talk to him about this or not.

She couldn’t stall this any longer.

Knight walked to his door but hesitated before knocking. She began to get a little nervous, and without even realising it at first, she stepped back. The urge to leave was strong, and she clenched her hands into tight fists.

No. She has to talk about this with him. Arthur deserved it after all of this.

For the first time in her life, she wasn’t thrilled to see him, but still, she knocked on his door.

As nothing happened, Andrea thought maybe he wasn’t there. Maybe little relieved and disappointed, she turned around slowly to leave.

However, her heart bounced almost off her chest when Arthur finally opened his door and glared her blankly. For her surprise, he let her inside. The first thing that she saw was alcohol bottles and Danse’s written report on his desk. There was a possibility that Arthur knew about Nick at this point…

“What do you want?” Arthur asked, holding his whiskey glass.

“I’m, uh, I’m here to apologise, sir.”

Arthur took a long drink and set the glass on the terminal desk. “Apology accepted.”

Andrea wasn’t convinced of his words. He hadn’t raised his voice, but he was a little drunk. Maybe she shouldn’t have come here. “Arthur—”

“It’s Elder, Knight,” Arthur hissed. “And you have permission to leave.”

“I didn’t—”

“Did you use me as you knew I was his descendant? Was I just a substitute?” Arthur spatted, finally turning around and slamming the glass to the table. For the first time in her life, Andrea felt real fear because of him. Perhaps it was the way he looked at her.

She stared at him in confusion and shook her head. She couldn’t believe what he was saying. “What? Do you think I was with you only because of that?”
“Why else then? I have got used it that my soldiers are interested in me because of my title and surname, but I didn’t expect you to be one of them.”

“Now you’re ridiculous. I wasn’t with you because of you’re Elder or whatever West Coast want you to be. I wouldn’t do that to you.”

“Then why you didn’t tell me?”

“Because I didn’t know how to tell you about it. Do you think this was easy for me?” Andrea reasoned.” I tried, yes—”

“But you didn’t.”

“Because I’m afraid of you, Elder.”

The man bridled, and he leaned his palms against his desk. “You’re dismissed, Knight.”

Andrea felt her heart skipping a beat. No, they weren’t done. “But—”

“What I just said, Knight?” he asked fiercely.

Andrea stiffened a little and clenched her teeth together.

“Do you want to know why I didn’t tell you about him? I fear you, sir. It was one of the reasons, but in reality, I wanted to start a new life. I wanted to have a fresh start. But it wasn’t that easy. If I despise something, it is dishonesty. And dishonesty was exactly what I felt during all this time—”

“Knight—”

“But I couldn’t lie or keep secrets from you anymore—”

“Knight!”

This time man took a few steps toward her, but Andrea didn’t move. She knew he wouldn’t hurt her. Possibly. She wouldn’t hurt him. That was sure.

“Do you know how it feels like? To love a man who died two centuries ago at the same time when I’m falling in love with you? With you, Arthur! Not with your title and surname. With you!” Andrea said, a little winded.

Arthur tightened his jaw and looked a little surprised, but it wasn’t enough. “I gave you an order to leave. We’re done, Knight. Now get the hell out of here.”

Andrea swallowed and closed her eyes as tears sprang into her eyes, trying to keep them off.

“Affirmative.” She tried to say it as firmly as she could, but it came out as a whine. Then she turned around to leave from the room as he had ordered.

Andrea power-walked straight to Flight Deck and storage room at the end of it. She leaned against the wall, and her body slumped down to the floor. And then she began to cry again.

How could one woman love two men? It tore her apart.

“Give me your caps, kids,” Stefanie stated and waved her fingers at Fox and Rhys, knowing she was winning this card game. Both men grunted frustratedly.

“Kids? Excuse me; I’m older than you. And Leroy here is, what, five years older than I am?” Fox pondered while digging his pockets to remove a small bundle of caps.

“Do I look so old?” Rhys bridled. “My age isn’t open information.”

“Rhys is in his thirties,” the sniper whispered. “I know everything.”

“Listen to me, Prince, that was insiders information. This wastelander doesn’t have to know about anything that isn’t his business,” Rhys murmured.

“What? I can’t hear you. I think my rifle has made my right ear a little deaf. What were you saying, Leroy?” Stefanie raised her voice little so that the rest of the mess hall could hear her, and it annoyed Rhys more.

“You’re getting on my nerve, Stefanie. And don’t call me Le—”

“Knight Rhys,” a stern voice called his name. The voice startled both men while Stefanie’s face brightened into a huge smile. “It seems the game is over. Knight Rhys and Jenkins may return to their duties. On the double, soldiers.”

Speaker was Star Paladin Scott Prince, the second-in-command of East Coast Brotherhood and father of five.

Stefanie collected the caps as Knights left from the scene after politely greeting Star Paladin. She stood up from the chair and walked toward her father, studying him.

He was a tall, stern, handsome man, who had a thick scar that ran down from his forehead and across his left eye.

“You have more grey hair and wrinkles than last time I saw you, hmm,” Stefanie said and narrowed her eyes while studying him carefully. “What are you doing here, dad? Did you leave Citadel under Alex’s command? Do you think our headquarters will survive without you?”

“Mind your brothers, Knight. You have a long way before you can carry the weight of such responsibility. Paladin-Commander is capable of leading Citadel. I’m more worried about what is happening here.”

“Pfft. A long way? Mom never did want to become Proctor. I’m just like her. I want to do something instead of giving orders to others.” Stefanie smirked.

“And like you, she talked too much,” Scott stated, and Stefanie rolled her eyes. “Don’t roll your eyes on me. I’ve to return to Command Deck now, and you have your duties, Knight. Don’t disappoint me.”

“I won’t.”

Now get the hell out of here.

Arthur regretted how he had said the words. He rubbed his bridge of the nose and gazed city from his usual spot. He was still unsure of how he should feel about all of this. But he hadn’t seen Andrea in days, and he missed her.
Suddenly the sound of someone clearing their throat interrupted his thoughts and brought Arthur back to reality. He glanced figures behind him.

Scott Prince and Quinlan.

They had something to report. Arthur glanced at Star Paladin first.

“Proctor Ingram and her scribes have gathered the pieces of the subject into the storage room of Airport. They’re building gantry as we speak,” his second in command told.

That was precisely what Arthur wanted to hear. Next, he looked the Proctor of the Quill, head of the archives, research and development.

“Is there something wrong, Proctor?” he asked.

“Prime wasn’t only thing what Star Paladin brought here, sir. And this matter is also the reason why I am standing here,” Proctor said while holding the folder in his hands. “When I first time met Knight Adams, I had a feeling I had seen her somewhere. It took me a while, but I was able to convince Head Scribe to send me a few documents.”

Arthur glanced him questioningly as the older man gave the old folder to him.

“There aren’t many people who have seen those pictures. Originals are still at the Lost Hills, but Council has sent us copies, in case if someone occupies the place in the future.”

The folder was full of old pictures of places which Arthur hadn’t seen before and photos of people whom he didn’t know. Arthur frowned as he recognised a picture of the bunker. Lost Hills, but the area around the bunker was deserted. This picture was taken a long time ago.

Arthur raised his gaze back to men and asked, “These pictures were… taken a right after the war?”

Proctor nodded.

Arthur continued examining pictures and stopped when he found a picture of a large group of soldiers.

And he found Andrea from the picture.

Like other soldiers, she was wearing winterised combat armour, helmet and camouflage face paint in the photo. Then he saw his surname written on Andrea’s label.

Then Arthur moved his gaze to the man next to her, recognising surname again on his label. Then his heart bounced. It was him. Roger Maxson. This was the first time he saw a picture of him.

When Arthur heard about their marriage, he had thought that Andrea was with him because he reminded her of her spouse, but they weren’t anything alike. The only things what they shared were the surname, scowl and maybe colour of their eyes.

Taking a deep breath, Arthur examined the rest of the pictures and found another one that got his attention. It seemed to be a picture taken from the graduation ceremony.

Andrea was wearing a white military hat, a greyish uniform decorated with dozens of buttons and a cotton sword shoulder belt in the photo. In her hands, she held a thin sword, and she laughed at someone who took a photo. Her smile was genuine, as if she had smiled from the bottom of her heart. Someone who took the picture made her happy.
Arthur had seen it. A really long time ago.

_Thats why she looked familiar._

“I recognised Knight Adams from that picture. She has changed a little bit, as I assume, the photo was taken when she was possibly in her early 20’s.”

No wonder. Her hair was longer, and her face was full of acne scars, and she had had them a lot back then. However, she looked younger, happier and healthier. Her appearance was fragile and small. Much feminine, compared to what she was now.

And the original picture itself must be fragile too. Not after centuries, but because someone had repeatedly unfolded and folded it so many times that picture had started to rupture from the centre.

One small thing what did catch his attention was a dark spot in the corner of the original picture. It was small but visible. As if someone would have dropped something on it. Why? Everything that belonged to the archives of Lost Hills was sacred. Nobody wouldn’t stain them. But to Arthur, it looked like a drop of blood. But he wasn’t sure.

“Elder?” Quinlan called him.

Shit. He had stared her picture for too long. Clearing his throat, Arthur closed the folder and gave it back to Proctor.

“See if you can find something else from those pictures,” he said.

“Yes, sir. I would like to interview Knight Adams about this, with your permission. Knight has, after all, inside information about our founders and I would be glad to learn more about them. About her,” Proctor suggested.

“Very well. However, only if she wants to talk,” Arthur commanded. At the same time, Danse returned to Prydwen. “I thought you returned to Cambridge, Paladin?”

“No, I didn’t,” Danse reported and greeted Star Paladin. Arthur furrowed his eyebrows together. Something wasn’t right. Andrea wasn’t the only one whom he could read like an open book. “I’m assembling team, Elder. I am going to Glowing Sea.”

“Paladin, we talked about this. Not before Senior Scribe Neriah has developed her new compound and as Proctor Ingram has her hands full already—”

“She’s there already.”

For a few seconds, Arthur was little irritated that Danse dared to talk over him, but then he realised what Paladin had said.

“What?” he growled.

“Adams went there two days ago. Others were worried as they hadn’t seen her for a while so, I went to Diamond City to look for her,” Danse reported. “Her friends told she took her T-51, bought every Rad-X and Radaway from traders and merchants. One of her friends followed her to the edge of the Glowing Sea, but Adams told them to stay behind.”

_Now get the hell out of here._

Arthur stared a man in front of him and turned around slowly to walk back to his usual spot.
He had sent his soldiers into the worst places of wasteland before. Some of them returned, and some of them not. It did hurt him. He didn’t want to lose them.

But this… this was fear.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hah! Such a drama queen. He's twenty years old teenager so he has times like this lol.

My mental image: This is Arthur looking at the picture of soldiers XD

Thanks for reading! Next few chapters will be mostly about Glowing Sea and stuff like that! Maybe Andrea says her goodbyes too... somehow... to someone.
The Glowing Sea

Chapter Summary

Andrea wanders deeper into Glowing Sea, without even knowing how much someone worries because of her.

Chapter Notes

Multiple POV's and flashbacks.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Glowing Sea was more horrible than Andrea could have imagined.

Radiation cloak was so thick that she hardly saw anything. Her whole field of vision was filled by it. And because of it, she had walked in circles and got lost more than once.

The only things she could see was dust, dead trees, fallen antennas and highways, destroyed buildings and wrecked vehicles. There was nothing left of the suburb that had been there long ago. The atom bomb had reshaped the area thoroughly.

Andrea marked trees with her knife so that she could see if she had been there already.

Her T-51’s and Pip-Boy’s Geiger counters clicked non-stop. First, she hadn’t cared about it, but when clicking had become rapid and even more rapid, it had started to horrify her.

However, power armour’s statics told radiation was minimal inside the suit — so she was safe, as long as she stayed inside. Power armour and hazmat suit were doing their job. Hopefully.

The only creatures she encountered were radscorpions and feral ghouls, for now. The latter ones were easier to kill, but radscorpions were a more significant menace — she had no place to hide from them. As everything was buried in the dust of the earth, creatures had a chance to surprise her.

And because of that, it was harder to find a place where she could sleep.

Andrea wasn’t even able to tell what day of time it was. She couldn’t see the sun or moon through the radiation cloak.

She looked around her and sighed. She had lost her bearings once again.

The shadow of the night had fallen over the Commonwealth, covering the whole city with darkness. The people of the city, even raiders, retreated to their homes and towns, in fear of Institute and creatures.

Anything could happen to anyone.
And Danse knew it better than anyone.

He stood at the platform of Flight Deck and stared a green light at a distance. Glowing Sea. It was, addition to Diamond City, the only place that was visible during nights due to lights... or high levels of radiation.

Danse had to find Andrea. And he didn’t care if there would be dozens of super mutants, deadly radiation or anything else between him and her.

She has saved his life once. No, twice.

Last time when Danse let someone to disappear, someone who he genuinely cared about, he lost him. Since then, he has blamed himself because he wasn’t able to save Cutler.

And now, Danse was in the same situation. He couldn’t let that happen again; he had to find her.

However, before he was able to climb into vertibird, someone called him. Danse looked over his shoulder.

“What are you doing here, soldiers?” he asked firmly and little surprised too as he saw Ortiz, Jenkins and Prince.

“We’re coming with you, sir. Nobody leaves from the Airport without a partner or team. If I find her myself, I’ll beat that fact into her thick skull,” Stefanie growled and waved her fist towards Glowing Sea.

“No,” Paladin stated. “Absolutely not. You’re not coming with me, and that’s—”

“Soldiers!”

Stefanie hissed a little bit after she realised who it was.

Danse saw Scott Prince in front of Prydwen’s door, glaring at them. He knew superior officer had caught them in the act but he hesitated.

He glanced Glowing Sea quickly. A longer he waited, the harder it would be to find Andrea.

Leave now, or you will regret it later, Danse thought.

But when Star Paladin called him once more and stated Elder wanted to talk with him, Danse stopped.

He was between a rock and a hard place .

Andrea glanced two-storey brick house and raised her hand to push the doorbell. Nobody came to open the door. She couldn’t hear any voices or sounds from the house. No one was home? She glanced around her and tried to spot neighbours before pushing the doorbell again. No answer. Their car wasn’t in the garage, and they didn’t answer their phones.

We’re are you, mom? Andrea thought. My back hurts.

The sound of a thump interrupted her thoughts, and she gasped. What the hell Roger was doing?

“Don’t break the door of your parents-in-law,” Andrea said and looked around. Her parents neighbours had a bad habit of stalking and they usually called the military police if someone broke
the rules or did something unusual. “They’ll call security here.”

“I’m hungry,” Roger stated. “Maybe your mother forgot ginger again and forced your father to drive them downtown?”

“Ginger is sold at Concord. Maybe she forgot fennel pollen,” Andrea stated, rubbing her chin.

Roger frowned and asked, “What pollen?”

“Spice. I haven’t tasted it before.”

Superfood was the trend, once again. Of course, someone who couldn’t afford it or someone who came from the farm didn’t understand it.

Andrea snorted again and patted his cheek.

“Now, I’ll go see their neighbours. After you have recovered from sudden pollen attack, you can come there too,” Andrea said and began a walk towards Nate’s house.

She cursed her ankle boots and asked herself why she didn’t put more comfortable shoes as she marched across a street.

However, a sudden sound interrupted her thoughts and movement. A car’s honk. Andrea halted when a car’s honk startled her and glared the driver.

“Hey, lady! Look where you are going!” a young man in military uniform yelled after opening the driver’s side window.

“Hey jackass, we do have speed limits here for a reason!” Andrea barked back, pointing a sign that warned about playing children and speed limit.

She didn’t recognise the face of man or name on uniform’s plate and concluded that he was a new resident at the base. The young soldier was about to say something back, but when he noticed Roger, he swore. He switched gears and drove away as fast as he could.

Andrea frowned. “He left in a hurry. Did you know him?”

“I’ve met him once.”

“Hm, the world is small, after all. What did he do? Did he ate your sandwich?” Andrea raised her eyebrows at scowling man.

“I was his instructor a long time ago. He would not be alive anymore if he would have eaten my sandwich.”

“Ah, scary Maxson,” Andrea hummed pleased. “I feel sorry for our daughter’s future boyfriend.”

“Dead boyfriend,” Roger stressed word dead, which made Andrea giggle.

“Those icy blue eyes of yours could kill someone with one glance. Except me. I’m immune to them,” Andrea added and walked over to Jensen’s house, knocking their front door with a rhythmic beat. In a moment she heard someone walking to the door. Nora opened the door and gasped when she saw who stood there.

“Oh my gosh. Look who we have here. Nate!” Nora exclaimed and hugged Andrea. “Look at you. It wasn’t a joke. A woman truly blooms when they’re pregnant. You’re beautiful,” she babbled and
looked at Andrea’s belly. “And your baby bump. It’s so cute.”

Nate arrived at the scene and leaned against the doorway. “Well, her face is blooming. If that is what you mean.”

Andrea scoffed and showed him the middle finger. Her acne wasn’t that bad as it had been once but bothered her still.

Nate raised his eyebrows. “Very adult-like.”

“Nate! Behave yourself!” Nora exclaimed and turned to Andrea. “How far along are you?”

“Three months.”

“Soon halfway, girl.” Then she turned to Roger. “How’s the handsome soon-to-be father doing?”

Andrea made ‘ooh’ sound and looked at Nate. “Nora called him handsome.”

“He is,” Nate stated, grinning back. Andrea waved her hand at him, giving up.

“I’m fine. I’m just… nervous about it.”

Andrea resisted the urge to kiss him right there. He was so different when it came to family life and children. Otherwise, he was overconfident and proud.

“The man can lead a platoon of soldiers into the battlefield, but then one baby comes to household, and everything changes. Suddenly leading a platoon becomes easier than taking care of the baby,” Nora stated.

“That was deep, dear. Why you didn’t become a poet?” Nate asked as he walked next to his fiancee.

“Isn’t a lawyer like a poet? More effective, though,” Nora added and touched Andrea’s tummy while Nate congratulated Roger formally because of promotion.

“Come on, Nate. We are civilians now, but thank you,” Roger said. “It is good to be home though Andrea bosses me around all of the time.

“Soon this little fella is going to be General in your household,” Nora stated, meaning the baby.

“Yeah, what do you say about that, Captain?” Andrea smirked at Roger and looked back to Nora when she remembered something. “Hey, do you know where my parents are?”

“Oh, your mother talked something about fennel pollen,” Nora recalled.

Nate looked at them confused. “Pollen? What the hell she is feeding to you, Andrea?”

“Hey, baby can hear every word soon, and I don’t want to him learn curse words from you,” Nora retorted. “Or she? Which one baby is?”

Andrea shrugged, and she heard the sound of a car engine. Suddenly her mother’s car appeared through gates of the military base. She drove her car into the yard and parked next to Roger’s car.

For Andrea’s surprise, they brought more visitors.

“Sam! Frank!” Andrea exclaimed after seeing her identical twin brothers and ran over the street.
She ran to her brothers and hugged them both. Then she hugged her mother hard.

“Hey cariño. ¿Estás bien?” her mother asked and studied Andrea after hug.

“My back pain has been excruciating few months. I read that back pain usually starts after the second trimester,” Andrea answered and gazed her mother. “I’m fine, mom.”

María gazed her piercingly, using her ‘officer’ and ‘mother’ stare.

“You seem to have lost some weight too,” her mother pondered, narrowing her eyes little. “Now, go help your brothers, I’ll take rest goods from a car.”

“Did you find that pollen?” Andrea asked and heard Roger arriving at the yard.

“We had to hunt it a few hours, and your father almost lost his nerve with me. Not the first or last time, though.”

“You’re such a rebel, mom.”

“You’re not so different.” Her mother hummed and glanced at her son-in-law. “Right, Roger?”

“True. I hope our baby won’t inherit that trait,” he joked and grinned.

“No, they won’t. Our kids will be bossy, proud and overconfident,” Andrea said dryly. “Sounds familiar?”

As her mother and Roger chuckled, Andrea rolled her eyes and went to the kitchen. There she witnessed how her brothers ate from the pot like kids. And those two were goddamn captains.

“Hey! It’s not dinner time yet,” Andrea shouted.

“We’ll leave something for you too. You are eating for two, Bo Peep,” Frank said. “And don’t roll your eyes on me, young girl,” he added, imitating their father.

“And it is rude to eat before others,” Jonathan said as he came to the kitchen. “If you two have nothing else to do, would you please set the table?”

“Yes, sir,” twins said in unison before taking a few more chicken leg from the pot.

“What I just said?” Jonathan raised his voice a little bit.

“It’s rude to eat before others—”

“And if we don’t have nothing else to do, we can set the table, sir,” Frank continued his brother sentence. Typical twins.

“Permission to leave kitchen granted,” their father said again. Twins took a few more chicken legs from the pot and rushed out of the kitchen when their father gave them ‘last warning’-look.

Once mischievous, always mischievous.

“Jackasses,” Andrea stated while smiling and moved gaze to her father. “What?”

“You look skinnier than before.”

“Dad, I know what I am doing. I eat all the time,” Andrea reassured. Her father scowled at her
and she grunted. “Now I know why people say ‘you will end up marrying a man who is just like your father.’ Dad, it’s enough that Roger is breathing behind my neck. I’m fine, and he takes care of me now.”

“When I walked you down the aisle, it didn’t mean that I’m altogether abandoning you. Father’s job is never done, Andrea, and you’re my only daughter. It’s still my job to look after you.”

“I know, Sergeant,” Andrea replied. Then she felt her stomach growl. “When we will eat? I’m hungry.”

As usual, they couldn’t eat in peace if the twins were home. They had a bad habit of banter with someone when they ate. This time they bantered with their mom. Andrea sighed and shook her head while listening to their conversation.

“So you destroyed a fighter jet that cost almost 150 million dollars per unit?” María asked Sam after he had told how they had test piloted new fighter jets.

“No, mom. It’s still operational. The reason why landing went wrong was because of breakdown,” Sam explained while eating his stew.

“Did you two learn anything from your mentors?” María asked twins.

“Everything. That’s why we were test piloting it.”

“Oh, overconfident. Why Air Force test pilots uncompleted fighter jets in the real situation before checking it thoroughly?” María asked and then moved her gaze at her husband. Assuming he knew about it.

“Duh, you can’t fly prototypes in simulation, they have to know how aircraft work in the air. And we do have ejection seats,” Frank answered. Their mother frowned at him and then pointed her finger toward him.

“Don’t you ‘duh’ on me, captain, and you two are more precious to me than fighter jets! You could have died!”

“What did you say? I can’t hear what the U.S. Army Major is talking about,” Sam said, amused. “We are not under your command-of-chain, Major.”

“Hey! That was rude, Sam!” Andrea exclaimed.

“You still have to show respect to superiors of Armed Forces, hijo.”

“There are six officers of U.S. Military in this room, and only one has authority to command us,” Frank said and pointed his father next to him.

“And I am a Commander-In-Chief in this household—”

Andrea cried out in pain suddenly when a sharp pain pierced her body, interrupting their conversation and eating.

Andrea felt her body shake in pain and fear. What the hell was wrong with her body? She took a few deep breaths and touched her back. Then another sharp piercing pain went through her.

“Andrea, what it is?” Roger asked as he put his cutlery down.
“Do we need to call the doctor of the base or ambulance?” Sam asked.

“No. I’ll go to bed. I’ve to lie down.” Andrea stood up and left. Roger looked after her and apologised from others as he left from the dining room. Then he followed Andrea to her old room upstairs.

“Honey?” he asked as Andrea lay down on her bed.

“I don’t know what is wrong with my back,” Andrea sobbed, wiping her tears on the pillow. “Roger, I’m scared that something is wrong with the baby.”

“Make an ultrasound appointment after we return to D.C.,” the man said and kissed her scarred cheek. “I love you both,” he whispered, and Andrea chuckled little as his beard tickled her.

Andrea woke up suddenly, hitting her helmet to the cave’s wall when she heard something and grabbed her machete. Sound of bloatflies. She sighed and closed her eyes for a moment. She was so tired, and she just wanted to lie down somewhere and rest.

Those dreams made her feel even more homesick. She missed so terribly Roger, her family, Nate and Nora.

Shaking her head, she reminded herself once again that she had to return to reality. She was in radiation hazard sea. And she had a mission. Virgil was still out there. Somewhere.

As she walked through hazard and deadly land, she thought about things what made her feel better. She thought about Dogmeat, Squires and Duncan.

She thought about Danse and asked for forgiveness from him. She had left without telling him, but she did it to protect him. Danse was one of them who had turned out to be ‘a man of her life’ in addition to her father, Nate, Roger and…

Sometimes her thoughts wandered to Observation Deck. She missed Arthur. Him and his scowl. Sometimes she heard his voice and even smelled his scent. But she also heard other people’s voices. The voices of the dead. Either her delusions helped her to survive or would eventually drove her into madness.

But Shaun was somewhere there. She couldn’t lose her mind. Not now.

Days passed. Andrea spent those days trying to avoid creatures and survive in this godforsaken land. She still got lost sometimes though she marked locations into her map and marked trees with her knife.

For her luck, she had found an abandoned shack day ago, which had led to an underground pre-war surveillance centre. The place had been already full of synths, which were probably trying to find Virgil too. After taking care of them, she was finally able to exit from her power armour as there wasn’t any sign of radiation inside an underground bunker.

She spent her night there and ate what she could find, saving the food she had in her backpack and continued her journey. She took pills of Rad-X every time she could — and still, she felt weak.

Andrea didn’t want to be there, but she had to find Shaun. She tried to think Nate and his positive view of life. She encouraged herself to stay strong and told herself that she had gone through worse. But she hadn’t.

Glowing Sea was worse when radstorm hit. Visibility was total zero. While she waited for the
storm to pass, Andrea sat on the floor of old Red Rocket and twiddled her only remaining holotape. If she dies out there, and someone would find her body, they would know the truth.

“—Paladin-Commander cleared Natick a few days ago with Paladin Lynn and her team. It’s the best to place to enter into Glowing Sea. Your mission is to locate rogue Institute scientist, Brian Virgil. We have no idea where he is or is he even alive at this moment. However, that scientist might be our only way into Institute,” Star Paladin explained to Glowing Sea team, staring four soldiers in front of him; Paladin Danse and Lynn, Knight Ortiz and Knight-Captain Matthews. The latter one has experience as a medic too, so his skills were helpful. “Estimated time of departure minus thirty minutes. Get ready.”

“Yes, sir.”

Ortiz glanced Star Paladin and Elder. “What about Knight Adams?”

“Knight left from Airport without permission, so she can be everywhere or dead… Institute is our concern, not the safety of one soldier,” Paladin Lynn, a stern woman with buzz cut hairstyle and blue eyes stated. “We are not going to search for one soldier from ‘suicide land’.”

“She’s right,” Arthur spoke suddenly, gazing outside from his windows while listening to their conversation. “Finding a rogue scientist is our primary mission; everything else is secondary. Now, if you don’t have any more questions, you’re dismissed. Be careful out there soldiers.”

Danse remained at his spot, keeping his eyes on Elder as others left from the Command Deck.

Arthur exchanged glances with him and told Star Paladin to give them a minute.

“What are you doing?” Paladin asked. “One of our own is out there.”

“She left there without permission and informing us. Knight is on her own.”

Danse blinked his eyes baffled, not believing his ears. “What… she’s under my supervision, sir. We have responsibility for our subordinates! This—”

“Then how it is possible that she left without nobody noticing? Without telling you?”

“She is skilled in stealth, so there’s the possibility she sneaked out of here. And knowing her, she wouldn’t risk someone else’s life by taking them with her to the Glowing Sea.” It sounded like her.

“Elder, give me time. I’ll find her.”

“Danse—”

“You know what happened last time. I can’t lose her.”

“Danse. You’ll go with the team to search for this scientist. It’s your main objective. Understood?”

“This isn’t like you, Arthur. You don’t usually abandon someone like this. She may be the only soldier, but to me, she’s a friend—”

Danse couldn’t finish his sentence as Arthur grabbed the collar of his flight suit and pulled him closer to himself.

“If I could get a chance, I would come with you,” a younger man whispered. “You aren’t the only who is worried, Danse. I haven’t slept for three days because I only think where she is and how I could help her. But I have to stay calm and keep my feelings neutral because we have Institute to
deal with.”

His reaction confirmed Danse’s suspicion about those two. Finally, Arthur let go of his collar and turned around. “You’re dismissed.”

Danse exhaled sharply and nodded.

“If you find her,” the younger man spoke again, without moving his gaze from windows. Arthur’s voice was soft, almost fragile, and it was something that Danse hadn’t heard before. “Please, bring her home...”

Danse knew what he meant. Either dead or alive.

“I will.”

Danse turned around to leave, but his thoughts were interrupted when he heard a crack of glass and distant noise from outside.

Gunshot.

He turned his head instantly to see what had happened. For his luck, Arthur was unharmed and gazed towards the direction of the sound. Knight on doorway ran from his position to ask if he was okay.

“This isn’t my first time for being an assassination target,” Arthur answered.

The bulletproof glass had stopped the bullet. It had squashed into a lump, but Danse recognised it as .308 calibre and noticed small detail on it. Engravings. The bullet was meant for Arthur. Assassin probably didn’t know that he was protected by bulletproof glass.

Again, Danse found himself between a rock and a hard place.

Should he stay here in order to protect Arthur or go look for Andrea?

The latter one would suggest the first option.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thanks again for reading!
Andrea

Maybe it was too much to be alone in a place like this. Not because of danger, but because of loneliness and isolation. She wished that someone would be with her. Someone who could talk to her and keep her mind occupied because flashbacks and ghosts haunted her. She had been too long by herself and with her thoughts.

However, one thing was good; she had done an excellent job of avoiding hostiles. Deathclaws were big enough to be noticed from a distance, except that baby deathclaw, but Andrea had managed to escape from mother deathclaw. The only menaces had been feral ghouls, bugs and radscorpions.

And radiation. The most dangerous and lethal enemy in the whole place. Something that she couldn’t kill, but it could kill her.

After she found a good place to rest, she sat down to the ground and closed her eyes. She was tired; she had to sleep. She tried to forget this hideous and brutal place where she was now and tried to think her past. It gave her strength.

Or took it away. Like that specific traumatic experience did. It had changed her life and transformed her into a woman who she was now. A life-altering experience, overwhelming pain, that no parent should go through.

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

That’s what Andrea's mother had said after they had buried their premature baby. For the first time in her life, Andrea had bashed the text of the Bible and told her mother that she didn’t need it anymore. She abandoned God, the church and her religion after funerals. Parents should not bury their children. She should have died instead of her son.

Andrea sat on the windowsill, looking outside from the window and held sky-blue crochet octopus in her hand. It was the only thing that was left of her son. Andrea smacked her lips, still tasting it — a horrible taste of pain killers. The back pain had stopped for a while as strongest drugs affected her body and mind, keeping the pain away. Chordoma. It was killing her, just like it caused the death of her preemie. She was terminally ill, and Roger would have to bury Andrea next to their son. That was wrong.

She felt tears rolling down on her scarred cheeks and leaned against the cold window with her forehead. After quitting radiotherapy, her hair had begun to grow again, but she still covered her
head with a scarf. Though she heard someone climbing the stairs, Andrea didn’t move her gaze and continued glaring water drops and their pool at the backyard. As usual, it was raining. It was typical in Washington D.C.

Roger didn’t say anything at first and sat down to windowsill in front of her. He examined her with his eyes and tried to get eye contact without success.

“I made soup if you’re hungry.”

“Only if I could eat.”

Andrea hadn’t talked much, so her voice was low-pitched, and her mouth was dry. One of the side effects of pain killers.

“Honey, you need to eat. At least something.”

“Doctor said that I might die in six months. Does it matter if I eat or not?” Andrea whispered and resisted the urge to burst into tears, which could happen at any second. “I can only think... him. You and our son was a light of hope what I needed. The boy was everything that you wanted. You deserved him. And now he is gone.”

“Drea—”

“Because of this stupid tumour. What we did to deserve this... what you did to deserve this?” Andrea mourned, staring a toy in her hand. She thought about the tiny hands of their son and how he had tried to seek comfort from the toy using his hands. Comfort. It was something she couldn’t give her child. Suddenly, a man cupped her teary cheeks, making their eyes meet.

“What happened to our son, it wasn’t your fault. I’ll never blame you for that. And even if you had only days left to live, I will be with you, Andrea, to the last moment and beyond that.” Roger leaned against her forehead with his own while stroking her cheeks, drying them from tears. Andrea stared him for a moment, scrutinising his icy blue eyes and touched his nose gently.

“And after that beyond, I want you to go on. Keep on living. No matter what happens to me.”

“Sweetie—”

“Promise me,” Andrea spoke over him, still sniffing but this time she gave him a determined and sharp look. He was the only thing she had left. They stared each other for a while and finally man smiled a little.

“I promise.”

While walking toward the unknown, Andrea thought maybe her conscience and Roger tried to remind her about their promise. That she couldn’t die, not yet. But Andrea missed him terribly, perhaps more than anything. Death had been in her mind during her time in the Glowing Sea.

“But I’m still worried that you have suicidal thoughts.”

She thought did Arthur even miss her? Andrea passed old ruins of a building, noticing markings on the dead trees. Her markings. That was a good sign. She was close to Federal supply cache. Andrea gazed around her and noticed that the area looked a little familiar. Familiar as it could in a place like this. Andrea bridled as she detected a storm threatening.

I just want out of here, she thought and heard how her stomach growled. She needed nutrition and
Danse

“It’s a radstorm,” Matthews affirmed while he peeked through the scope of his sniper rifle. “It’s coming this way.”

“We haven’t even entered to Glowing Sea, and now even nature is slowing us? There’s old pre-war bunker near here. Let’s go, soldiers,” Lynn stated, frustrated. Danse wanted to continue their way but knew radstorm would only slow them down. They could get lost in the Glowing Sea, and then, they would be doomed.

“I’m going to miss this view,” Lynn said as she gazed blue sky.

“Don’t worry. After we’re back, I’ll take you to the picnic as you love the outside world so much,” Matthews laughed.

Just before the border of Glowing Sea, Danse heard something. The sound wasn’t welcoming, and the thing which made that noise appeared out of nowhere. “Deathclaw!”

Everything happened in seconds. The beast attacked Lynn as she was far away from others and most vulnerable. The woman was able to avoid its first strike, but it ended up breaking her power armour’s left leg with its claw and penetrated power armour frame. These creatures weren’t the most dangerous animals in Wasteland for nothing. Their claws pierced and ripped everything. Lynn’s scream got others attention.

Deathclaw roared in turn and created a shockwave. Danse called Lynn, told her to get out of there and ordered others to shoot Deathclaw. Lynn tried to roll away from it, but her leg was critically injured and rolling in power armour wasn’t the fastest way to move around. Paladin grabbed her gun, reaching it just in the nick of time before the creature attacked again.

However, someone in T-51 ran to between Lynn and Deathclaw and stopped the attack. Danse was stunned by how she was able to hold its arm or dared to face that monster close range. But when Knight fell on her knee, her arms trembling, Danse knew Deathclaw was winning the arm wrestling. Danse turned around to give a command to the sniper. “Shoot it, Matthews. Now!”

Furious Deathclaw roared now even louder when a bullet hit it, and for a second, it raised its both arms in the air. Andrea catch hold of its broken horn and thrust her machete deep into Deathclaw’s eye. It let out its last cry, which sounded more like lament before it fell to the ground with a loud thud. Andrea let out heavy gasps and tried to stay upright.

“Adams, are you okay?”

“I’m… I’m fine…” she answered and tried to clean her helmet from the blood of Deathclaw.

Her voice was so weak that he barely heard her and Danse saw how she fell to her knees. She wasn’t okay.

“Andrea!” The voice belonged to Ortiz, foreseeing something that others didn’t. Rest of the group moved their gaze behind them as they heard yet another growl. Danse heard Andrea cursing when she saw Matriarch.

*It’s a good feeling, but it frightens me all the same. Having a bond with someone then losing them, it changes you. I don’t want to go through that again.*
Those had been his words when he told about Cutler to Andrea. Danse remembered those exact words when Matriarch Deathclaw came out of nowhere and attacked Andrea, who dodged the first strike. For some reason, it was angry at her. It didn’t even care about others. With a roar, mother deathclaw threw an old wrecked car towards Andrea, but Knight dodged it by going down. Danse shot it again, but too late. Deathclaw grabbed her and smashed powerless soldier to the ground with force.

_I don’t want to go through that again._

Danse heard those words in his head when he heard her scream. Backup arrived from Natick at the same time, and they moved its attention away from Adams. Before going to girls, Danse ordered Ortiz to call vertibird.

“Knight-Captain, get Paladin Lynn. We’ll return to Airport,” Danse ordered and went to his protegee.

“I’m sorry if I let you down,” Andrea whispered and grunted as Danse kneeled next to her.

“You have never let me down.” Danse took off his helmet and removed hers after it. It terrified him to see her in such a horrible condition. So weak. As if she hadn’t slept, eaten, or drank for days. It was a miracle that she was able to walk or fight against Deathclaw.

“Tell Elder… I’m sorry about leaving like that… against his orders...”

“No, you’ll tell the report to him yourself, soldier. You’re going to be okay.” Andrea smiled faintly and closed her eyes. “No. Open your eyes, soldier. That’s an order!” Danse commanded, but her head slumped down as she lost her consciousness.

“Fuck!”

“We should get her out from power armour, Paladin,” Ortiz suggested and pushed Andrea to her side. He caught her after opening the suit and put her down to the ground slowly. Danse stared at her, thinking about how he could explain this to Arthur or how he could live with himself after this. First Cutler, and now her. Death was part of their life but losing someone changed people.

One of their Scribes arrived at the scene along with reinforcement and ordered Danse to give her space. Scribe examined Andrea but didn’t find visible wounds, and she suspected internal bleeding.

“Cold and pale skin, weak pulse… She needs emergency medical attention immediately. She has lost too much blood, and she’s in horrible condition anyway,” Scribe spoke and took something from her First Aid backpack and begun to insert IV into her vein. “I can’t do anything else here. Knight needs to be treated at the Airport. We have to leave now.”

Danse agreed. He heard Lynn’s cry when they tried to climb into a bird. She collapsed down to the floor of vertibird, breathing heavily. Knight-Captain attempted to examine the wound but failed — due to power armour frame.

“Don’t touch it, Matthews! Shit!”

“It’s bleeding, Paladin! I have to minimise blood loss somehow. It’s hard when your leg is inside a power armour frame.”

“Yeah? No shit! That fucking monster pierced it, and power armour like it was nothing!” After her burst, she screamed again when Matthews injected her with stimpak in the leg. After Ortiz had carried Andrea to the bird, Danse turned toward pilot.
As the aircraft landed to Airport’s helipad, Danse noticed that Cade had arrived there his medical team.

“How’s your leg, Paladin?” Cade asked Lynn.

Lynn climbed down with the help of Knight-Captain and grunted as they came down. “I’m fine. It’s just a flesh wound, doc.”

“It feels like it. I gave her pain killers. She’s bleeding badly,” Matthews said.

Cade nodded and turned to look at his subordinates. “Scribe, take Paladin Lynn with you and prepare her for surgery. Senior Scribe Gregson will—”

“Knight-Captain! Knight Adams isn’t breathing,” scribe shouted after they had moved Knight to transfer trolley with Knight Ortiz. Danse felt his heart beating fast and hard.

“No.

“Get her to the operating room immediately! Start cardiopulmonary resuscitation,” Cade ordered with the stern voice of tone and looked at Gregson. “Gregson, take care of Paladin Lynn’s wound.”

“But, Knight-Captain—”

“That was an order, Gregson! You’re our best surgeon. I’ll take care of Knight Adams. Danse, Elder wants a report,” Cade ordered sternly and left.

After making sure that Andrea survived from her heart failure and they didn’t amputate Lynn’s leg, not forgetting a fight with Cade about blood donation in the middle of Infirmary, Danse returned to Prydwen. It was time to give his report about the mission. What mission? They had not even entered into Glowing Sea, and Deathclaw had almost torn two of their own into pieces.

“We have a report, sir,” Danse stated, staring Kells, Arthur and Prince. “There isn’t much to report but… After we were dropped off, we headed towards the edge of the Glowing Sea as we planned. However, we were attacked by Deathclaw before we were able to enter into the Glowing Sea. Everything happened so quickly. It attacked at Paladin Lynn first and wounded her. Deathclaw was about to attack again, but Knight Adams appeared to the scene just nick of time and saved Lynn. Matthews shot it with his rifle, and it gave an opening for Knight to struck her machete into Deathclaw’s eye,” Danse told. Ortiz gave him a distressed look.

“After that, Matriarch Deathclaw came out of nowhere and attacked only Knight Adams for some reason. She attracted it away from Paladin Lynn, dodging its attacks but,” Danse kept a break and tried to forget her scream. “It grabbed her and slammed her to ground. Rest of us took it down and called help. After we arrived at the Airport, Knight-Captain sent Paladin Lynn to surgery and Adams to the operational room after her heart stopped. But, they were able to save both of them,” Danse continued, seeing how the youngest man squeezed his hands into a fist. “Our mission failed. We have no information or intel about a rogue scientist or the Institute. Elder, I’m asking permission to—”

“No, Paladin. We’ll send another team to the Glowing Sea. You two,” Arthur looked both of them. “Go rest immediately. Is that clear?”

Arthur

Arthur went to his quarters, walking straightly to his bar cabinet. He grabbed a bottle of whiskey,
poured himself a glass and took a swig. He had almost lost his best soldiers there, and now he had to send another team? So they could meet the same fate? He disliked it. Arthur disliked sending his men to their deaths while he was safe himself. He took another sip of his drink and saw something in the corner of his eye. Something blue inside his bar cabinet. Nuka Quantum. When Danse had told about her heart failure, Arthur had resisted the urge to run immediately to Infirmary.

A knock on his door brought him back to reality. One of their Knight’s brought him few holotapes, telling Cade found them from Knight Adams’s bag. Arthur examined them for a while and put the first one into his holoplayer.

At first, it sounded like she would have tried to figure out how to use Pip-Boy’s recorder, without realising it was already recording. Arthur smiled a little bit when Andrea cursed every terminal, holotape and Pip-Boy — stating how she hated technology and mumbled how it was already recording.

“...piece of shit. This is a personal record of Knight Andrea Adams, Brotherhood of Steel, or maybe ex-Knight, who knows. Anyway, I’ve been at the Glowing Sea for about seven hours; I’m not sure. According to Pip-Boy, it’s noonday, but it doesn’t feel like it. It’s so dark here. I found old coffeehouse, buried under, whatever that dust is. There isn’t that much radiation, so it was safe to exit from power armour. I don’t know where I am. Somewhere at the Millis, maybe? No landmarks, no buildings, nothing to remind me about the pre-war suburb. Everything is dead. Wrecked cars, crashed buildings and highways, skeletons... This whole place is... There isn’t anything here. Except for death and radiation.”

She had also recorded a few other holotapes, where she told about her progress and locations which she had found. The deeper she went into that sea of death, the more depressed she sounded. She talked about death and loneliness as if she had forgotten everything good in her life. That place had got into her.

Soon, there was just only one holotape left. Arthur inserted it to the player, pushing the play button. After hearing her voice, he knew how tired she was — given up. No traces of happiness or joy in her voice, like usually there was when she talked. Especially with him. It made him think twice about sending someone into that place. If Andrea, strong-minded and tough person, fell into despair in that place...

“...Knight Andrea Adams of the Brotherhood of Steel. Whoever finds this holotape, please, return it to Airport of Boston or Nick Valentine, detective of Diamond City. I’m not sure if someone is going to find this... Who the fuck would come here and explore the old Red Rocket gas station? Maybe after another two hundred years? Anyway, I just wanted to tell my life story. To ease my dishonesty. Maybe someone will find this. Maybe he will get this someday... or not...

My life hasn’t always been easy. When you’re descendant of former presidents, member of Congress and... daughter of Enclave officers, people expect that you will be someday an important person. When your family trains you to become a soldier and leader, it’s... it wasn’t easy. I tried to fight against my family but eventually gave up. Just for the sake of my dad. Just for the sake of his dignity and honour. Until...”

Record caught her faint snort.

“I still remember the day when I met Roger for the first time. At first, he annoyed me with his stupid questions and then suddenly, he asked me out. I punched him as an answer. It didn’t take long before we started to date, then we got married, and we bought the house from D.C. And then, I got pregnant with our son, Lucas. Roger was so happy... Our son was everything we had hoped. Our light of hope.”
The woman stayed quiet for a while.

“But then I was diagnosed with a tumour in my spine. Chordoma. It caused our son’s birth at week twenty and... he died at the age of one day. He was just too weak to survive. At the same time, the doctors gave me one year. Sometimes I can hear Lucas. I have always imagined his voice and cry. I think I’m losing my mind here, in this silence. I can hear him... even now...

Record caught sounds of sniffing and her voice as she tried to calm herself and told herself not to cry.

“I’m sorry Cade. I lied to you. I have been seriously sick and I have been exposed to a high amount of radiation. After radiation therapy and chemotherapy made me feel more nauseous than the tumour itself, I did quit it. I gave up. Every time the pain kept me awake, I went to sleep somewhere else so Roger could at least sleep.... and he just followed me. He told me he would be with me until the end. But then my uncle came to visit us. He was Secretary of the Defense back then, so he had connections.”

Andrea bridled and huffed.

“What connections? He was one of those who founded pre-war Enclave. He offered help and a possible cure. The Pentagon and Fort Marleen, United States Army Medical Research Institute, had created a cure for The New Plague that raged all over the world. It was still under development, but he told that they had had successful results with it. I accepted it. I was already dying.”

A sigh.

“It worked. My tumour went to remission, and slowly, cancer cells began to vanish. It was a miracle. Finally, science had done something which could save millions. Cancer, AIDS, leukaemia, The New Plague... everything would have been history. Now I think about it, we wanted to play God, and we got what we deserved. But back then, I was so happy. It gave me a second chance. I did cheat death.

But then something happened. I transformed from a naive, loving and happy woman into someone else. I changed as a person and a woman. I became cynical and aggressive. First, we didn’t even notice anything, but then, I began to lost my nerve over little things. It frightened me, Roger and my friends. They almost abandoned me. I didn’t recognise myself. I couldn’t sleep; I was restless. The only way to ease that feeling was to do something.

Pentagon didn’t tell me everything at first. They had created an experiment to test a new generation of steroids. Scientists believed they would be more effective against diseases and caused fewer side effects. They said steroids were ‘natural’ and permanent. But the cure of Fort Marleen was incomplete; they were wrong. Steroids may have given me permanent strength and endurance boost and cured my tumour, but they are the reason why I’m aggressive, vindictive and restless. Eventually, it was replaced by a new project, F.E.V. It showed better results.

Soon after that, Pentagon wanted to send me to the field and, the Company recruited me. CIA and U.S. Army trained me at the Camp Peary almost a whole year before they sent me to Anchorage. CIA taught me martial arts, infiltration and even how to interrogate someone and how to withstand torture. I spent six months underground with them. I still have nightmares of those months; I can’t even explain what they did there.

Then CIA sent me to Anchorage to handle infiltration missions for them as my main strength was in stealth and close-quarters combat. I often fought with Roger about the whole thing. He didn’t want
me to stay there, and I wanted. I realised that being on the field eased my agitation. I loved it.

By the sound of it, she changed her position and inhaled.

“After the war, we returned home for a while... I should have been happy about it. But whenever I closed my eyes, I... saw snow. I still see it. Our home... It wasn’t my home anymore. Something was missing. We tried to have kids, but... I didn’t get pregnant. I couldn’t enjoy sex. It hurt. It raised my suspicions, so I infiltrated Fort Marleen to find answers... Their experiment had been on-going for over sixty years. Sixty years — I don’t even know how many died during those years. Most of them died after an operation, or because they were executed due to failed expectations. I was the only one who survived from it, and after me, they tried again and again, failing every time. Pentagon told their families they died due to natural reasons. And no one suspected them, or if they did, they never questioned them because of fear... Fear. Oldest and strongest tool of power. That controlled our world and U.S. Military. It still controls this world and an organisation that my husband founded.

Steroids... they practically destroyed my fertility and sexuality. I went straight to Secretary of Defense’s office to rebuke my uncle. I hoped he would have kicked me out from Special Forces, but he just laughed. He said ‘You survived because of me. You should be grateful. You’re Adams; you aren’t supposed to have a normal life. You belong to me, to us, because WE saved your life. You are a soldier and the soldier’s only job is to follow orders.’ War, mission and army were my priority. Not my husband, family, children or anything else. And he knew that he had succeeded in it. That I had found my home. Battlefield. Sirens and gunshots are a cure to silence. I’m a soldier who can’t live without a war. I missed it; I missed the war. Civilian life wasn’t meant for me anymore. Nobody can’t understand how much I love Wasteland because of it. Wasteland is... just one big battlefield.

But still, I was angry. I wanted children more than anything else in the world. Maybe the child would have saved me from the battlefield... from Enclave. I told my uncle I could kill him. Then he demoted Roger because of my insubordination and threatened to kill him. I warned Roger and told him to leave me; I didn’t want him to be killed by that ruthless government. But of course, Roger refused, saying he would die rather than leave me.

In the end, I was able to leave the U.S. Military after General Chase’s pharmaceutical company’s doctors diagnosed me with PTSD, Survivor’s Guilt and Intermittent Explosive Disorder. Doctors suspended my operations because I was incapable and dangerous due to my medical condition and Pentagon couldn’t do anything about it. They never tried to kill Roger, and then we tried to live as normally as we could. But we had our problems, and we fought a lot. I wasn’t anymore same Andrea whom he knew. It almost broke out marriage, and at some point, I told him I wanted a divorce. I fled overseas, and I worked for the private army, mercenaries, but they kicked me out because of my erratic behaviour.

Then I returned home, and I was surprised that Roger waited for me there. He told he had torn the divorce papers and waited for me because he wanted to be with me. However, our marriage wasn’t the same what it had used to be. Something changed. We turned distant, and we both lived in the time before Fort Marleen. Maybe the war changed us. But still, those were happiest months in my life after everything. Then his duty continued, and they commanded him to Mariposa. Security team. Tsk. I know SecDec organised it to keep Roger away from me.”

A long silence and when she continued, her voice almost broke.

“Maybe it was time for us to became separated. I guess all the stories can’t have a happy ending. Others live together until death do them apart, or they die together. Others are separated, without
knowing what happened to another: three thousand miles and two hundred years between them.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Steroids and IED are reasons why Andrea is so aggressive. I thought what could save my Sole from cancer? Looked up to treatments and found my answer: steroids.

Also, re-writing scene with Rog and Andrea was a painful one. After learning about those crochet octopus and seeing pictures of preemies with them, I burst into tears and writing about it didn't help.

PS. I think Andrea's real life counterpart would be Dana Linn Bailey! Muscles, hairstyle and all stuff like that! (+ Selene from Underworld)
A Promise

Chapter Summary

Andrea's dishonesty and ghost of the past are now history, so she can commit to a whole new life.

But for how long?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

After things had calmed down, Arthur decided to give a visit to Infirmary and saw Senior Scribe Gregson sitting in the office. She was browsing through folders and didn’t even bother to raise her gaze as Arthur arrived at the Infirmary.

“General visiting hours are 0900 to 2100 daily. Please, give patients—” she spoke firmly but halted when she recognised him. “What does bring you here, Elder?”

“I came here to check how Paladin and Knight are doing,” Arthur replied. Then Gregson sighed and took off her eyeglasses. “Senior Scribe?”

“Frankly speaking, I’m just exhausted. Those two gave us trouble, especially Paladin. She wasn’t the easiest patient to treat. The condition of her leg was terrible — a bone fracture in the tibia and deep bleeding wound,” Gregson explained. “Paladin is at seventh.”

“How long she has to be at infirmary?”

“As long as she learns not to put her full weight on her foot. She has to use crutches; otherwise, she’ll be here whole next year.”

Another persistent woman. “I’ll talk to her,” Arthur said.

“Thank you, sir. I’m sure she’ll listen to you. What comes to Knight Adams, her condition isn’t anymore life-threatening, but she hasn’t woken up yet. Knight-Captain put her into a private room.”

“Good work, Senior Scribe. I’ll talk to Paladin Lynn.”

“She’s on drugs so she might not be herself,” she warned.

Arthur nodded and went to partition number seven.

“Ayyyy — Oh, sorry. I thought you were Matthews. Sorry, sir,” Lynn said after Arthur had pushed the curtain away. “It’s just these drugs. Otherwise, I’m fine.”

“Senior Scribe Gregson told you don’t want to use crutches.”

“I’ll not use them. I do look an old woman if I use them... which I am not.”

Gregson had been right; Lynn wasn’t herself. She didn’t act like this even when she was drunk.
“I want you to use them, Paladin.”

“Sir. I—”

“It’s an order, Paladin. I want you to be healed completely, soldier. I need my best soldiers on the battlefield,” Arthur scowled.

She looked at him with a slightly absent gaze and grunted under her breath. “Fine. Hey, how’s supergirl doing?”

“Senior Scribe said she’s sleeping,” Arthur answered as he realised who she meant.

“Fearless. She stared a death itself straight to the eyes. I’ve pondered how she did it. I know power armour gives strength boost, but Deathclaws aren’t weak either,” Paladin said, her eyes fluttering. “I... think I have to sleep now. Good nightie, sir~.”

After leaving, Arthur made a mental note to himself to talk with Paladin tomorrow and made his way to private rooms.

After opening the right door, he heard continuous beeping in the room — medical equipment.

Then he saw Andrea lying on the bed in a helpless state and his heart sunk.

Arthur walked next to her bed and gently brushed strands of hair from her face. She looked weary and weak, almost pale and bushed. He could see rings under her eyes that were darker than usual.

“Andrea?”

No reaction. Arthur sat down to the chair next to bed and grabbed her hand, avoiding the cannula.

He knew she could die for someone else. Without her, one of them would have died, or maybe more than one. Two deathclaws could have killed the whole team in mere minutes.

Arthur moved his gaze back to her when she grunted. This time, he felt powerless. He was the most powerful man in the East Coast, but he couldn’t ease the pain of his soldiers.

He shook his head, like trying to shake off the thought. They were all alive. The only thing that mattered to him now was that they survived.

Then someone opened the door behind him. Arthur stood up as fast as he could, knocking a chair down and turned around.

Cade.

The doctor snorted little at his sudden behaviour.

“So what brought you here in the middle of the night, sir?” he asked, though he knew the answer probably.

Arthur sighed and looked at Andrea. “How is she?”

“Weak but alive. We managed to stop internal bleeding and received blood donations from other soldiers. They saved her and Paladin Lynn from blood loss.”

“What about their situation now?”
“We immobilised Paladin Lynn’s leg with fibreglass cast, and I recommend her to stay out of the field as long as possible. I know it will be hard for her, but if she wants to return to the field, she has to start rehabilitation. The problem is her usage of crutches.”

“I spoke to her already. However, I’ll speak to her again as she is now under the influence of drugs and seemed to be little... off,” Arthur stated.

“Drugs ease her pain,” Cade said. “My job is to ease our soldiers’ pain though Lynn is...” Then he glanced Andrea. “...or they both are stubborn enough not to care about the pain.”

Arthur sighed.

“You seem to know her very well?” Cade asked. Silence fell between them before the doctor spoke again, “You know that she can’t—”

“I know. I just—” Arthur said and gazed wistfully Andrea. “She has made me feel the joy of living. That there’s Arthur—”

He stopped. The doctor wasn’t supposed to hear that — too much information.

“I’ll return to Prydwen. Inform me if something comes up,” Arthur added, using his usual firm tone this time and left the room.

________________________

Soldiers described after-death experiences differently.

To some of them, the place between two worlds showed a specific view. It changed depending on who was experiencing it.

Or their souls just left their bodies after death, and they saw everything around them as an entity.

Then either they were brought back to life so that they could tell those stories themselves or they were set free so that they could see the eternal peace which attracted many.

This time Andrea was prepared for it. She was ready to see eternal peace.

She found herself standing in the snow, the middle of the Anchorage’s battle trenches. There it all started and ended. She died and was reborn there. There she turned into someone else.

Then Andrea saw someone farther away, walking away. Roger.

She called him, but he didn’t hear her.

“Don’t go,” she whispered and followed him. “I wanna come with you.”

If this was a place between two worlds, she was ready. She was ready to join him. He was so close to her now.

“I’m ready, Roger. Please, let me come with you...”

“Don’t follow me,” he said suddenly.

Andrea stopped her walking, and so did Roger.

Then he asked, “Do you remember what we promised to each other?”

“I want to stay with you...” she cried.
After a moment of silence which felt like an eternity to Andrea, Roger finally turned around. She began to cry because she knew if she left now, she’d never see him again. She would never see his face.

She began to wade toward him in the snow, but Roger shook his head sharply, and she halted.

“Don’t follow me where you don’t belong.”

“Don’t stop me from following you where I can follow you now,” Andrea said.

He smiled at her stubborn, commanding voice of tone. His smile was one of those things she had missed. It had been one of those things which had given her strength and comfort.

“I want you to return to them, and I know you want too. Be happy again, fall in love and grow older as I did. I’m waiting for you here, but you don’t belong here, Andrea. Not yet.”

Andrea closed her eyes as tears streamed down her face. She wanted to run to him and be with him. And all that suffering and pain would be over.

But she backed away.

“I love you,” Andrea said and smiled.

Her smile was something which he had loved in her a most, and he hadn’t seen it often after Fort Marleen. Then she remembered a song that she had heard after his departure and looked at him last time.

“I can wait forever if you say you’ll be there too.”

She was free.

After saying her goodbyes, Andrea woke up and she could feel a slight pain in her body. Slowly, she fluttered her eyes open and thought she died anyway. The only thing that she saw was a blurriness and a bright white light.

But after a few minutes, the blur disappeared, and the bright white light turned out to be a lamp. Recognising the roof, Andrea realised where she was. In the Airport, inside the old doughnut shop.

She was alive.

Andrea looked the room around her as her eyes got used to the light, and felt something on her hand. No, someone held her hand.

She turned her head, and a smile appeared on her face.

Danse slept on the chair, in a most uncomfortable position which Andrea had ever seen. His head hung so low that his forehead almost touched his chair’s armrest. As if he might fall at any moment.

However, his grip was still firm as he squeezed her hand.

Andrea continued to stare at him and thought about what he has gone through because of her.

Then she heard the door opening. Cade stepped inside the room and glanced Danse.

“And yet, he still holds your hand though he is sleeping,” Cade whispered. “Paladin even fought
with me about blood donation. He wanted to donate more blood than recommended, stating you
and Lynn needed it more than he did. That’s what he does when he is overly worried. I told him
‘no’. Jenkins, on the other hand, donated blood two times by cheating and passed out in the middle
of Infirmary.”

Andrea smiled.

“How are you feeling?” the doctor asked.

Andrea cleared her throat and tried to speak. Her mouth was dry, and her first sentences came out
as a hoarse rasp. “Decent. What happened?”

“They brought you and Lynn to Airport after Matriach attack. You lost your consciousness, and for
a moment, your heart gave up. But thanks to blood donations and fast treatment, we brought you
back to the land of the living. As a matter of fact, you’re in more horrible condition because of lack
of sleeping, dehydration and minor radiation poisoning than internal bleeding.”

Andrea sighed and closed her eyes for a few seconds. “You can’t eat or sleep in that place. Lynn?”

“Survived. Thanks to you. According to Paladin’s report, mother deathclaw was pretty pissed at
you.”

“I killed one of her kids. Though I understand why she followed me all way to another side of the
Sea,” Andrea answered and glanced Danse when he moved.

“Paladin has stayed by your side since you arrived here. I can’t imagine how it feels like to sleep
three nights on that chair.”

“Have I been out cold for that long?” Andrea frowned, sounding sceptical. That was a new record.

“As I said, lack of sleep and eating have done more damage to you than radiation or physical
injury,” the doctor pointed out and crossed his arms. “Do you want to talk about your holotapes?”

“Not right now.”

“How about what happened at the Glowing Sea? Any intel would be great before the second team
goes—”

“I found Virgil,” Andrea said quickly. “There’s no need to send anyone to that sea of death.”

The doctor raised his eyebrows in surprise. “Are you ready to give your report?”

A nod.

“Okay, but I suggest you rest now. It’s midnight. I’ll inform Elder.”

Andrea scoffed mentally. Elder probably didn’t want to see her. After the doctor had left, Andrea
turned on her side and stared Danse. This time he snored a little bit, and Andrea smiled.

_I want you to return to them, and I know you want too._
as expected, and the number of hostiles was more significant than outside of the Sea, and they are stronger than their conspecifics here. But I found Virgil.”

“Where is he now?”

“Still in his cave.”

“How did he survive out there? That place can kill anyone in hours,” Andreson pondered.

“He turned himself into Super Mutant after he escaped from the Institute. It was the only way to ensure his survival there,” Andrea recalled what Virgil had told her.


“Institute has its own strain of FEV. They used people of the Commonwealth as test subjects through decades. They are smarter than their brothers of the West, so that might explain why they are capable of using weapons, turrets, mines and are capable of creating armours. Virgil also said that he created a cure for FEV, but it’s still inside his lab.”

“There is a cure for,” Danse faltered a little bit, failing to keep his stiff posture. “For FEV?”

Andrea eyed him for a moment, knowing what he thought. Then she continued, “Virgil said he is willing to help us to get inside the Institute, but in return, he wants that cure.”

It could save the world. A world without FEV. Yeah, sound familiar, huh?

“The only way to get inside the Institute is to use Molecular Relay. That’s how they call their teleportation. Virgil promised to give us blueprint of the Relay, but before we can use it, we have to kill Courser.”

“Courser?” Arthur asked.

“They are elite assassins and hunters of the Institute. Institute created them to hunt down escaped synths and uses them on surface missions. The man which we saw in Kellogg’s memories,” Andrea looked Danse once again. “…was one of them. According to Virgil, every Courser has special hardware in their body that gives them a direct connection to the Relay. We need one if we want to get inside.”

Arthur, or Elder, narrowed his eyes. “Do you trust it?”

“No, but our options are limited, sir. We kill Courser, then Virgil gives us the blueprint, and we can start to build the Relay.”

“Why you didn’t get it immediately?” Anderson questioned her this time.

“With all respect, sir, I was trained to interrogate humans, not super mutants. I threatened Virgil, but it stated he could smash my skull with its bare hands if I try anything,” Andrea stated.

“Anything else?” Arthur asked after a moment.

“No, Elder.”

“Very well. Paladin-Commander, return to Prydwen and start to gather men for Courser hunting,” Arthur said to Anderson and then glanced Danse. “Paladin Danse, leave us.”

Anderson frowned this time. “Elder, is that wise? She’s—”
“If she wanted me dead, she would have killed me a long time ago. You have your orders, Anderson,” Arthur commanded, and his fourth-in-command nodded.

“Arthur, I’m—” Andrea said as soon as the door closed after Danse, but Arthur gestured her to stay quiet.

She sat down on the bed and put a strand of her hair behind the ear.

“It took me a long time to convince higher-ups that you aren’t a threat to us or our operations. Do you know how many rules and laws of Brotherhood you broke by fraternising with the enemy? By hiding your past and abandoning your post and this base without permission?”

“A dozen,” Andrea answered firmly and lifted her eyes to look into his.

“Do you have an explanation for what you did?”

“What comes to the detective, I wasn’t your soldier when I met him. I did—”

“Him? As far as I am concerned, it’s a synth and should be shoot on sight.”

A muscle tensed in her jaw.

“Then go ahead and kill the detective of Diamond City,” Andrea said and stood up. “People will get mad at us if we kill him. I don’t like that those people call you lunatic and warmonger because you aren’t one, but don’t give them a reason.”

She noticed the man’s muscles tensed up, but she continued.

“Why did I abandon my post and this base without permission? Everything I do, I do for the young boy, who’s now my responsibility. And nothing will not stop me from finding Shaun. Not you, not Glowing Sea, not hundreds Coursers, Unknown Soldier or goddamn Institute!”

Andrea realised she had raised her voice once again. She backed away and kicked chest of drawers to ease her anger. Then she stayed still for a moment.

“I’m sorry, Elder,” she said after she had calmed down. “I didn’t want to leave without your permission, but I didn’t want to take anyone with me. That place... nobody shouldn’t go there.”

“But it isn’t up to you. I’m in charge here, and I decide who stays in the Airport and who leaves.”

“I know,” Andrea assured. “What’s going to happen to me now?”

“You’ll continue serving under supervision of Paladin Danse, but due to your insubordination and desertion, we decided to demote your rank. I suppose you should thank your husband for that we won’t throw you out,” Arthur addressed, and his voice didn’t even break or falter. A true Elder. "Do you understand, Initiate?”

“Yes, sir.” Andrea wanted to say something else, too, but words didn’t come out. Hell, she didn’t know what to say.

“Good. Night, Adams,” Arthur added blankly and left the room.

Andrea went over to the bed and sat down. The way he behaved and talked, it felt terrible. He ignored her and behaved coldly toward her. And they even demoted her. She didn’t personally care about her rank. Her family had demoted Roger’s rank because of her, so maybe it was her turn now.
But she feared this would undermine Danse’s position.

And at least, they will keep her there so that she could stay close to Arthur. She would still do anything for him.

Then someone opened the door.

Arthur came back.

Andrea stood up quickly as she could, trying not to slip on the cold stone floor. “Elder?”

“I—,” Arthur hesitated, but he didn’t finish his sentence. Instead, he kept staring at her.

This time he hadn’t that deadpan, expressionless look on his face which he had had a moment ago but something that he didn’t show to others. He looked sad and concerned. Just like that, he was once again Arthur, not Elder.

Finally, his shoulders slumped down as he gave up. Arthur power-walked over to her and kissed her deeply.

Andrea was so surprised about his sudden reaction that she couldn’t answer to kiss. Arthur noticed it and pulled himself away from her, albeit reluctantly.

“Don’t ever leave from the Airport before telling me. Ever,” he whispered and gazed her eyes.

“Arthur—”

“You could have died there. Alone. And no one would have found you.”

“That’s the risk we—” Andrea reminded.

“You’re more than a soldier to me.”

“I remember how you said ‘we’re done, Knight’ and then you told me to get the fuck out of here.”

“That’s not what I meant!” Arthur took a deep breath. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry I said those things. I didn’t mean them, but—but I thought you were using me.”


Arthur’s look softened, and he closed his eyes closed for a moment. Then he grabbed her hand and stared at her wedding ring.

“When I found out about your lineage, I, um, tried to stay away from you but eventually, it was too late,” Andrea said suddenly. “The real reason why I left alone... I knew someone would have come with me. I’ve enough those who speak to me behind their graves. I hope that it would stop. Maybe Kellogg was right about death being the only way out,” she whispered, saying the last line to herself.

...but you don’t belong here, Andrea. Not yet.

She felt how man touched her hip, pulling her body more firmly against his. She shivered under that touch.

“No, it’s not the only way out,” Arthur stated, embracing her tightly.
Andrea flashed a smile at him and hugged him back. People rarely hugged him — if ever. Then she touched his chin, scratching his beard gently and kissed him on the lips.

Now as her dishonesty was past and she had said her goodbyes, Andrea could give herself to Arthur.

She was his now, and she would show him how much she had missed him.

He kissed the tip of her nose and then lightly brushed over her lips with his. Andrea wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him with all the passion she felt.

His hand wandered up and down, caressing first her hips through the scrubs, then her bottom.

Andrea giggled as he lifted her in his arms, carrying her to bed and put her down. He climbed the top of her and Andrea grabbed his holotags, pulling him back to kiss. His tongue touched hers, albeit clumsily, but she didn’t care. He practised.

She felt Arthur’s hand under her scrubs, and she let out a moan as he touched her naked breast.

“You like that?” he breathed against her mouth.

“Yeah, just—”

“Andrea, Fox stole Quantum for you and—” Stefanie entered into the room, but froze after seeing them. “Yeah, never mind. Sorry. I’ll be going.”

Arthur huffed furiously and glared the sniper who returned to outside.

“I’ll kill those two,” he cursed and stood up.

Andrea burst into laughter. It was something that she hadn’t done in a while. “Don’t. I like them.”

“If Cade gives you permission, return to airship soon as you can,” Arthur said as he fixed his hair.

Andrea tilted her head as he fell into his thoughts and seemed to ponder something. Then he looked at her and said, “I’m sorry about your son and husband. About what happened to you before the war.”

His apology, or subject of it, made her sad and relieved at the same time. Maybe it was his way to offer an apology, considering his behaviour before she left. Though somehow his reaction was justified. They both hurt each other.

“I’m sorry that I didn’t tell you.”

“It’s okay,” the man stated and gave her something from his pocket — her pre-war tags, including Roger’s own. Andrea was so stunned about his gesture that she didn’t even notice Arthur kissing the corner of her mouth. “I’ll help you find your godson.”

“Thank you,” Andrea whispered.

Arthur said good nights to her, kissing her knuckles and left.

She felt butterflies in her stomach — big butterflies. Then Andrea realised something; Arthur didn’t hate her after all.

But she wasn’t so sure about the others. How could she defend herself as others saw her possible
threat? She and Arthur weren’t responsible for the sins of their fathers. Nobody wasn’t. Andrea rubbed her hair and sighed.

But for her shock, she noticed something on her palm and felt her heart missing a beat. Her hand trembled when she gazed strands of hair on her palm. Butterflies disappeared as fast as they had appeared when tightening feeling on her chest got stronger.

That fucking radiation.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Damn that one scene. But they were goodbyes, and she's ready to move on and knows what she wants.

Lyrics “I can wait forever if you say you'll be there too” is from Air Supply's - I Can Wait Forever. My favourite song for Drea and Rog. The feels. She will always love him. He will always be her greatest love. Nothing can't change that. Even my godmother still loves her deceased spouse, who died over ten years ago.

Yes, I know there is rank Aspirant between Knight and Initiate, but I don't know... It didn't sound good with her surname.

Thanks for reading!
Chapter Summary

The Airport has visitors, who have a proposal for Elder and news from Sanctuary.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After vertibird had hooked onto Prydwen, Andrea jumped down from vertibird and thanked the pilot. She had been in the infirmary longer than she had imagined and finally, Cade let her go.

Though she sometimes almost lost her mind up there, she was now grateful for it. She was grateful to be able to see Arthur and the others finally.

But there was something that Andrea wanted to tell him. She had to tell him first before Cade does.

“Arthur...” she began.

He lifted his gaze from the report to her and closed the folder in his hand. His expression softened a little bit.

“Welcome back,” he said.

Andrea walked over to him and glanced behind her. Command Deck was empty. Then she kissed him on the cheek.

“How are you?” he asked.

Straight to the point.

Andrea bit her lip and sighed.

“There’s something I have to tell you,” she said and tucked a stray lock of hair behind her ear. “Before you heard it from Cade, or you’ll steal his terminal.”

Arthur’s expression changed quickly from soft to firm. Then he asked, “What?”

“Last night, I had a nosebleed. It frightened me because... Cade said it’s possible radiation poisoning. Maybe it is because of stress—” Andrea said. “Maybe it’s nothing.”

Arthur turned to look out of the windows and ran his hand through his hair.

“Otherwise, I’m fine,” Andrea continued. “I wanted to tell you. I won’t keep secrets from you anymore.”

Arthur let out a sigh and stared at her. Then he grabbed her hand and kissed her knuckles.

“I won’t send you to the Glowing Sea when it is time to retrieve those blueprints. You should avoid radiation from now on.”
She didn’t want to return to that place.

“Okay,” Andrea said, nodding. “But if I turn into Glowing One, put me into the flight tower of Airport. It would be a good lighthouse.”


Andrea tried to hold her laugh, failing at it. That surprised her.

“Wow.” Andrea said and cleared her throat. “You’re full of surprises, Elder.”

He smiled back. “I just wanted to hear your laugh.”

She loved it when he smiled. Then she remembered another thing they needed to talk about.

“Did... you talk to Quinlan about... my surname?” she asked.

“Yes, I did. I suggested we should use your maiden name instead for now, but Brotherhood will keep Maxson name on your records.”

Andrea shook her head. “It’s not right.”

“I thought you wanted to keep it,” Arthur said, frowning.

“It’s your surname, your family, not mine—”

“Elder Maxson,” a gentle voice interrupted her sentence.

Startled, Arthur let go off Andrea’s hand and took a step backwards.

Andrea turned to look at the speaker, and for their relief, it was Danse.

“Paladin Russell is requesting your presence at the Airport, Sir. We have visitors.”

The first thing Andrea saw at the perimeter usual quests of the Airport was brahim and trader. However, this time mercenaries didn’t travel with the trader. It was Minutemen.

When Andrea saw Preston, she smiled. He was alive and looked the same as he did before.

Then she noticed a middle-aged woman with long, red curly hair and green coloured eyes. Her face was narrow, nose small, and her lips were red as her hair.

She was wearing a dark blue overcoat with four gold stars on each side of the collar, worn over a white shirt and combat armour, with Minuteman emblem on it.

The redhead pushed her tricorn hat higher on her forehead with one finger, as if it would be too big for her.

“Gillian Elenora Pierret, General of Minutemen,” the woman introduced herself when the trio reached them. Then she looked at Preston. “This is Colonel Preston Garvey.”

Andrea glanced Arthur. He hadn’t expected General’s visit.

“Elder Arthur Maxson,” Arthur said firmly. Then he introduced Danse and Andrea.

“Ah, the latter one doesn’t need introductions — a woman out of time. You saved Garvey and his
group at the Concord,” General Pierret said, smiling at her. “Thank you for it.”

“No problem, ma’am,” Andrea answered but heard Arthur clearing his throat.

“General, may I ask your business here today?” Arthur asked from his equivalent leader.

Andrea knew Brotherhood wasn’t a big fan of Minutemen, but if their General was standing in front of their gate, Arthur couldn’t send them away.

“A friendly visit,” Pierret answered. “But I have a proposal for you, Elder. If you’re interested.”

“What kind of proposal?”

“I know your main purpose here isn’t to protect the people of the Commonwealth. But I know you need rations to feed your soldiers in your war against the Institute and hostile creatures, which, hopefully, excludes non-feral ghouls,” Pierret said firmly.

“We don’t attack non-feral ghouls.”

“Good,” the redhead said, sounding pleased. Then she glanced around and asked, “Is there someplace we can speak in private?”

Arthur exchanged glances with Danse, and Paladin looked at the ruins of the Airport.

“Follow me, General,” Arthur said.

Arthur gestured for his two visitors to sit down at first. Then he, Danse and Andrea sat down in front of the table in the conference room.

“So, what kind of proposal you have in mind? I assume it has something to do with your farmers as you spoke about rations?” Arthur asked. “If it’s about protection, we aren’t here to protect every farmer, General. It’s your job.”

“We can handle the protection of farmers. However, raiders and feral ghouls aren’t our only enemies. Gunners, Institute, Forged...” Pierret listed. “We need help with them, and you need food. I can arrange a better supply line between the Airport and settlements if you agree to help us.”

“We don’t need your help, General,” Arthur said and crossed his arms.

“But Commonwealth needs our help,” Pierret said, gesturing herself and Arthur in front of her. “This city won’t survive if the most dangerous factions, like the Institute and Gunners, are threatening her and her people. This place needs better collaboration.”

“We aren’t a company of the charity, General. We are military—”

“Military? How many militaries threaten farmers?” Pierret asked.

Andrea frowned. What?

“I’m offering you a better option to get food instead of stealing crops from our people, Elder.”


Pierret turned to look at Preston. “Colonel?”
“Farmers have reported about soldiers, who have either tried to bribe them or threatened farmers so that they would give their crops,” Preston explained. “There haven’t been casualties, yet. Farmers have been pretty powerless against power-armoured soldiers when they have marched, if I may, to steal their food.”

Andrea’s jaw dropped open.

She had sudden flashbacks of news where news agency had revealed video footage of the U.S Military soldiers executing starving civilians because of food riots. Then through an anonymous source, the citizen’s heard the military had appropriated the food rations to themselves.

That had fueled the riots.

Andrea didn’t want to go through it again. She turned to look at Arthur and was about to open her mouth, but after seeing his shocked look, she knew that Arthur wasn’t aware of this either.

Arthur tightened his jaw and said, “I’m deeply sorry about what people of the Commonwealth have suffered because of our actions. I’ll make sure that what you told ends immediately and stolen property will be returned to their owners. Whoever is behind this, I’ll make sure they will be prosecuted and punished.”

“We don’t want anyone dead, Elder. I’ll be pleased if you return those crops to their owners. But I would like you to consider my proposal. You may have skilled hunters and working supply line now, but it will be harder to get food if Institute starts to burn down more settlements,” Pierret said, glancing Andrea. “Institute attacked and burned Sanctuary down a few days ago.”

Andrea gasped. “Wh-what?”

“We both were at the Castle when it happened.” Pierret meant herself and Preston. “Synths and Coursers attacked the settlement and killed over half of the people.”

“How people managed to escape?” Danse asked.

“They got help,” General said shortly and glanced Andrea. “He was from the Vault. According to my men, he was a skilled fighter and knew what he was doing. He even took down a few Courser by himself. Thanks to him, our people managed to escape.”

“Which Vault he was from?” Danse asked again.

“We don’t know, but his laser rifle was unique,” Preston pondered. “It was like yours, Paladin. Its white paint had waded, but a golden lion on it—”

“Where is he?” Arthur asked, interrupting Preston’s sentence. Andrea thought about Paladin Cole, who had disappeared after Sarah Lyons death.

“He disappeared after helping us,” Pierret stated and continued telling what happened after it.

Andrea thought about Sanctuary. Why the Institute attacked there and burned it down? There wasn’t anything valuable there.

Beep. Beep.

A sound of her Pip-Boy woke her from her thoughts. Andrea opened the machine and found a reason why it beeped.
Slowly, she glanced around the room, ignoring the conversation between Elder and General.

“Preston, Danse,” she said, keeping her gaze fixed on the corner of the room. “get General and Elder out of here. Courser is here.”

Andrea drew the pistol from the thigh holster and shot toward the intruder. She could see its silhouette.

Just like Kellogg, they used Stealth Boy.

Then on the corner of her eye, she saw movement on her left side and kicked a chair toward the second intruder.

There were two of them.

She managed to break Stealth Boy with the chair as it deactivated, revealing the intruder.

Courser stared at her with its cold, blue eyes, and grabbed its weapon.

However, Andrea managed to disarm it and punched it to the face.

It didn’t even flinch.

Courser blocked her hit and threw a kick, but Andrea blocked it with her leg. It tried to punch her, but Andrea, just barely, dodged it.

Its speed and strength surprised her little. They were skilled as she was, and probably had more stamina than she did, so she had to wrap this up quickly.

Then another Courser approached her from the side. Andrea threw her current opponent to the ground and kicked the second Courser away. One of these was enough.

As Courser stood up, Andrea kicked it hard on the stomach and then to the head. She focused her attacks on its head, just like in Kellogg case.

However, it stopped one of her punches, grasping her hand in mid-air and punched her to the head as a retaliation.

It felt like someone would have hit her head with a sledgehammer. Tiny floating stars filled her field of vision, but she ignored the pain, feeling of dizziness and disorientation.

It didn’t often happen when someone punched her. Steroids and her training had strengthened her endurance, but she had her limits. But she had to stay conscious. Otherwise, others would be in danger.

Andrea headbutted it, feeding the pain inside her head and pushed Courser further. Then as quickly as she could, she kicked Courser down and drew her knife from the chest sheath.

She managed to stab its head just in the nick of time before the second Courser shoved her against the concrete wall. It grabbed her right shoulder and threw her to the ground.

Andrea fell to the ground, injuring her left arm, but dodged the incoming attack.

Courser tried to kick her again, but Andrea caught its foot.

Then sounds of laser rifle and laser musket interrupted them, and Courser turned to look at the
doorway.

While its attention was elsewhere, Andrea drew her second knife from boot sheath and stabbed its leg.

Then she stood up quickly, pulling out her second pistol and aimed at Courser. She heard reinforcements approaching the room and saw Danse and Preston surrounding the enemy with her.

“You can’t protect them. Not even from yourself,” it said with its chilly, stoic voice and fled from the scene using the Relay.

Andrea lowered her gun and tried to catch her breath. Then she felt something warm streaming down her face and touched her forehead.

*More wounds, great,* she thought as she glared her bloody fingers.

“Are you okay?” Danse asked her.

Andrea nodded, wiping the blood from her forehead and walked to fallen Courser. Her knife was still sticking out its head.

She knelt, grabbing the knife and cracked its skull open.

“What are you doing?” Preston asked.

“They have a chip which helps us to get inside the Institute,” Andrea answered scrutinised the brains.

“Uh. Its all yours, Andrea,” Preston said and turned around as General and Elder returned to the room. “Are you okay, General?”

“I’m fine, Colonel,” Pierret stated confidently and glanced Andrea. “Well, you have taken down Deathclaw.”

“Frankly speaking, ma’am, I was trained to kill humans, not mutated chameleons,” Andrea answered. “This was my field of expertise… Ha! I found it.”

She stood up and walked over to Danse. “Here.”

“Let me see,” Danse said and took an object from her bloody hand. “This must be a courser chip.”

“Did anyone know you were coming here?” Andrea asked Preston.

“No. Only our crew. Why?”

“Even coming here was a huge risk, but still Institute sent them here,” Andrea stated and glanced Arthur, who seemed to be unharmed. “Somehow, they knew you were here with us.”

“Maybe they followed us and sneaked here?” Preston asked.

“They know we follow their radiofrequency. It was a suicide mission,” Danse said. “But Elder and General in the same room? A perfect chance to attack.”

Before leaving, General Pierret stated she wanted to talk to Andrea privately. Danse glanced the redhead and told them to stay inside the perimeter.
“I just want you to know,” Pierret said. “We went to Vault 111 and buried the residents, including your friends. We thought it would be better for them.”

Then General took something from her coat’s pocket and gave Andrea the necklace and dogtags — Nate’s dogtags and Nora’s gold cross, their wedding rings attached to the chain.

Andrea stared the gold cross, touching it with her finger and looked back to General.

“Thank you so much,” she whispered and put them around her neck. “I’ll give these to their son when I find him.”

General touched her shoulder gently, giving her a friendly smile and returned to her troops.

Andrea felt relief. Nora and Nate had now a final resting place.

Then out of nowhere, Andrea felt the world spin around her, and she fell backwards. But someone caught her.

“Adams?” Danse asked.

Andrea shook her head and leaned against him. “I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?” Danse asked again but then continued, “Go to see Knight-Captain. That’s an order.”

Andrea nodded.

After the medical check, Andrea went to Arthur’s door. She took a deep breath, then knocked on the door. She waited for permission to enter, but Arthur opened the door himself.

He gave her a little smile and let her inside.

“I, um, Cade ordered me to sleep, and your mattress is hard compared to my mine own, which feels like a marshmallow,” Andrea said and scratched a tip of her nose with her finger. “And I wouldn’t want to sleep on the floor of the storage room even though it wouldn’t be the first time.”

“I can share my bed with you,” Arthur said. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine. I’m just grateful that you are fine,” Andrea answered. Then she remembered something and dug through her backpack to find her present for Arthur.

“Early birthday and Christmas present,” Andrea said, dropping her backpack and gave him Magnum .44 pistol. “I modded it with Ortiz and Teagan, adding that Brotherhood logo to the grip.”

Arthur studied the pistol and then looked at her.

“I thought about selling it, but after I heard the assassin tried to kill you… I decided to give this to you. I’m not always here but swear to God; I don’t want to lose you because your current sidearm sucks,” Andrea stated dryly, seeing a faint smile appearing on his face.

However, Arthur sighed and said, “I recommend you to keep this. You may need this. I have—”

“Keep it. I don’t want to say goodbyes to you after—” Andrea stopped and swallowed. “When my heart stopped, I went to the place between two worlds — this world and afterlife. And, I, uh, I met Roger there. I was ready to join him, but he told me that it wasn’t my time.”
Arthur remained quiet the whole time, letting her speak.

“I’ll never stop loving him. But I said my goodbyes to him, and I left him behind — his ghost. For now, I’m here because of you. Because I’m yours, Arthur Maxson, not his.”

Andrea pressed her forehead against his and cupped his cheek.

“And I don’t want to say goodbyes to you anytime soon… When Coursers attacked, my first thought was to get you and Danse out of there. Institute has taken enough important people from me. I’ll protect you.”

“You don't need to protect me. You’ll just put yourself in danger.”

“It is my duty as your soldier, and I love danger. It’s my middle name,” Andrea said, amused and wrinkled her nose.

Arthur scowled her but pulled her into a tight embrace.

“I don’t want to lose you,” he said and brushed kisses along the side of her neck.

Andrea giggled as his beard tickled her skin.

“I like being this close to you,” she said and touched his collar and then ran her fingers through his beard. “though I still fear you.”

“Maybe I should fear you after what you did at the Airport.”

Andrea grinned a little bit. “Mess with my Elder and face my wrath.”

After changing her clothes, she exited the bathroom and heard Emmett purring under the table. Arthur, instead, was lying on the bed, reading a book.

Andrea tilted her head little as she tried to see what book Arthur read.

_The Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe._

She smiled, seeing how peaceful he was. It melted her heart how the man focused on the book, analysing and reading every poem with a thought.

She fell in love with that man. She didn’t fell in love with Maxson or Elder, but with Arthur.

Andrea shut down except for the one on his night table lights, drank his whiskey with one swig and took his book. Arthur stared her confused as she put the book away and climbed the top of him.

“What—”

Andrea put her finger on his lips, then she smiled and kissed him passionately.

Arthur answered her kiss and pulled her closer. He placed his arm around her and touched the unbruised side of her face with his lips, kissing her nose, cheek and side of her neck softly.

She caressed his upper body and pushed the T-shirt up, but then Arthur broke their kiss, albeit reluctantly.

“Andrea...”
“Yeah?”

Did she do something wrong?

“Are you sure about this?” Arthur asked. “Your heart is beating fast.”

Andrea stared at him and then smiled, tilting her head playfully. His heart thudded as much as hers did.

“I’m ready. If you want me…”

Arthur pulled her back to kiss and then said, “I share this bed only with one person, and it’s you.”

Andrea felt the bang of warmth inside her, as she heard his words.

“Let’s be slow at first, so no need to be nervous,” she whispered. “I try to be gentle, though it’s not a promise.”

The man flashed her with a sly smile. “I can't wait.”

She couldn't wait, either.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: This chapter has a few foreshadowing moments.

Thanks for reading!
Man or a Monster

Chapter Summary

After sharing an intense night and discussion with Arthur, Andrea visits Goodneighbour and after their journey, someone appears.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That night was full of the most passionate lovemaking that Andrea’s ever experienced.

The fact she was his first; there was something special about it. He was inexperienced, so she gave him time, encouraged him and gave instructions. However, she told him he held the reins. It was what he needed.

And even if it weren’t the best ride she had had, how many others had ‘rock her world’, Andrea wouldn’t give this feeling and moment away. Sharing a tender and pleasant moment with someone for the first time was beyond price.

Arthur wasn’t the only one who had been nervous during their sexual intercourse.

She had been nervous too because of her body. It wasn’t anymore feminine; she had no breasts, and she had problems with her bottom. She was sometimes so dry that sex hurt.

But with him, she hadn’t that problem. She trusted him. She ached for him and his presence.

After their lovemaking, they cuddled and talked for a couple of hours.

“Where did you get this?” Andrea asked, touching the scar — an old bullet wound — on his flank. “Someone shot you?”

“One of the mercenaries of Talon Company tried to assassinate me,” Arthur answered and smiled as she kissed the scar.

“What about this?” she asked and touched the burn scar on his arm.

“I got it when we attacked to Shepard’s stronghold. A small amount of acid corroded through power armour frame,” Arthur answered. “Centaur attack.”

“A centaur?”

“Combination of human and various kinds of animals — tall as an adult human, uses three tentacles as tongues and instead of legs, they have multiple human arms that they use to move around.”

She raised a single eyebrow and asked, “Are they capable of attacking with acid?”

“At some point, they developed the ability to produce radioactive acid. Of course, it was me who got the honour of being the first test subject. I don’t know who freaked out more; other soldiers or
“I bet they did. I would have,” Andrea said, and Arthur kissed her once.

“My turn. How did you get this?” he asked, meaning scar on her chin and touched it.

“I didn’t get it on the battlefield,” Andrea stated. “I was quite a troublemaker in my youth, so it was hard for me not to get into fights.”

His first response was a slightly raised eyebrow.

“That hasn’t changed,” he said dryly.

Andrea loved this side of him. He was capable of being funny sometimes, or maybe she found him funny when others didn’t.

“Goodneighbor Watch didn’t care,” she said. “Anyway, as a teenager, I was more short-tempered than now, so I ended up into fight with few assholes. And after those assholes got more help, Sam and Frank, my twin brothers, came to my aid. I got this—” Andrea pointed a large scar on her chin. “...after asshole’s girlfriend hit me with a wine bottle. Police took us all in after someone called them. So the brig is not an unfamiliar place to me.”

Arthur smiled, and she liked it. Then he glanced her scar in her eyebrow. “This?”

“It’s a little bit older. I got it when I was training in gymnastics, performing a move called a double front. I lost my balance on the balance beam and fell. It was pure luck that I didn’t lose my eye.”

“I can’t imagine you being an acrobat.”

“I was good at it,” she said and stroked her fingers down his chest, but stopped suddenly. On the left side of his chest, directly above his heart was a stab wound.

He noticed how she looked at it and said, “One of ours worked for someone else and managed to stab me. After that, others have been more reluctant to recruit outsiders.”

“Then why do you continue it?” Andrea asked.

“I don’t want to be like Elders of the West...”

“But like Lyons?”

Arthur nodded, stroking her hair gently and pushed strains of her hair behind her ear.

“Not all wastelanders aren’t that bad. You’re a good example,” he said.

Andrea smiled at him and leaned to kiss him passionately. A slight moan escaped her lips as a man wrapped his strong arms around her again and tightened his grip. It was something that she had longed for — touches and closeness.

It was what they both had longed for. They both were touch starved.

A chuckle escaped her lips as Arthur turned her around and climbed the top of her.

“Do you want to do it again?” Andrea asked.

“I’m getting the hang of it. You’re a good teacher.”
“Says someone who almost choked me with—”

He stopped her sentence with a kiss and pinned her against the bed with his body. Then he leaned close and whispered in her ear,

“Your fault. You were supposed to keep it slow.”

A shiver went down Andrea’s spine as she heard his low, husky voice in her ear.

“I can’t help myself when someone enjoys my handling,” Andrea teased and wrapped her legs around his waist. “Bring it on, Elder.”

At dawn, Andrea woke up to the sounds of scratching. She lifted her head and saw Emmett coming out from the bathroom, walking back to her bed. The cat curled up on her bed and continued sleeping.

Andrea put her head back on Arthur’s chest and closed her eyes. Focusing on the rhythm of his heartbeat, she fell quickly back asleep but woke up again when her Pip-Boy’s alarm turned on.

And it woke Arthur too.

“Sorry, continue your sleeping. I’ve to go before someone starts to suspect something,” Andrea whispered and kissed him before she sat up.

“I sleep better when you’re here.”

“Of course,” Andrea smirked. “No, seriously, introvert like you needs to be alone once for a while.”

“I have been alone enough,” Arthur said, his voice sounding hollow.

Andrea kissed him on his corner of the eye and whispered, “I know. But I want you to sleep. Okay? I’m worried about you.”

She rubbed her eyes and dressed her sports bra. Then she felt the tips of his fingers touching her back.

“Did I do something wrong?” he asked.

She frowned and asked in turn, “What do you mean?”

“You didn’t enjoy it?” Arthur asked. “You didn’t… come.”

Andrea sighed.

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” she said. “That experiment didn’t only destroy my ability to have children, but also my libido, ability to have orgasms and feel sexual arousal. So that nothing wouldn’t be more important than war. Not my family, friends, children or even sex. I’m an only soldier, Arthur, not a woman. I’m not an ideal girlfriend... or a wife,” Andrea continued.

Her voice faltered when she stressed the word wife and picked up her flight suit from the floor.

“The steroids in my body have reduced my estrogen levels, causing dryness. At first, it was a big problem for us. I didn’t want sex… my body didn’t want sex because it hurt. But then I spoke to a sex therapist, and I realised I could enjoy sex without orgasms. I found another way to feel sexual
arousal and a way to enjoy sex — a way to trick my body.”

She looked over her shoulder and glanced at him.

“I enjoy closeness and touches, giving pleasure to someone I care. So you didn’t do nothing wrong, Arthur,” Andrea reassured, cupping his cheek. “I did enjoy it because you did. Though at first, I was ashamed of myself, and I feared you would start to dislike me because of it.”

“I wouldn’t dislike you. You didn’t do nothing wrong,” Arthur said and kissed her freckled shoulder. “But what did you mean by ‘ideal wife’?”

No answer.

“What did he do?” he asked again.

Her shoulders slumped after his question. “He cheated me, but...”

“Son of—“

“Arthur, don’t. Of course, it had an impact on him when the woman he loved turned into someone else and stopped wanting sexual intercourse—”

“It doesn’t justify cheating,” Arthur snarled.

“Perfect couples only exist in the movies and books,” Andrea pointed out. “We got over it. We continued. I forgave him.”

Arthur kept staring at her for another few seconds. Then he brushed his lips against her neck.

“I wouldn’t do that to you,” he said.

“You’re not him,” Andrea whispered. “Can we not talk about him, though?”

“If it’s what you want,” Arthur said and took her flight suit and dropped it back on the floor. “Stay. That is an order.”

“I’m supposed to go to Goodneighbour with Danse. I’ve to—” Andrea said and heard how Arthur growled. She smiled faintly and shook her head. “Fine.”

She went to his arms again. He wrapped his arms around her and buried his face in her hair. Andrea didn’t want to be anywhere else. She didn’t want to be doing anything else if she were honest.

“Auntie!” Duncan shouted. “You’re back!”

His was the first voice Andrea heard when she, Danse and Fox entered into Goodneighbor.

She crouched down and gave a hug to him.

“Yes, I’m back. Monstro sneezed me out again, with these two fellas,” Andrea said, pointing Danse and Fox.

Duncan glanced men behind her and then looked at her. “Where is your power armour?”

“I don’t need one. I can kick the butts of bad guys without it.”
“True that!” the boy exclaimed, then he noticed the fourth visitor. “Dogmeat!”

“Okay, what is this ballyhoo here?” MacCready asked. “Boss and her bodyguards. After fighting with Courser, I thought you would need a full army to look after you.”

“No, I hired you for that job,” Andrea said.

“Did you hear that, tin can?” MacCready asked Danse as he recognised his power armour. “She still appreciates my help.”

“If Courser attacks, you won’t survive long, mercenary. I’ve better chance to survive,” Danse said.

Andrea sighed and rubbed her forehead.

“What happened to your head, auntie?” Duncan asked suddenly. “You have a big red bump on your forehead.”

“A bad person managed to hit me once to head. I took care of him after that,” Andrea explained.

“Duncan, I’ve to talk to your father and Amari. I’ll come to see you after that. Might you want to show your room? I haven’t seen it after renovation.”

“Okay!” the boy exclaimed.

“You can take care of Dogmeat while we talk,” Andrea said and then looked at MacCready. “We found chip from Courser and thought if Amari could do something about it.”

MacCready nodded and gestured them to follow him.

“Oh. You’re back! How was the Glowing Sea?” Amari asked Andrea after they arrived at the Memory Den.

“Full of death, creatures, Children of Atom, deathclaws, radiation… I managed to find Virgil. He suggested me to find Courser as they have access to the Institute. We found one, killed one, and now we do have this,” Andrea said and showed her courser chip. “We thought if you could help us with it.”

However, Amari shook her head.

“Unfortunately, I can’t help you. I’ve worked on a lot of synths, but never a Courser. I don’t know what that chip does, let alone how to decode it,” Amari said, sounding apologetic. “But some people might. I work with a group that, well, they’re the only ones I know that even have a chance at cracking Institute security. They’re called the Railroad.”

“They can’t be the only people who can crack a damn code,” Fox murmured behind her.

“Maybe you could find someone else, but the Institute is far more advanced than what I can manage. They built the synths for god’s sake,” Amari said and then looked at Andrea. “The Railroad’s the only group with people who even understand Institute security protocol at the most basic level. Trust me. You need to talk to them. You’ll need a code phrase to find them. ‘Follow the Freedom Trail’.”

“What kind of code phrase is that?” Fox asked.

“Freedom Trail begins from Boston’s Central Pond and ends Old North Chruch,” Andrea told him. “Trail connects historical locations of Boston, and it used to be a tourist attraction. Roger usually
wanted to walk—” Andrea stopped suddenly.

The memory made her feel homesick. After a sigh, she moved her gaze back to Amari and said,

“We’ll find them.”

Outside, Andrea saw a familiar red coat and tricorn hat. Hancock. She went to greet him, and the ghoul turned to her with his sly smile.

“It’s Silver Shroud herself,” a ghoul said. “It seems you survived Glowing Sea and duelled with Deathclaws and Coursers?”

“Well, that’s a short version of the story,” Andrea said. “Oh. I asked Duncan if he would be interested in showing his new room for me. It is okay?”

“Hm. If Duncan wants to, but I’m not going to let your company enter to Old State House,” Hancock said and glared power armoured soldiers.

“She isn’t going anywhere without us,” Danse said, and Andrea sighed. Somehow she wasn’t surprised.

“Danse, I’m just going to look at Duncan’s room. I’ll take Dogmeat and MacCready with me. Don’t worry,” she said and noticed man glancing her bruise.


Andrea nodded to him and went to pick up Duncan from Daisy’s.

“Duncan, do you want to show your room now?”

The boy nodded slightly and grabbed her hand.

Andrea smiled as the boy dragged her towards Old State House and glanced MacCready. “Is this how you teach your son to treat women?”

“Maybe. I usually drag women towards my bed,” he answered.

Fox gave MacCready a friendly punch in the shoulder. “Nice one.”

“Don’t touch me,” a sniper stated, glaring both men and marched to Old State Building with Andrea and Duncan.

“... And that is my bed,” Duncan told Andrea and pointed a little bed in the corner of the room, after showing her his toys and books. The boy ran to his bed and took his teddybear, showing it to her. “This is Duke.”

Andrea crouched down and shook hands with the teddybear. “Hey, Duke, we haven’t met yet. Where did you get him?”

“Daisy Auntie gave him to me.”

“It’s a big bear,” Andrea said.

Then she saw the picture on the bedside table and tilted her head.
“Who is this?” she asked, pointing a portrait of a young woman with long blonde hair, green eyes and dimples.

The photo was a little skewed which indicated that someone who took it, didn’t fully know how to use a polaroid camera. It was probably the reason why the woman laughed in the picture.

“My mother,” Duncan said. “Do you have a husband, auntie?”

“I had,” Andrea answered.

“Where is he? In the Monstro?” Duncan asked, tilting his head in turn.

Andrea smiled a little bit. “He is… in the same place where your mother is now.”

It was apparent that the boy knew where. He looked a little sad and lowered his gaze to the floor.

“Do you know anything about your mother?” Andrea asked, trying to cheer him.

“She was taller than dad! And she was a bad cook but a good carpenter. She also sang beautifully,” Duncan said.

“It seems you have inherited your hair colour from her,” Andrea said as she touched his head gently, feeling the softness of his hair. Then she ruffled them playfully and asked, “Could you get some water for Dogmeat? You know this building better than me.”

The boy performed a forehead salute before calling Dogmeat.

“You wanted to talk? You left your team outside and sent Duncan to find water for the dog,” MacCready asked, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Have you seen Nick?”

“He disappeared after your last visit,” MacCready answered. “How so?”

“I hope we haven’t got him after, uh, after our Elder ordered us to shoot him. And after General Pierret gave us a visit, Elder has been more nervous.”

“According to Ellie, Nick mentioned something about a long trip before disappearing. He could be out of town,” MacCready said. “Andrea, why you are with Brotherhood? You don’t belong there.”

The woman stayed quiet for a while.

“It’s complicated, RJ,” Andrea faltered. “It’s sort of family business.”

“Are you with them because of your husband?”

“It’s one of the reasons,” Andrea said and grabbed his hand. “If Nick returns, do me a favour. Tell him to avoid me. Tell him I’m sorry—”

“We are done!” Duncan exclaimed when he ran to the scene with the dog.

Andrea nodded and glanced the sniper. “You know what to do.”

“And you know what to do when you find your godson,” MacCready stated. He gave her a piercing stare as if he doubted her and her choices.
Saying nothing, Andrea turned around and felt how small hand grabbed her hand.

“Can I play with your Pip-Boy?” Duncan asked.

Andrea stopped after she had an idea and said, “I might give it to you. But I saw something interesting in your room.”

She glanced a voice recorder on his bookshelf. “Would you like to trade with me?”

“This house is six hundred years old and, somehow it stands after all this,” Andrea explained as she stared Paul Revere’s house. They had followed Freedom Trail through the city and were on the home straight now. She turned to Fox. “What seal says?”

“Number eight and letter D,” he answered.

“The Old Church is the last one,” Andrea said and moved her gaze to the clocktower.

She walked to bronze seal in front of the church, seeing the final number and letter. Then she glared a painted lantern on the church’s wall. They were in the right place.

Soldiers entered into the building and unholstered their weapons when Dogmeat began to growl. When they reached the church’s atrium, a few feral ghouls stood up after hearing them. The dog barked a few times and ran towards them.

“Good we brought him with us here,” Danse said as he remembered the same event as Andrea did.

After the fight, Fox noticed a painted lantern on the wall and they followed signs to catacomb that was full of tombs, skeletons and feral ghouls.

“Why there are so many feral ghouls? Did members of Railroad turn into them?” Fox asked.

“Maybe they are here as a diversion, or they use them as some sort of defence,” Paladin answered and took the lead.

Soon they reached the end of the tunnel and found golden Freedom Trail seal on the wall.

“Maybe those letters and numbers will give us code,” Fox said and began to search his memo.

“It is ‘railroad’,“ Andrea said, touching the wall in front of them. “The wall isn’t sturdy enough either. One good hit with explosives and it would fall like a card house.”

She activated seal by rotating it clockwise and counterclockwise, aligning the letters in numerical order. Then Andrea pushed the wheel gently after the last letter, and the brick wall opened, revealing the darkness behind it.

“I don’t like this,” Danse said.

“Neither do I, but do we have a choice, sir?” Andrea asked and walked into the darkness. Then she gestured others to stop with a hand sign. There was someone in there.

“I know you’re there, so stop screwing around and turn on the lights,” Andrea commanded and narrowed her eyes. Dogmeat growled very low beside her, baring his teeth.

Then someone turned lights on, and for a moment, the flood of light blinded her.
“Stop right there,” someone said with a stern voice.

Andrea stopped, and after her eyes got used to the bright light, she saw three people standing in front of her with their weapons aimed.

“Put down your weapons,” a voice said again.

Andrea glared the speaker, the redhead, but didn’t lower her weapon.

“I said put down your weapons!” the redhead said, glaring their visitors.

“We’ll point our weapons toward whoever we want until we determine you’re not a threat,” Andrea snarled. “Amari told you’re the only one who can break code of courser chip. I have it right here. That’s why we’re here. We aren’t going to shoot you.”

“You have what? This is not a joking matter,” the redhead asked surprised but sounded still irritated.

Andrea was about to answer her, but then she recognised the man who appeared to the scene.

“Oh, it’s you,” Andrea stated as she saw the bald man.

“I didn’t know we’re having a party. What gives with my invitation? Oh, I see you invited the Courser-killer. Nice,” the man said playfully.

“Deacon, you’re late,” the redhead said and looked at the man. “Are you saying this intruder killed a Courser? Single-handedly? That’d give even Glory a run for her money.”

“News flash, boss, this lady is kind of a legend out there,” Deacon said. “You know, you’re practically famous. A lot of people know about you. There are lots of people after you.”

Andrea narrowed her eyes. Did he know about Unknown?

“You have left a trail of destruction after you awoke. Gone places no sane person would go alone.”

“Sounds like her,” Fox said.

Mentally Andrea grinned after Fox’s answer and thought, *Yeah, that is me in a nutshell.*

“Nick Valentine was in a jam, as usual. But the word is she bailed him out and talked her way past Skinny Malone. She also killed Deathclaw with a machete and blew up the stronghold of Gunners while saving MacCready’s son,” Deacon reported. “And as if that wasn’t enough… The Railroad owes this woman a crate, hell a truckload, of Nuka-Cola because she’s the one who killed Kellogg. He was our public enemy number uno. She also took down two Coursers single handily. How’s the bruise?”

“I might want to continue the conversation about courser chip instead of talking about what I’ve done,” Andrea said. “We’re here to find Institute. So, are you done?”

“I don’t know if I like your attitude,” the redhead stated irritated.

“Dez, she has an intact courser chip, for god’s sake.”

“Well, hopefully, nobody else crashes this party. We’re letting you into our headquarters. You’re the first outsider ever to be given that possibility,” Dez stated. “Follow me. Now. I suggest you come alone—”
“She’s not going anywhere alone. I’m coming with her,” Danse said suddenly and turned to Fox. “We’ll return soon. Wait for us.”

Their leader led them through a wooden door and then down the stairs. Agents of Railroad glared them angrily, and some of them murmured ‘why Brotherhood soldiers were there’ and ‘was Desdemona out of her mind?’

“Decoding a courser chip is a very delicate operation,” Dez explained. “A million things can go wrong — the least of which is losing the data. Fortunately, we have the right man for the job.”

She walked over to man, who wore odd clothes, and said funny things. Somehow he reminded Andrea of Sturges.

“Hey, Dez. You need something?” a man asked, and then his eyes widened little when he saw their visitors.

“Tom, they have a courser chip.”

“Whoa? For real? Oh, man, it’s been ages,” the man said with awe.

Then the redhead looked at Andrea and said, “Hand over the chip. Let’s see what’s on it.”

“What can we get off the courser chip?” Andrea asked in turn.

“Those chips have more than just codes on them. Everything from how it’s made to what it’s made from tells us something about our enemy. One minor detail could mean the difference between life and death for our agents and the synths we’re trying to save. Some ground rules first. Tom can get you the code, but once he’s done, we get the courser chip.”

Andrea exchanged glances with Danse, and the latter one nodded.

“Fine,” Andrea said and gave chip to them.

The redhead looked her little surprised; she had probably waited for resistance and Tom began to decrypt the chip. He was excited about it. In fact, at times, he was a little too excited. But eventually, he decoded it and handed a holotape to Dez.

“Good work, Tom,” Dez praised.

“Not sure our luck will hold up next time, Dez,” the man said.

“Start working on the rest of the chip,” Desdemona suggested and moved her gaze to Andrea and Danse. “It might be best if you keep your distance from us. Not for our sake, but for yours. The Institute wouldn’t hesitate to torture and kill you for what you know.”

“I’ve gotten used to torture. Thanks anyway for your concern,” Andrea said as she took holotape from a woman.

A leader of Railroad glared her sternly and said, “Deacon can show you out.”

Instead of going straight to the airship, they decided to give a visit to Cambridge. They surveyed their surroundings as raiders still tried to occupy the area and attacked people whenever possible. This time they saw none.

A few radstags ran across the street, and Andrea smiled as a small fawn followed its mother in a
hurry.

They reminded her of Arthur and their first ‘date’.

*If Arthur were an animal, he would be a male deer with a big crown and thick fur,* Andrea thought and sniggered to herself.

But then Dogmeat ran after the radstags.

Andrea grunted and called him back, but he didn’t hear her.

“Dogmeat!” she said and heard how he barked and growled. “Get back here. It’s not our job to hunt; it’s Kershaw’s and—” she halted midsentence as she saw someone whom she didn’t recognise. A man.

The bald man stood in the middle of the street, watching her and began to walk toward her.

She pulled out her 10mm pistol and ordered Dogmeat return to her.

“Who are you!?” she asked.

No answer.

He wasn’t a raider or gunner. He was way too calm. Andrea thought about Kellogg, but she couldn’t tell who he was.

The man had covered his face with a scarf and road goggles to hide his identity.

Danse ordered them to open fire, but for their surprise, the man didn’t even try to dodge them.

The bullets stopped in front of him and dropped to the ground as if they would have hit some kind field.

“The fuck?” Fox asked in disbelief.

The hostile reached under his leather jacket and pulled out .50 calibre pistol. With an instinct, Danse shoved Andrea behind him and continued firing upon the enemy.

The situation was bad. .50 calibre was capable of piercing power armours plates.

One of the bullets hit Fox’s shoulder plate, and the bullet pierced it like it was nothing.

Then the man stopped shooting and started running towards them.

“Jenkins, call back up now!” Danse ordered.

The man was quick.

He attacked Andrea, ignoring the men and disarmed her. She couldn’t do anything else except to block his attacks.

She almost failed it in too.

His skills surprised her. He was way more experienced than she, Kellogg, Courser or any person whom she had met. He hit her in the face, and it almost knocked her out cold.

Andrea fell to the ground after it, and her ear started to ring.
Danse came to between them, saving her life and tried to punch him with his exoskeleton arm. However, the hostile dodged his attack and wrestled him to the ground. Then he grabbed Danse’s arm and twisted hard.

Andrea heard Danse’s painful scream with her only good ear and fear pierced her mind.

She feared she would lose Danse and Fox. She feared this man.

He was overwhelmingly strong, and he took down power armoured soldier easily.

But Andrea told herself she has to stand up. She has to protect those two.

And even if her body trembled and the pain in her head almost tore her skull in half; she stood up.

At the same time, Fox attacked the man, but hostile hit him a few more times and knocked him down.

Danse grabbed hostile’s leg with his another arm, stopping him.

The man turned around and kicked his head. Then he pulled out his pistol again, aiming for Danse's head.

However, Andrea stopped him before he pulled the trigger, saving Danse this time, and kicked hostile away.

The man stumbled a little bit.

Then Dogmeat came to her aid and sunk his teeth into his flesh. That created a hole into his defence. Thanks to her friend, Andrea was able to hit hostile this time, hard.

But he recovered quickly from attack, faster than Kellogg, and threw her the ground. Then he kicked Dogmeat, and the dog cried loudly.

Andrea stood up and attacked him again, but the man gained the upper hand easily.

Finally, Andrea heard voices and the sounds of power armours — the reinforcement.

Hearing them too, the man drew her knife from the chest sheath and managed to stab her shoulder though Andrea fought back.

Andrea screamed in pain and fell on her knees. She could feel the warm stickiness against her skin as the blood-soaked her flight suit.

Then hostile disappeared using Relay.

Andrea glared around her.

He was gone. He had disappeared as fast as he appeared.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Yes, her marriage wasn't a perfect one. Or it was before the cure. They went
through a lot of shit because she changed as a person and a woman.

EDIT: Andrea suffers from female sexual arousal disorder and anorgasmia.

And whoosh! Who was that who rekt'd the whole team? Did you expect this?

Thanks for reading!
Andrea stared a wall in front of her and fiddled with Nora’s gold cross that hung on her neck. She thought about an assassin; that man had taken down the whole team in less than a few minutes. He was better than her and Coursers. She thought about Fox and Danse, who barely survived.

Was Institute behind the attack? Why they wanted her dead?

A sudden whine of German Shephard brought Andrea back to reality. She moved her gaze to Haylen, who tried to calm the dog. Dogmeat whimpered and growled every time she touched him.

Haylen sighed and let go off him.

“This isn’t easy without the right equipment. Cade should check him out with X-Ray. I can only say that it doesn’t look good,” Haylen said.

Andrea nodded and scratched Dogmeat’s head. He looked at her with his dark eyes, watching after her.

Then Andrea heard Danse bawling as one of the Scribes set his shoulder back into place. Fox, on the other hand...

“Oh!” he exclaimed as Scribe tried to pack his nose with gauze and splint.

Shoulder dislocation, concussion, stabbing wound, broken ribs and nose. The outcome could have been worse.

“Hold this against your wound. Otherwise, it’s going to swell. Your forehead didn’t look good before, and it won’t look good after this,” Haylen said to her, offering her the ice pack.

Assassin’s punch had reopened a cut on her forehead and required more stitches. However, her shoulder was sore as hell though the knife hadn’t fully sunken into her shoulder.

Andrea exited the infirmary, holding an ice pack on her head, and went to lobby of Police Station. There she saw their power armours that were full of dents and cracks.

Then she narrowed her eyes as she realised something.

The enemy could have killed them with few shots, but he didn’t.

“Did you find anything, Knights?” Knight Commander asked soldiers.

“No, sir. Only shells of 10mm rounds and .50 calibre ammo.”
“According to Paladin Danse, the hostile used .50 calibre handgun,” Knight Commander stated. “It was pure luck assassin didn’t shoot him and his team members.”

Andrea narrowed her eyes as she stared at Fox’s and Danse’s power armours.

‘He doesn’t need his gun. He was trained to kill without it. Like—’

“Knight Commander! Valkyrie is approaching the Cambridge,” a soldier informed.

Andrea furrowed her brows. Only Star Paladin and Elder used that vertibird.

She left from the scene and walked over to Danse. His head was bandaged, and his shoulder was supported with a shoulder sling. T-60 helmet had saved his head, though Scribe suspected he might have a concussion.

“How are you feeling?” Andrea asked him.

“I’m fine,” he answered.

“Good, because Valkyrie is approaching Cambridge,” Andrea stated, but then lifted her gaze as she heard vertibird on the roof. “or has arrived here already.”

Danse frowned and asked, “Elder?”

“Or Star Paladin.”

“I think… no, I have to come there,” Danse said and stood up, slightly trembling.

“Danse…”

“I’m fine, Adams,” he stated and walked toward the lobby.

They called Elder and Star Paladin in unison as they arrived at the lobby.

Star Paladin turned his head to look at them and asked, “Where is Knight Jenkins?”

“He’s still under medical examination, sir,” Danse spoke.

“What about you two?”

“Shoulder dislocation and stab wound, sir.”

Arthur stopped examining power armours and turned around. He stared Danse and Andrea with a piercing glare.

Then with his angry voice, he said, “I want a full report. Now.”

“We were at the Kendall hospital when unidentified hostile approached us. We tried to take him down, without success. He knocked us down one by one and then he fled from the scene using the Institute’s Relay.”

“Did you have your radio on, Paladin?” Arthur asked.

“Yes, sir, but it didn’t pick up a Courser signal.”

How was one man able to take down three Brotherhood soldiers?” Arthur asked, raising his voice.
Only Danse, Andrea and Star Paladin looked calm while others looked ready to jump out of their skin.

Andrea was more worried than frightened. Arthur wasn’t the only one who could read people; Andrea was good at it too.

She could tell that something had happened while she had been away.

“I’m sorry, Elder,” Danse said. “The hostile was something we haven’t encountered before.”

“Why you didn’t shoot him?” Prince asked Danse.

“Bullets didn’t hit him.”

“What? Why do you mean that bullets didn’t hit him?”

“The bullets stopped before they reached him. As if there would have been an invisible field around him,” Danse explained. “We tried to take him down a hand to hand, but he overpowered us.”

“Did that one man cause this?” Arthur asked, pointing two wrecked power armours behind him.

Andrea glanced over her shoulder as Fox came to the scene, his wounds cleaned and his nose bandaged.

“And your wounds too, soldiers? Two of you had a power armour!”

This time a few soldiers fled from the scene.

“What if he was Unknown?” Andrea asked suddenly, and then she looked at Danse. “You told me assassin appears out of nowhere and disappears without a trace. You told Unknown can kill entire squads, and no one survives.”

Danse raised his eyebrows as if realising it too.

“The technology he is using might be a reason why there haven’t been witnesses after his attacks,” he said. “But why he is working with the Institute?”

“He appeared after Kellogg died and Coursers failed,” Andrea continued.

‘That’s why he didn’t kill them. I was his target,’ she thought.

“What else do you remember about him?” Arthur asked.

“He had dark clothes, tactical vest, boots and a leather jacket. He had also covered his face with a scarf and goggles. He was muscular, about 5’9 feet, bald…” Danse listed. “He carried 50 cal. Desert Eagle.”

Then Andrea remembered something. Her uncle’s men carried Desert Eagles.

“Initiate?” Arthur asked.

His voice snapped her back to reality. Andrea blinked, surprised and stared at Arthur. “Yes, Sir?”

“We are leaving,” he continued, then his gaze moved on to Star Paladin. They put on their helmets and left, Fox following them.
Andrea looked at Danse’s power armour and then him. “What about your T-60?”

“Someone will bring it to Prydwen later,” Danse said.

Andrea nodded and walked back to the infirmary.

“Sorry, boy. We have to go now...” Andrea whispered to him, but when she tried to lift him, Dogmeat cried loudly.

“Give this to him,” Haylen said, giving her a few syringes of Med-X. “Give him another dose when you arrive at the Airport.

“Thank you,” Andrea said and injected the dog with medicine. Now she could lift him without hurting him, and she walked over to the helipad.

Dogmeat whined again as Andrea tried to lift him after they had landed at the Airport. The whole Airport probably heard his cry.

Andrea gave him another injection and carried him to the infirmary.

However, she could feel how Dogmeat trembled. The medicine wasn’t strong enough.

Something was wrong.

“What the hell happened to you?” Gregson asked Danse, and then she glanced Andrea. “Initiate, what have we discussed about your dog?”

“He got hurt during the mission, ma’am. I thought if Knight-Captain could take a look—”

“With all respect, Initiate, this infirmary is for soldiers, not—”

“And Brotherhood’s dogs are soldiers too,” Cade said.

Andrea smiled. That’s what she wanted to hear.

“But first, I’m going to check all of you”, the doctor continued, staring the trio in front of him.

But her smile and relief vanished instantly after Dogmeat’s examination.

“Hi...his what?” Andrea asked Cade, faltering.

“His left hind leg and backbone have broken into pieces. We can’t cure this, Adams.”

“There isn’t anything we can do?” she asked.

“Ossification would be extremely slow, and there is a chance that kick has destroyed some of his inner organs— Andrea, his backside is paralysed, and it is painful. It would be painful even for a human.”

Andrea closed her eyes. “Does this mean we have to—”

“I know it isn’t an easy decision, but it will end his suffering.”

“I’m not going to shoot him...” Andrea faltered and tried to fight back her tears but lost.

“No, you don’t have to. In cases like this, we give strong anaesthesia dose to our canine soldiers.”
“Can I...” she swallowed. “I want to cremate him.”

“All right. I can help you make arrangements for that,” Cade said. “Say your goodbyes to him. We will give you all the time you need.”

Andrea nodded, sniffing, and she walked inside to the room where Dogmeat was with Scribe Connor.

“I can leave if you want, Adams,” Connor said, but Andrea shook her head.

“No. I know he wants you to stay here too, Connor,” she said and sat down next to Dogmeat. “He knows.”

“He can sense our feelings,” Connor said, scratching the dog’s head.

“I’m sorry, Dogmeat. I should have left you here,” Andrea said, resisting the urge to cry. “He was the first one whom I met after I woke up from Vault. He helped me to find Kellogg and saved my life more than once. We saved together Reconnaissance Squad Gladius from ferals. That’s why everyone calls him a feral killer.”

“That’s why he earns proper burial. I’ll talk to Elder if needed,” Connor reassured.

Then Andrea remembered Mama Murphy’s words.

‘Dogmeat doesn’t belong to anybody. He stays and helps those who deserve it, and now, he’s staying with you. He’s a good dog; try to take care of him.’

She had ordered Dogmeat to stay further, but dogs were loyal and protective. Dogmeat helped her when she needed help in his opinion. He protected her from Unknown.

Soon Cade came to a room, a single syringe in his hand and flashed her a sad smile. He didn’t say anything and gave a syringe to Scribe.

Andrea scratched Dogmeat’s head, and she felt form in her eyes. No need to fight back.

“Say hello to my husband and family. Tell them I miss them,” Andrea said, her voice breaking and she smiled at the dog. Then she kissed his snout. “I love you, Dogmeat. Someday we will see you again.”

She gave a little nod to Connor, and he injected him with the fullest dose possible to make his heart stop.

Andrea hugged Dogmeat until he fell asleep and stopped breathing.

After he had been cremated and his ashes gathered into a little jar, Andrea thought about scattering his ashes where they met the first time. At the Sanctuary.

But then she realised Arthur wouldn’t give her permission to go there.

Instead, she went to the forecastle. They usually held memorial services of soldiers there, so it was fitting.

She stood at the forecastle for a while, holding a steel jar and stared at the city. Then she lifted her gaze and tried to spot stars from the sky, but they all were hiding behind the thick curtain of cloud.
What do I think about the stars? That they are the place where souls reside. People who are long gone now, are watching us from above, Roger had said.

Dogmeat was there now too.

And, once again, part of her wanted to join them.

But not yet.

Andrea touched jar’s steel cork to open it, but then she heard someone opening the door.

“If you don’t mind, I would like to say goodbyes to him,” Danse said.

Andrea smiled faintly and gestured him to come to her.

“Are you okay?”

“I’m,” Andrea answered and looked down to the floor. “I’m sorry I wasn’t… able to protect you.”

“It’s not your job, Andrea,” Danse reminded. “We have to remember that as soldiers, we are willing to take risks.”

“Keep in mind that I am willing to take risks too,” she said, staring at him but dropped her gaze back to the jar. She opened the cork slowly, but all of a sudden, she stopped as she heard something.

Maybe it was just her imagination, but Andrea swore she heard Dogmeat’s barking.

They were goodbyes. It was time.

Andrea cast her gaze back to the jar and turned it upside down. His ashes flew towards the Castle right after she let him go. Dogmeat wanted to say his goodbyes to them too.

“You were a good soldier, Dogmeat. Run free now, little one. Go play with the angles,” Danse said.

Andrea burst into tears after hearing his words. It reminded her too much of Lucas.

Danse walked over to her and hugged her. “I’m here.”

Crying, Andrea hugged him tightly. She cried for a moment until her eyes burned, and her voice was hoarse.

“Don’t ever leave me, Danse,” Andrea whispered, but then she realised she has to protect them. Then slowly, she pulled herself away from him and looked up to him, giving him a hard look.

“I’ll make sure I’m not going to lose any of you. I have to get strong. I have to face him.”

“You think that’s what I want you to do? It’s not your burden. He is our enemy.”

It was her burden. He was a soldier of Enclave.

Andrea turned around to leave, but the man grabbed her arm and swung her around.

They stare at each other for a short time without exchanging words. Then Andrea broke their staring contest and reached up to touch his cheek.
“You know what I think,” she said. “This is a family matter, Paladin.”

Then Danse let go of her and looked away.

Andrea sighed and kissed his cheek softly before she left.

After collecting herself, Andrea went to buy a new flight suit, but for her surprise, Teagan wasn’t in his one-man-zoo.

“Where is Proctor Teagan, Sir?” Andrea asked Knight-Captain, who was in the storage depot in place of Proctor. “Has something happened to him?”

“Oh, Adams. Well, he is… at the guardhouse,” Knight-Captain answered.

“What?”

“He clashed with Elder Maxson, and Elder threw him to the guardhouse. Then he kicked Anderson and Prince from Observation Deck after they questioned his orders.”

He sent Proctor to the guardhouse and kicked his best lieutenants from Deck? That didn’t happen every day. Now, she worried even more.

Andrea walked up to Arthur’s door and knocked on it. No answer. She grabbed the handle and realised it was locked. Andrea glanced around her, took the key from her pocket and opened the door.

“Arthur?” she called him.

She saw him sitting in a chair, staring at the photo in his hand.

Andrea walked over to him without making noise with her ‘stealth steps’ and looked down at the photo.

It was an old, faded family portrait of a man, a woman, and a baby boy.

A slender woman had long, coffee-coloured hair pulled back into a bun, and she wore a grey, double-layered robe. Her eyes were hazel, not mysterious brown, and she looked beautiful with her pale skin.

The dark-haired man in the photo had a gentle face and big, sky-blue coloured eyes. The dark circles under his blue eyes emphasised exhaustion and weariness, but his whole appearance exuded great pride as he stared a baby in his arms.

It was a picture of his parents.

Then Andrea noticed empty alcohol bottles on his desk and half-empty whiskey glass. He was drunk again.

“Arthur?” she called him again.

No answer.

Andrea touched his hand and moved his gaze to her. He looked downhearted. Then for a moment, he stared into emptiness.
It broke her heart to see him like this. He looked... vulnerable.

“They don’t respect me...” he whispered.

“What?”

“It was Proctor Teagan,” Arthur said, moving his gaze back to picture. “He worked off the books and ordered soldiers to take food from farmers.”

Andrea frowned. She couldn’t believe it.

“He said...” Arthur continued. “otherwise we wouldn’t have enough food and morale would decrease because of it. But after I ordered him to return food to their owners, Proctor said I was just like Lyons, not Maxson.”

He stressed his surname and slammed the glass against the table.

“After that, I snapped. I told Proctor that no one talks to me like that and reminded him I’m the one who makes decisions,” Arthur snarled. “What does it tell about me when my soldiers act behind my back? When they question the choices which I make. As if the choices I make every day would be easy for me.”

Knowing him, Andrea let him speak. She was the only one he could talk to.

“It... feels like I’m letting them both down — Lyons and my family. I’m trying my best to live up to their honour. I’ll try my best to focus on our original task to prevent another civil war. East Coast Brotherhood wouldn’t survive it,” he said and stared a picture of his family. “But the ghost of Lyons speaks to me behind his grave. Everything he taught me... I’m trying to carry out his will. I’m trying to do what—”

Then he let go of the picture and rubbed his eyes.

“I wish... I wish I could be someone else. I’m tired, Andrea. I’m just so fucking tired.”

Andrea sat down on his lap and threw her arms around his neck, burying her head in his hair. Arthur embraced her tightly, burying his face against her shoulder.

She just sat there not saying a word and stroked his hair gently, pondering how many times he has been alone with these thoughts.

“Young legacy is more than steel limb on the sky, almost abandoned bunker or pentagon-shaped building,” Andrea whispered. “We can never run away from or abandon what our ancestors created and left for us. Neither of us can. But our actions define us, not our families.”

She stared into his eyes and touched his cheek, her thumb brushing over his mouth.

“If you want to protect people of Wasteland... If you honestly feel that you’re doing the right thing, do it. Your family, or your mentor, wouldn’t be disappointed in you,” she added confidently.

Arthur closed his eyes as Andrea kissed his forehead and then his temple.

“I love you,” he said.

She felt warm waves of affection inside her and lifted his chin to kiss him. Then Andrea pushed his whiskey glass away and looked at him.
“I love you back.”

Arthur smiled in turn, and Andrea told him to forget everything else. She was there now with him.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Well, let’s say something about the chapter; this isn’t one of my favourites. I wrote this back in days when I lost my dog, so it was one way to cope with that struggle — fcking US.

Thanks for reading!
Arthur woke up with a headache after a series of nightmares, noticing he was in his bed. A slight ache poked his head and behind his eyes.

He rubbed his eyes and temples, trying to massage away the pain and made a mental note ‘don’t drink alcohol’. Then he heard the sound of soft breathing next to him and turned his head.

Andrea was lying next to him. Her soft snores and snuffles indicated she was still asleep.

‘Why she is… What...’ Arthur thought and frowned.

Then he remembered it. She had comforted him last night and held him in a tight embrace until he fell asleep. He had needed her closeness, not alcohol.

Arthur smiled a little and kissed her cheek softly.

She looked so peaceful and calm that Arthur didn’t want to wake her. He tried slowly to get out of bed and took off his battlecoat, covering her with it.

After the shower, Arthur stood looking in the mirror while combing his hair and heard the door opening.

“Are you feeling any better?” Andrea asked with a smile as she walked into the bathroom, his coat on her shoulders.

“Yes,” he answered.

She nodded and gave his coat back to him. “If you feel downhearted and lonesome, you know I’m here...”

“I know. I just... I don’t want people to see me like that.”

“Am I one of those people?” Andrea asked, raising her eyebrow.

“No, you’re not,” Arthur answered and took his coat. Then he glanced her shoulder and forehead, which didn’t go unnoticed by her.
“I’m fine. Unknown surprised me, but next time I’ll be ready,” Andrea told and leaned against the sink behind her.

“I’m sorry about Dogmeat.”

“Me too. The silly dog decided to stick with me, and now he’s gone.”

Arthur touched her scarred chin, avoiding her healing wound and stared down into her eyes.

“I wouldn’t give away a single second I’ve spent with you,” he said. “So I’ll stick with you too.”

Then he grabbed her hand, feeling the rough dryness of her skin and he saw the abrasions and scabs on her knuckles.

“I would do anything for you, Andrea,” Arthur said as he kissed her knuckles. “You’re the most important person in my life. Your smile, jokes and your love for others are the reasons why I did fell for you,” he continued and kissed her forehead, avoiding her wounds once again.

Andrea blushed a little bit and scratched the tip of her nose.

“Thank you for being with me last night.”

“I’ll be here for you,” she said, smiling and put her arms around his damp body. Then she brushed a soft kiss on his lips and snuggled against him.

If he’d wanted to, Arthur would have taken her right there, but he didn’t want to ruin this moment. And he still had a headache.

Then Arthur noticed how her smile disappeared. She had something on her mind.

“What?” he asked.

“About the Institute,” Andrea said cautiously and looked up to him. “Virgil said we can send only one soldier there...”

She wanted to go there.

“I’m not going to send you there,” Arthur said, his voice harsh.

“Arthur, I might be the only one who has a chance against Coursers in an open fight,” Andrea reminded. “I have to find Shaun.”

“I’m sending someone else. Is that clear, Initiate!”

Andrea let go of him immediately and stepped a few steps back as if she would have frightened his tone of voice.

He instantly regretted his words and the way he said them. She wasn’t supposed to fear him.

“I’m sorry, Andrea, I—”

“Understood, Elder. Anything else?” she said scowling.

Arthur stayed quiet for a moment, staring her. She was just like him. She transformed from Andrea into a soldier in the snap of fingers.
“No,” he said.

“Affirmative. I’ll be at the Power Armour Bay, if you need me, Sir,” Andrea responded. Then she turned on her heels and left, slamming the door behind her.

So much for that sweet talk.

“Fuck.”

That word just escaped his lips.

Arthur gazed his liquor cabinet but had seconds thoughts; he remembered the mental note he made earlier.

Andrea tapped her fingers against the table of the mess hall, staring Stefanie who put her hairbrush away and started to plait her ponytail. Then secretly, she turned her head to look at Arthur as he walked past them.

For a moment, their eyes locked together in an intense staring contest that ended when Arthur left the mess hall.

Exasperated, Andrea turned her head and took a sip of her coffee.

“Stubborn and bossy...” she said, but then wrinkled her nose in disgust. “urgh, is someone trying to poison me? Coffee tastes like shit.”

Stefanie finished braiding her pigtail and asked, “What happened?”

“What do you mean what happened?”

“Elder scowls, and you murmur to yourself,” Stefanie reasoned.

Andrea grunted, rolling her eyes.

She had tried to talk with him about the Institute, but they always ended up pushing each other’s buttons and arguing. Except for last night when they ended up doing something else on his desk after a heated debate.

“Oh, we just disagreed,” Andrea faltered.

“Oh, the honeymoon is over? You two are such a cute couple,” the girl said. “When are you two getting married?”

Andrea almost choked on her coffee.

“I appreciate it if you would not try to kill old lady, Prince,” Brandis said behind them.

Andrea gave him a confused look. What? Now he called her old lady?

“Don’t worry, sir,” Stefanie said to Brandis and then turned to Andrea. “What could kill her?”

“A Suicide Mutant, Deathclaw, Radscorpion, Proctor Ingram…” Andrea listed. “Oh, and Gunners and Triggermen want me dead.”

“You might have enemies, but remember, we got your back,” the girl stated. “If someone messes
with Elder’s girlfriend, they will be destroyed.”

“I think I can destroy them myself. I don’t need a boy and his army to handle my shit.”

“Oh, overconfident.”

“No. It means I won’t put others into danger because of my problems.”

The girl shook her head and said, “You always put the safety of others above your own. When do you start caring about yourself? We care about you, Andrea.”

“I do care about myself. I just—”

“Initiate Adams!” someone called her. “Elder wants to see you.”

When she arrived at the Command Deck, Andrea saw Arthur, Danse and their two quests. Preston and his companion.

“Initiate,” Preston said, greeting her with a smile. Depressed Preston, who Andrea knew from Concord was now history.

“I’m glad to see you again, Preston,” Andrea said as she reached him and looked at his companion. “And this is..?”

“Oh, Sergeant Dayton, ma’am, sir,” the young sergeant introduced himself.

“Nice to meet you,” Andrea said, and then turned to Preston. “What brings you here?”

“We just got up here a few minutes ago. We have news,” Preston explained.

Andrea nodded to him and glared Arthur.

“Elder,” she said politely. She almost ‘forgot’ to greet him.

The atmosphere in the room wildly confused. Their guests had no idea why they were staring daggers at each other, and on the other hand, Danse knew why.

When Danse cleared his throat, bringing those two back to reality, Andrea turned back to Preston.

“So what kind of news you have?” she asked.

“One of our acquaintance has intel which might interest you.”

“What kind of intel?” Arthur asked suddenly.

“What kind of intel?” Arthur asked suddenly.

“How about this assassin; Unknown.”

“What? What do you know about him?” Andrea asked.

A stab wound on her shoulder still hurt her. It reminded her of his existence.

“Me? Nothing. This person didn’t tell us anything,” Preston answered. “He just told us to bring a message to our neighbours. And here we are.”

“Why he won’t come here himself?” Danse asked in turn.
“He said he won’t come near the Airport. If I may, Brotherhood still has...” Preston thought over his next words carefully. “…a controversial reputation.”

Andrea glanced Danse and Arthur, then Preston. “So, he wants to meet us at the Castle?”

“General’s suggestion,” Preston stated. “He has intel about the Brotherhood too. More, I don’t know.”

Arthur narrowed his eyes and said, “We’ll leave in ten minutes.”

“Sir?” Danse and Andrea asked in unison.

“Paladin, escort our visitors out and tell the pilot to get ready. Adams, follow me,” Arthur said sternly.

Andrea frowned and exchanged glances with Danse. He seemed to be confused too but accepted the order.

She followed him to the armoury and walked over to her locket.

“I hope you still have that 44. which I gave you,” she said, staring at him as he took his secondary laser rifle.

“I carry it with me, no matter where I go,” Arthur said. He walked over to her and cupped her cheek with his hand. “I want to talk to you after this. Without fighting.”

She stared him in the eyes and nodded, saying, “Okay.”

He smiled at her, and she found herself smiling back. It felt good.

Then the smile on his face turned to a scowl in a snap of fingers. “Let’s go.”

After the vertibird ride, they walked to the front gate of the Castle, where guards greeted them politely.

“At least we didn’t get same kind reception here as we got at the church,” Danse said, referring to the Railroad as they walked through the gate.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” Andrea said, gazing the inner yard of the old fort. “Farmers, livestock, power armoured soldiers…” Then she noticed the artillery guns and looked at Preston. “Do those work?”

“Yes, they do,” he answered. “General is a master engineer. Thanks to her and Sturges, we have those artillery guns, electricity, clean water and watering system. She’s the miracle. She has done so much for Commonwealth and us. Pierret might be a farmer but she a good leader—”

“Preston,” Andrea said and walked over to him, squeezing his shoulder. “My husband was from a family of farmers, and still, he was a good leader and soldier. A leader is a person who inspires people through their words and actions. I believe anyone can be a leader because our actions define us, not who we are.”

“You’re speaking like a true leader,” Gillian Pierret stated as she walked toward them. She had gathered her long hair into a high ponytail, and this time, she wore utility coveralls. “See? A leader can be anyone, even a mechanic.”
Then she walked over to Arthur and offered her greasy hand for a shake.

Andrea smiled little as he shook it, not even caring about the grease.

“Welcome to the Castle, headquarters of Commonwealth Minutemen. One of the safest settlements around the Commonwealth...” Pierret said. “...after we killed the previous inhabitants.”

“Which were?”

“Mirelurks, Hunters and Queen.”

“You managed to kill Queen? How did you do that?”

“Don’t underestimate Minutemen, Paladin,” she said smirking.

But then she glanced scowling Arthur.

“But I didn’t call you here to talk about that,” General said and turned to her lieutenant. “Clint, return to your duties.”

Then she looked at their visitors. “What comes to our quests, follow me.”

General led their visitors into their conference room. The room was large and furnished with a long table and ten chairs, couches, bookshelves and paintings.

“Sit down, please,” she said and gestured toward the chairs.

Andrea gazed around the room and noticed a familiar person sitting on the couch.

“I knew you couldn’t live without me,” she said to MacCready.

“No, I can. However, without money, I cannot,” MacCready stated, taking a sip of his beer. “How are you doing, boss? I heard about what happened.”

“I’m fine,” Andrea said, trying to ignore the pain in her shoulder. “Why are you here? Are you Minutemen’s acquaintance?”

“MacCready is working for us,” Preston answered suddenly. “He keeps hostiles away from the Castle if he isn’t doing his... other stuff.”

“So, where is your acquaintance?” Andrea asked and crossed her arms in front of her chest. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw MacCready rolling his eyes for some reason.

Andrea frowned at him, but then she noticed Arthur had crossed his arms too.

“First of all, I want to make clear that the Castle is an impartial territory. We have ghouls and maybe even synths in our ranks, but they’re human to us. Residents of the Castle and our settlements, even their quests, are under our protection,” Pierret explained. “So I’d appreciate it if you would respect the rights of those people and the Castle.”

“Very well,” Arthur said.

Pierret smiled at him and turned to MacCready. “MacCready, let him in.”

Andrea’s eyes widened when she recognised Nick’s trench coat and fedora. This situation could end up badly. Arthur swore under his beard and inhaled deeply, his body tensing up.
“You don’t want to be with me in the same room, and I sure don’t want to share it with you, but
given the situation, we don’t have a choice,” Nick said, gazing Arthur and Danse with his yellow
eyes. Then he glanced Andrea. “Are you okay, kid?”

Andrea nodded and said, “I’m fine, Ni—”

“And we think we would listen to this... thing?” Arthur snarled at General.

Pierret opened her mouth to reply, but Nick spoke before her.

“Because no one else does the work of the detective, whippersnapper.”

Andrea’s eyes widened after Nick’s sentence. She heard Arthur growling and touched his leg
under the table, gesturing him to calm down.

“I walked over 100 miles to Providence and back so that I could give you these,” Nick said,
digging holotapes out of his pockets. “For your information, Elder, you aren’t the only one here
who is working for Commonwealth—”

“For Commonwealth? You’re synth made by—”

“Elder…” Andrea interrupted his sentence. “Can we at least hear the detective out?”

Arthur stared daggers at her, but it wasn’t anything new. His scowl didn’t work on her.

Then Nick continued, “Secondly, I got these from the man who took down Enclave ten years ago
with the help of the Brotherhood.”

A silence fell on the room for a few seconds, broken only by the heavy breathing of Arthur. The
first one who spoke was MacCready.

“Mungo? Is he alive?” he asked.

“Where is he?” Arthur asked. No response. “Where is he?!”

“Whom we are talking about?” Preston asked.

“Liam Cole. He’s one of our ex-Paladin. I believe he’s the one who helped your men at the
Sanctuary,” Danse explained, staring at Preston and Pierret. “He disappeared nine years ago.
Everybody thought he was dead...”

“Well, he’s alive and well,” Nick stated. “Cole is the one who killed Remnants. There is no
Enclave anymore.”

“What?” Danse asked. “Where did he found them?”

“Mojave. He found their last safe house and killed all of them, taking the data.”

“Unknown is still out there,” Andrea stated gloomily.

Still, he had done the job for her. She should thank him for that.

“This might give answers,” Nick said, staring Arthur and gave him a holotape.

However, Arthur didn’t move a muscle. He stared at Nick as if he would kill him with his eyes.
Andrea sighed and took the tape, inserting it into holotape player. She heard the unfamiliar sound of a man’s voice, but MacCready and men next to her recognised it.

“...for some reason the Institute was interested in Enclave’s data. After I had killed Remnants, Kellogg appeared there with his synths and downloaded the data from the database. I couldn’t download it all, but hopefully, there’s something in those tapes that will lead you to Unknown. It was him, Arthur. Unknown killed Sarah and her whole team.”

Anger flashed in Arthur’s eyes.

“I’ll not rest until that man is dead. I’ve found him a couple of times, but he keeps running away from me. Maybe he’s afraid of the gun I have... If you find him before I do, kill him. Kill him for Sarah.”

There were a few seconds of silence.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry that I couldn’t protect her.”

Then the tape ended.

Arthur took a deep breath as if still gathering himself and rubbed his eyes.

Andrea had no idea what Arthur thought or what he would do next. If he and Roger shared something, it was their unpredictability. A trait which she feared most.

“So answer to your question is I don’t know where he is,” Nick announced and pointed holotapes on the table. “These holotapes include the data which he downloaded from Enclave Bunker.”

“Proctor Quinlan,” Danse said as Andrea took holotapes.

“Cole stated there was something about Unknown and your spouse in the recordings,” Nick said to Andrea, and their eyes met.

A wave of anxiety crashed over Andrea when synth pointed at one particular tape on the table. She took it, her hand trembling and put it into the player.

Damaged holotape was full of old recordings of Enclave’s operations, radiation levels and experiments. When one of the scientists mentioned Dr Nordlinger and told they had found a boy who survived from his experiment, a shiver went down Andrea’s spine.

“Are you okay?” Nick asked her.

“It’s nothing,” she answered.

If she were honest, she didn’t want to hear anything about Enclave. She wanted on to shut down the tape player or leave the room.

“Mission report, sir!”

“...his first mission?”

“He infiltrated Lost Hills and assassinated Roger Maxson, however, he wasn’t... the second target.... found Unknown...”

Andrea flew into a blind rage. She stood up, and her chair hit the floor with a loud bang.
“...a teenager, but he will be his father’s successor... we need to get rid of them. High Elder’s death was just the beginning of Brotherhood’s downfall ... follows him, it will be over soon.”

“What about...”

“If she ever wakes up, Roger will be the first one whom she will try to find. .... he was at the Mariposa, but ... killing those men whom Roger sent to Boston to pick up her...”

Nick stood up slowly and called her, “Andrea...”

‘If you ever slander me or disobey my order, Captain, I'll have your husband killed.’

The anger rose inside her as she saw flashbacks of her fight with her uncle. She should have killed that man when she had a chance.

Andrea clenched her hands into fists, burying her fingernails into her palms.

Then Nick continued, “Andrea. I know you’re angry—”

“Don’t,” Andrea hissed and gestured him to shut up. “I hope my uncle is in Hell with Kellogg, so I can send his fucking assassin there and kill them all again myself.”

“Andrea, you aren’t like this. You don’t even know if it’s the same assassin. Don’t let revenge—”

“What are you doing then, Nick!? Jenny died two hundred years ago!” Andrea yelled. “Why are you after Eddie Winter?!”

Nick knew how she felt. Her words hurt him, but the grief and anger took control. She couldn’t think clearly.

She was outraged, sad, and despairing because she couldn’t protect him.

Because she had caused his death.

Because her family had killed him.

She wished she would have never met Roger so that he would have seen his son growing up and that he would have met his grandchildren.

He would have lived longer if he had never known her.

Then Andrea felt a big lump in her throat.

She turned on her heels and heard Arthur calling her, but she didn’t listen. She didn’t care about if she would be kicked out from Brotherhood after this.

That man was a threat to Arthur, and she would do anything to keep him safe.

She would hunt assassin down and kill him herself.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Kill her dog and spouse - I will find you, and I will kill you... with a pencil.
"I don't need a boy and his army to handle my shit." is a variation of Tara Knowles' (SoA) quote "I don't need a boy to handle my shit". I've always wanted to use it.
Chapter Summary

Something unexpected happens. Andrea discovers the truth, one of them at least, but what happened?

Chapter Notes

A/N: Danse/Andrea POV

A little shorter chapter this time, explained in end notes. No action here, only angst.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Danse overheard sniper cursing after Minutemen patrol told them Andrea left from the Castle, heading towards the west.

“Yeah, in that state of mind, just leave by yourself,” the sniper said. “What the hell you were thinking, boss?”

“She’s going after Unknown,” Danse reasoned and turned to his commander. “Elder, we need to find her.”

Arthur gazed him for a moment. “Make sure Initiate comes back alive, Danse.”

“You have my word, Elder,” Danse said. “I’ll find her.”

“And how are you going to find her? She’s a needle in a haystack,” MacCready spoke.

“Any suggestions, mercenary?” Danse asked.

“If we want to find her quickly before someone else does, I suggest we leave immediately. I can track people, but it will be harder if rain washes away marks and footprints. And she is faster than I am. She runs like a chased rad rabbit.”

“Why are you doing this?”

“She is my friend,” a sniper stated. “This isn’t about the caps, tin can. Andrea saved my son’s life, and I know how she feels. When someone kills your spouse, and you can’t do anything about it, it leaves you hollow. It’s like a wound that won’t heal.”

Danse sighed and glanced city. He didn’t have a choice.

“Let’s go,” he said.

After they had travelled for a while, Danse looked up at the dusky sky and noticed the rain had
stopped. Then he saw the storm approaching, greenish clouds unrolling from the Glowing Sea. Radstorm could slow them down.

They didn’t have time for it. Danse hoped they would find Andrea in time and they could return to the safety of the Airport.

“Are we still on her trail, mercenary?” he asked.

“No, I’ve had examined the ground for the half-hour just for fun. Yes, we are on her trail. Her footsteps are quite fresh, and it’s easy to follow someone who leaves shells of 10mm and bodies behind them. We are close,” the sniper said as he examined leaves and mud.

“We have to find her as soon as we can so that Adams and I can return to the Airport,” Danse stated. “I’m not a fan of this place.”

“Pfft... Airport,” MacCready murmured. “She shouldn’t be there in the first place. I should have never let her go in there.”

Mercenary spoke aloud to himself.

Danse frowned and asked, “What do you mean?”

“Andrea was perfectly fine before joining your little military organisation. I told her no, but she insisted. Because she thought you could help her with the Institute. And look where we are?”

“She is right; we are Commonwealth only hope for getting rid off—”

“That’s bullshit!” MacCready snapped. “The only thing what Brotherhood causes is destruction. You’re only helping yourself. Because when people need your help, like I needed when ferals killed my wife,” he continued and poked Brotherhood insignia on Danse’s chest plate with his finger. “you are never there to help.”

Danse took a quick breath. He opened his mouth to answer, but the mercenary huffed and turned around.

“Don’t answer. I don’t care. I don’t just understand why she is with you. Andrea has—”

He got no further. Danse saw the mercenary lifting his rifle and startled dark figures who stood right next to them.

Two Coursers.

They had appeared out of nowhere without making sounds and were so close that they could touch both of them with their hands.

They could kill them, but they didn’t attack.

“Put those guns down,” Danse snarled and aimed his gun towards Courser.

“You are not in a position to give us orders, soldier,” Courser said. “Now tell me where she is?”

“I don’t know who you mean.”

“Andrea Maxson. Now tell me where she is, or we kill your friend,” Courser continued, not moving its gaze from Paladin.
“Hah. A friend? You think he cares about what happens to me?” MacCready said nervously, his voice quivering.

Then the dark-skinned synth disarmed him of his gun, twisted the barrel and hit the sniper to stomach. The younger man gasped for breath he couldn’t seem to catch and fell to the ground.

“Now tell me where she is, or we’ll kill him. And yes, we’ll kill you too,” Courser stated, still glaring Danse.

“I’m not going to tell you anything.”

“Very well,” the synth said.

The second Courser grabbed mercenary by the throat and lifted in the air. It could snap his neck or crush his windpipe with one squeeze, but they tried to make Danse talk at first.

But it wasn’t enough.

Danse stared Courser in front of him and tried not to care about the sounds which MacCready made. He knew Andrea wouldn’t forgive him if he let mercenary die, but he wasn’t going to let Coursers know…

“Stop!” a voice screamed.

Danse moved his gaze slowly towards the voice and shook his head slightly.

They had been on Andrea’s trail whole time.

And there she stood, her black hair and flight suit soaked after the rain.

“If you want me, I’ll surrender. Just… let them go,” she said, glaring hostiles with her brown eyes.

“Drop your weapons,” Courser commanded with stoic voice.

Andrea unholstered her weapons and threw them further.

Then she said, “Let him go.”

“You are not in a position to tell us what to do.”

“I’ll come with you without resistance if you let them go. Both of them,” Andrea said, holding her hands up.

The dark-skinned Courser, the one they had seen in Kellogg’s memories, stared her behind his sunglasses and dropped mercenary.

Andrea glanced gasping mercenary and then Danse. “Take him to Diamond City.”

“No. I’m not letting them take you—”

“They will kill us anyway. Please, Danse, get him out of here.”

“No. I promised Elder to bring you back,” Danse said, and she shook her head. “It’s an order, Initiate!”

“Take MacCready to Doctor Sun, do it for Duncan… do it for me. Please.”
Her last word came out as a faint, pleading beg.

Danse couldn’t believe this was happening. He had no idea what made him accept her offer. He clenched his teeth and hands. Then he let out defeated grunt and picked up the sniper. The younger man was still gasping for breath and tried to release himself from Danse’s grip, but Paladin told him to calm down.

After he bypassed her, Andrea spoke, “Thank you, Leo. Tell Arthur I’m sorry.”

He was supposed to protect her and yet again; she protected him and someone else.

Hearing grunting behind him, Danse turned around and saw Courser pushing her down to her knees. They put something around her wrists behind her back.

“Target captured,” one of them said.

Then Danse heard the sound of Relay, and they were gone.

Danse stiffened his whole body while holding his breath.

‘Make sure Initiate comes back alive, Danse’

‘Please, Danse, get him out of here.’

“What the hell is this?” the doctor asked when Brotherhood soldier appeared into his clinic, carrying Goodneighbor’s mercenary on his arms. “What happened to him?”

“He was tortured. That’s all I can—” Danse answered, but the mercenary’s sudden movement interrupted him.

“No... I’m fine,” MacCready said.

“What do you mean ‘no, I’m fine’?” Danse asked. This man was getting on his nerve. “Listen, this doctor has to check you out. We don’t know what kind of damage—”

“I said I’m fine, tin can! I know how to breathe,” MacCready snapped as he tried to stand up, scampering. “I’ve to get back to Goodneighbor.”

“No, you’ll stay here and let him check you,” Danse said and pointed Doctor Sun.

“You can’t order me around,” MacCready stated, but Paladin walked in front of him, stopping him from leaving. “Get out of my way before I’ll shoot you myself.”

“You’re right. I can’t order you around. But Adams wanted—”

“She’s gone because of you!” MacCready yelled but grunted quietly after it. “Because of you and your—”

“Andrea wanted to keep you safe!” Danse snarled back. “Believe me, without her and your son; I would have let that Courser kill you. But I couldn’t. Now, let the doctor check you and after that... you can do whatever you want. Just...” he kept a break. “Do it for her.”

MacCready murmured something under his breath.

“Fine. I’ll let the doctor check me out. But you... find her, or I’ll start sniping your friends down
from that airship of yours.”

It was a treat. But Danse knew mercenary was hurt and worried.

“I will find her.”

Thump of vertibird brought Danse back to Earth, waking him from his thoughts. The pilot had hooked aircraft into Prydwen. He was already there.

Staring minigun in front of him, Danse thought about how he could explain this to Arthur. Then he thought Cutler and how he had disappeared and never returned. As a human at least.

And now Andrea was taken into a place where he couldn’t follow her.

Danse hit vertibird’s door with his exoskeleton fist, startling a pilot who was still with him.

How he let this happen? He was supposed to protect her and watch after her. Not just because of Arthur’s sake, but his own too.

On his way toward Observation Deck, anxiety and hindsight grew strong in Danse’s mind. How could he endanger someone important and their mission in the Commonwealth? This could jeopardise the entire Brotherhood. Andrea knew things that a typical soldier didn’t know.

His eyes met with Arthur’s. He knew something was wrong.

Arthur asked, “What?”

“We tracked her to Mass Pike Tunnel, but we were surprised by Coursers before we could find her. The Institute tried to find her too,” Danse reported. “They took the mercenary hostage and tortured him while another one interrogated me. They wanted to know where she was. I didn’t tell them, but...”

“But what?” the younger man snarled his question.

“It seems we’re close to her whereabouts... Adams appeared out of nowhere and made a trade with Coursers.”

“No,” Arthur whispered, running his hand through his hair and tried to gather himself. “How did you let this happen?”

“Arthur...”

“You promised to find—!” Arthur closed his mouth before turning around. He stayed quiet, deathly quiet and completely still, gazing only the handrail in front of him. He didn’t even react when Danse called him.

“I’ll go look for her,” Danse stated finally.

“No. We have no idea where Institute is, or even how to get in there. We can’t do anything,” Arthur commanded, then his voice halted for a moment. “There isn’t anything we can do.”

Danse knew Arthur wanted to send patrols to find their way to Institute — go there himself — but their resources were limited. It would be dangerous. He didn’t want to put others into danger because of one soldier.
Danse told he understood, but couldn’t hide the hesitation in his voice.

Arthur heard it and said, “Danse, don’t even think about leaving like you almost did last time.”

This time he couldn’t hold that order.

The only things what Andrea could remember were yelling and burning pain on her back before the Relay activated. Using Relay second time didn’t feel as bad as the first time, and the pain in her body drew her attention elsewhere.

But she was out.

One problem was behind, but she had another problem — anaesthetic.

She wouldn’t stay awake for long.

Andrea wished that she would have gotten there where she wanted to but wasn’t sure. Her consciousness began to dim slowly as her body and mind fell asleep. Despite the sunshine, Andrea’s vision blurred slowly, and she couldn’t see very far. She tried to keep her eyes open so that she could ensure the safety of the environment.

No, she couldn’t fight back. She had to sleep, although the power of will told her to stay awake.

Just before she fell asleep, Andrea saw a hazy, dark silhouette approaching her. However, she was too confused and stupefied to see who it was. She couldn’t even defend herself.

After Andrea had heard and saw horrors of the war; painful screams of wounded and last whispers of dying soldiers — a small, bouncing infant was a sight for sore eyes and ears.

A baby gazed adults around him, staring especially one particular woman who stood right next to cradle.

“Adorable, aren’t you?” Andrea asked and touched his button nose with her finger. “Where is your hair, little guy?” she asked and turned to Nate. “Should babies have some hair after their birth?”

“I think this one is going to be bald.” Nate stated.

Andrea looked back to the baby and said, “He looks a little bit Josh who moved Sanctuary Hills not long time ago.”

“That Corporal?” Nate laughed. “Hah. I think Nora would have chosen that new guard who has dimples. Oh wait, he’s bald.”

Andrea shook her head and stared a baby in front of her, who played with his blue baby rattle. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Nate walking next to her.

“Where Roger is, Andy?” he asked.

“He… he will be here soon. Don’t worry.”

“Did you two fight?”

Andrea sighed. Did they have to talk about this now? “Something just happened after I returned from the Yangtze.”
“What happened? You usually tell me everything...”

“Stop this third degree,” Andrea raised her voice. “Roger will be here. He won’t miss our godson’s christening. Can’t we talk about something else?”

She wanted to brush aside the whole topic.

“Well, if you don’t want to return home after this... You can come with us to Mount Desert Island. We booked a hotel room from Aldersea Day Spa.”

“Bar Harbor?” Andrea asked and raised her eyebrow. “Nate, you know I hate the ocean. I’m not going to the middle of the infinite ocean to spend my unpaid holidays with rich and elite. How in the hell did you manage to get a room?”

“Well, Nora has connections, and I’m a war veteran with the prosthetic leg. But for some reason, we got a whole holiday packet for free,” Nate pondered.

Andrea smirked a little bit. She knew the reason, but she couldn’t tell him he would get Medal of Honor in the future.

Nate narrowed his eyes and said, “Fine. Keep your secret then.”

Andrea smiled faintly and said, “Thank you for the invitation, but I won’t be here tomorrow. I’m leaving for an overseas—”

“Sir?” a voice called Nate.

They moved their gaze to Mr Handy as it appeared into the doorway.

“I’m sorry if I interrupted something, but Mr Maxson has arrived.”

“Thank you, Codsworth.”

Andrea exhaled and crossed her arms. She hadn’t been on speaking terms with Roger after he had told about his act of infidelity. If she appreciated something, it was his honesty, but still, it hurt her.

Thankfully, Nate sensed her reluctance and said, “I’ll go. You are to have the honour of carrying Shaun to the backyard. Other guests are already there.”

“Shaun, huh? You decided to name him after your great-great-grandfather?”

“Yeah.” Nate nodded and touched her shoulder before leaving. “Talk to Roger after this.”

Andrea didn’t want to see him now, and talking wouldn’t help.

The sound of the giggling baby brought her back to reality, and she smiled back at the infant. He made her feel better.

Shaun made her feel better. He always did. Shaun was the son she never had.

Maybe you could tell something about... my parents. I want to hear about my parents. I really do.

Andrea woke to burning pain. She felt a deep burning pain in her back. Then she looked around her and recognised where she was.

Sanctuary.
She stood up, body trembling with pain, but she ignored it and walked straight toward Nora’s and Nate’s house.

She didn’t even care how she got there and didn’t even bother to ask it from settlers.

Andrea walked through their collapsed house to their backyard.

It had been a place where they held Shaun’s christening. It had been a place where she and Roger had shared a quiet, peaceful moment after all that arguing.

When she had held Shaun in her arms, she had realised she loved Shaun as much as she loved Lucas.

At the backyard, Andrea slipped in the mud and lost her balance, falling to the ground.

*Maybe you could tell something about... my parents.*

She lifted her head and saw a nameless tombstone in front of her. There they were. Andrea grunted and dragged herself to the grave. Then she sat up and leaned against the stone.

Over two hundred years ago, she had been there with their families and friends. Now, she sat there alone. And the person, for whom she fought, killed and almost died for, was somewhere underground.

Nora and Nate wouldn’t even recognise him if they were alive. Andrea herself didn’t even recognise him first. She didn’t want to accept the fact that the man was really Shaun. But the resemblance between him and Nate’s father was unmistakable.

Andrea stared her hands on her lap, which were full of abrasions, wounds and dirt. Her head hurt. Her back hurt.

She closed her eyes, ignoring the pain and everything else around her.

“Why it had to be him, Nate? Why it wasn’t someone else?” Andrea asked, talking this time to the ghosts. “I don’t know what to do, Nate. Why aren’t you here with me? I need you...”

She was too tired to cry. She hoped Nate could hear her if she stayed quiet.

Betweentimes, settlers and Minutemen came to her, asking if she needed something. Even Preston came to her, pleading her to come inside. Andrea told them to leave her alone because she didn’t want to see anyone.

“Adams?” a voice called her.

Someone walked slowly to her, and squatted down at her level, touching her shoulder. Touch was gentle but firm.

“You shouldn’t be here. It’s midnight. Something might happen,” Pierret said.

No answer.

“Someone has to tend your burns. It will ease your pain. Also, the infection—”

“No.”

“Adams—”
“I said no!” Andrea yelled and glanced General in front of her. “Leave me alone.”

Then she hugged her legs even more tightly and buried her face against her knees. She didn’t want to be here, but there was no other place for her now.

“I just want to be with them,” she whispered.

General let out a faint sigh before she stood up and said, “I’ll leave this here.”

But Andrea didn’t care.

Hours, which felt like days, passed by and slowly the new dawn came. Settlers began their daily routine, and one of them brought her something to eat.

But then something stole her attention.

Andrea heard familiar sounds nearby and thought she heard her own.

Sound of thumps, and then hiss.

“Nate?” Andrea asked, thinking it was Nate’s T-45.

She raised her gaze to see who it was. Then she recognised an orange flight suit and Danse’s light brown eyes.

He examined her face as he walked over to her, sadness in his eyes. He crouched down and reached for her face, cleaning her face from the dried mud.

A muffled sob escaped her lips, and then Andrea burst into tears after feeling his touch. Danse sat down next to her, taking her into his arms and held her while she cried it all out.

He held her until she exhausted herself and fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Forgive me the fast pace of this chapter. All I can say is, everything happened pretty quickly.

But something happened right? Well, she survived, so that's all that we need to know haha. I will tell more soon!
The following day started slightly differently than the previous one, and Andrea was grateful for that. She had been so shocked that she had rejected her basic needs and rejected the help of others. But she hadn’t known who she could trust.

And then one of those who was worth her trust came to her aid.

Andrea examined her red, blistered back through the broken mirror. Then she heard sounds of T-60 in the old living room.

“Are you feeling any better?” Danse asked her.

“A little,” Andrea answered. “I didn’t even realise yesterday, or this morning, how sore my back is.”

“You were on shock, Andrea, physically and mentally. That’s why you didn’t feel the pain.”

“Yeah, I know,” Andrea stated as she dressed her t-shirt. “You heard the recorder?”

“General Pierret played it to me before I came to you. Surprisingly, the Institute didn’t find it.”

“Instead they took my radiophone,” Andrea said and looked up to him. “Danse, how did you find me? Is Arthur here?”

“No,” Danse said. “After he said you were on your own, I left. I couldn’t just sit and wait. I went to Diamond City, but Ms Wright and the detective didn’t know anything about you. Goodneighbor turned me around when I tried to find you from there. Then someone, may I say, an unexpected person approached me and told me you were here.”

“What?”

“That chatterbox, Deacon. The first time, he was worth listening to.”

Andrea let out a tired laugh.

“Of course, if someone knows what is happening in the Commonwealth, it’s him,” she said and walked to another room to pick up her boots.
“Do you know this house?” Danse asked her, looking around the room.

“It’s my childhood home,” Andrea answered. “Or what’s left of it. Two centuries has done its job. Even brick house can’t stand everything.”

“Oh,” Danse stated, sounding little surprised. “Are you feeling homesick again?”

“No. I’ve said goodbyes to this place,” Andrea said. “The place I call my home... is the place where my family lives.”

“Prydwen?”

“You and Arthur are there,” Andrea said, smiling. Then she remembered she has to face that latter one. Knowing him, he is overly worried by now.

“Do you want to talk about what happened there?” Danse asked carefully.

Andrea shook her head as an answer. “I need to think about it. I haven’t...”

‘I’m sorry. We need it; we have sick people here.’

Andrea rubbed her bridge of the nose after the flashback. “I’m sorry.”

“No. Don’t be sorry.” Paladin smiled and lifted her chin until she met his gaze. “Whenever you’re ready.”

Andrea smiled this time and nodded, touching his hand with her own.

“Uh, Paladin Danse?” a voice called him.

Andrea recognised the voice and turned to look at the speaker. Sturges.

“Could you lend me a hand? A few bigger logs are on our way, and we need someone strong to move them,” Sturges said.

“Go on, Hercules,” Andrea said to Danse and punched his arm friendly. “I’ll wait here.”

“Affirmative,” he said and left with Sturges.

Andrea leaned against the doorframe of the front door and watched those two, smiling a little. Then she looked across the road and sighed. Memories passed through her mind when she saw the house of Nate and Nora.

Andrea swore silently and turned around, hitting her healing shoulder to the doorframe. “Fuck!”

Hissing, she sat down on the bed and rubbed her shoulder gently. It had been a great idea to dislocate her shoulder in order to escape, but now it hurt like hell.

Then her eye caught something on a table.

The letter that General had left to her.

Andrea had forgotten it.

Frowning, she opened it and read the paper inside.

“W-what?”
In Arthur’s opinion, Wasteland didn’t look different from the sky. The Commonwealth was, however, in better condition than Capital Wasteland. Most of the buildings of Boston were still standing and landscapes identifiable. Even old military base, its brick fence and thirty houses were still standing.

Barely.

A previous attack of Institute had almost devastated the whole base, but farmers tried to rebuild it. However, the place wouldn’t withstand a new attack. Not by Institute, or even raiders.

And from all the places, she went there.

Arthur noticed a good landing spot and bent toward the pilot.

“Land on that helipad,” he said.

“Yes, sir.”

The first one he saw at the Sanctuary’s helipad was Danse. Arthur jumped down from Valkyrie, his power armour clanging loudly and gestured his guards to wait further while he spoke with Danse.

“Elder,” Danse greeted him.

“Danse, where is she?”

“At her childhood home,” Danse answered. “She’s okay. She has returned to herself, and...” He sighed. “She’s fine, Arthur, but General Pierret wants to talk with you first.”

“I want to see Andrea. Now.”

“Elder, it’s better to hear what happened before talking to her. I’m not even sure does she want to talk about it.”

Danse’s tone was steady and calm, but Arthur could sense the seriousness in his voice. Danse knew something that he didn’t. He knew Andrea better than he did. It has always made him a little jealous.

Andrea opened up to Danse, not him. She feared him, not Danse. It saddened him; he genuinely wanted to be worthy of her trust.

“Elder Maxson,” General called him as she walked toward them. “I assume Paladin Danse told you about what happened.”

“No really. He said I needed to talk with you first,” Arthur corrected, staring Paladin in front of him.

Pierret gestured him to walk with her, their soldiers following them behind.

“Any signs of Institute?” he asked.

“No. However, we increased security,” Pierret replied and glanced soldiers behind them. “May I speak with you? Privately?”

Arthur nodded and ordered his soldiers to stay on guard. Then he looked at Danse. “We will speak later.”
“Yes, sir.”

Arthur followed General into the stone house, closing the door after him as if it would matter. Windows were all broken, and settlers worked right under them.

Pierret took off her hat and put it on the table. “I have to say; I dislike this hat.”

“You had something?” Arthur asked.

“Not a fan of small talk?”

“I don’t have time for it,” Arthur stated. “Especially now.”

“I understand,” she answered and took something from her pocket.

A voice recorder.

“I found this from her belongings. Hidden well. She recorded everything that happened to her.”

“Play it,” Arthur spoke. He feared the worst. Did they send a synth back?

Then he brushed aside his growing anxiety as a churning feeling in his stomach became stronger and took a deep breath.

The first thing what they heard was the sound of rustle, as she hid the recorder and walked in a hurry.

“Stop! If you want me, I’ll surrender. Just… let them go.”

“Drop your weapons.”

A voice belonged to someone whom Arthur didn’t know, and Andrea followed its order, tossing away her guns and knives.

“Let him go.”

“You are not in a position to tell us what to do.”

“I’ll come with you without resistance if you let them go. Both of them. Take him to Diamond City.”

“No. I’m not letting them take you—”

“They will kill us anyway. Please, Danse, get him out of here.”

“No. I promised Elder to bring you back. It’s an order, Initiate!”

“Take MacCready to Doctor Sun, do it for Duncan… do it for me,” Andrea said softly. “Please.”

They heard Danse grunting and picking up mercenary before he left.

“Thank you, Leo. Tell Arthur I’m sorry.”

Arthur’s hand clenched into a fist. Why didn’t he stop her before she left from the Castle? Why Danse let her do it?

“Target captured. X6-88 ready to use Relay.”
Then they heard the sound of Relay and vomiting.

“Get up.” someone said.

Sounds of scuffling, clothes rasping and heavy breathing.

“How deep this place is? That was the second elevator.” she asked. “Are we underground?”

She huffed as she was pushed down to the ground. Then record caught her gasp.

“Shaun...”

Did she find him?

“Who...who are you? Who is she?” a child asked.

“Shaun, are you okay? Shaun, please, look at me.”

“I don’t know you! Who she is?”

“Shaun, I’m your godmother. I’m here to save you. Your father...”

Someone hit her on the head, and Andrea grunted. But still, she continued talking to the kid,

“Shaun...”

“I don’t know you! Go away! Father! Father! There’s someone here! Help me!”

“Shaun, your father...”

The sound of the door opening interrupted halfway through her sentence. Someone walked toward her and let out an exhausted sigh.

“Shaun... S9-23 Recall Code Cirrus.”

“W-what did you do to him?!” Andrea yelled. Then someone hit her on the head hard, and she hit the ground.

“That's enough, X6.”

“You son of...” Andrea hissed.

“Fascinating but disappointing. The child’s responses were not at all what I anticipated. He’s a prototype. We’re only just now beginning to explore the effects of extreme emotional stimuli.”

“A prototype of what?”

“Next-generation of synth. But it seems they need more adjustments.”

“Jesus Christ... Give me Shaun. The real Shaun. Right now!”

“Please try and keep an open mind. Let’s start anew. Welcome to the Institute. I’m Father. It’s what I’ve come to mean to the people of the Institute. But I need you to realise that this situation is far more complicated than you could have imagined a voice explained. You have suffered a great deal to find your godson. And I’m grateful for what you have done for me. It’s me. I’m Shaun.”

“What? H-he was a ten years old boy when this motherfucker picked him up from Kellogg’s apartment?”
“And you didn’t see your own, but think about it. In the Vault, you had no concept of the passage of time. You were released from your pod and went searching for the only person who you had left. But then you learned that he was no longer an infant. You believed that ten years had passed. Is it so hard to accept that it all happened a sixty years ago?” a voice explained. “You have thought about it, haven’t you? You’re a smart woman.”

“But why? Why they wanted a child? Why take him... Shaun?”

“At that time, the year 2227, scientific curiosity and the goal of perfection drove Institute ever onward. What they wanted was the perfect machine. The most logical starting point was human DNA. Institute found me, after discovering records of the old military vault, Father told. An infant, frozen in time, protected from the radiation. I was what they needed. And so it was my DNA that became the basis of the synthetic organics used to create every human-like synth you see today. Through science, we’re family.”

No answer. Then the recorder caught only Andrea’s soft sniffle before she spoke again, her voice breaking, “Then why Kellogg killed everyone?”

“Orders. After my father died, my mother was the only one who would have been a substitute to me if something would have happened to me...”

“They would have used Nora, your mother, as a test subject! And you are okay with that?!?”

“Leaders before me… they had no sympathy for the people. But they took me in and raised me as one of their own. My mother wasn’t needed after that, but they kept her pod up and running. When I was—”

A long silence.

“I began to think ‘what if’s’ and I decided to … reunite with my mother. I wanted to see would she seek her lost son. So I opened her pod remotely. I wanted to meet her.”

“Nora asked me to take you with me when agents of CID came to pick me up. Your parents didn’t care about themselves; they wanted you to be safe. She would have done everything to find you.”

“I’m glad to hear it. That my mother loved me. But… instead of her, you came out. I didn’t know who you were, so I sent Coursers after you. But after what you did at the Concord… it got me interested. We went through the data of Enclave, and I found your file. I ordered Coursers to stand by, to report your every movement and keep an eye on you. I sent the prototype to the ground. See would you seek me...”

“So you tricked me with your... synth child so that you could test would I try to find you!?”

“Yes, yes, I did.”

“So what are you going to do now? Kill me?”

“No,” Father said. “I sent my Coursers to find you, before he would kill you. Unknown doesn’t work for us, loosely yes, but his loyalty belongs to those who raised and trained him.”

“Why would you capture me instead of killing me? Would it be easier to shoot me in the head right now?”

“I wanted to speak to you. I hoped you could see things in our way. You have seen how unstable the wasteland is. It’s a war-ravaged quagmire; full of murderers, rapists and savages. Here, we don’t
have to worry about that. But after what science did to you and others and after what happened at the Mariposa, I highly doubted...”

“Mariposa?”

Arthur frowned. How did they know what happened there?

“Hm? Didn’t Elder tell you about it? Unlike him, I’ve been quite honest with you. Your husband found out the truth about West-Tek’s human tests. That’s right. They used military prisoners as test subjects. I think it reminded him too much of you because he interrogated, even tortured scientists and killed them...”

Sound of footsteps.

“And then he found Brotherhood of Steel,” Father whispered. “Blood and lies. Those are foundation stones of Brotherhood. Sounds familiar? Is there any difference between your Elder and uncle?

“Stop....”

“Can you truly trust him? Military and its leaders have betrayed you once—”

“Enough!”

“I could tell you the truth about—”

“I don’t care. You’re not Shaun” Andrea growled.

“Very well,” the man said and walked further. “Doctor Holdren, could you please come to my Quarters immediately? He’s head of the Bioscience Lab. A doctor.”

“Why do you need a doctor? What are you doing?”

“I need you. I need what is inside you. Unknown is harder to capture. In truth, you’re our only source of Nordlinger’s serum. I’m sorry. We need it; we have sick people here.”

“I could kill you. Right here, right now.”

“Yes. Yes, you could. And I would be powerless to stop you. That’s why those two are here with us, and you’re chained. I’m sorry, but I have to do this — for our organisation and future generations. I hope you’ll survive and we could... Maybe you could tell something about... my parents. I want to hear about my parents. I really do.”

“I’ll tell you one thing; your parents would never forgive you if they were alive! Your mother defended justice, and your father was a soldier of honour. He died protecting you! And this is how you will remember them?!” Andrea yelled at him, and then someone entered the room.

“Please, don’t fight back. It’s just anaesthetic. It will be over in a moment.”

Sounds of scuffling, then a heavy thuds, like punches or kicks being landed and a sharp scream.

Then the recorder caught sounds of running. She escaped.

A sound of elevator, then they heard her heavy breathing and grunting.

“Fuck,” she said and took deep breaths. “I’m sorry, Cade.”
Next, the sound of bone cracking. Andrea hissed, whimpered and finally let out relieved exhale.

*She dislocated her shoulder so that she could move her hands back in front of her body, Arthur thought.*

Her scream brought him back to reality. She had pushed the shoulder back into place.

After a few seconds of silence, she said “Don’t fall asleep, don’t fall asleep…”

Sounds of laser rifles. Andrea stood up and ran. Then by the sound of it, she typed a keyboard.

She moaned in pain as someone shot her continuously and fell on her knees. She crawled on the floor, grunting and then they heard the sound of Relay.

Pierret closed the recorder and gave it to Arthur.

“She appeared to the entrance of Vault 111. One of my people brought her here. Due to anaesthetic, she slept almost two days and… it took a while before she returned to herself,” Pierret explained. “She also has second-degree burns and blisters on her back. We have used ointments as treatment.”

“Why didn’t you tell me she was here, General?” Arthur asked. “If Institute knew she is here, they would have come here in full force, and they would have killed everyone.”

“But they didn’t, and I’m sure they know where she is. And don’t underestimate us, Elder. We have fought against the Institute long before you came to the Commonwealth,” Pierret said, her green eyes drilling into his own. “And I decided not to contact you before her permission.”

“She’s my soldier, General. I’m her superior, and as an equal leader, you would be thankful to know where your soldiers are—”

“Adams didn’t want you to know where she was.”

Those words hit Arthur like a ton of bricks.

“She wanted to be left alone, and we gave that opportunity to her. You’re right, Elder. She isn’t my soldier, so I don’t have the authority to order her. Adams is an adult, and she has the right to choose. Self-determination is something that we cherish.”

He stayed silent for a moment, then he asked, “Where is Initiate Adams?”

“Spencer!” Pierret called one of her guards. “Bring Adams here.”

“Bring her to our vertibird. We are leaving,” Arthur said, walking toward the door.

The guard looked at his commanding officer, and Pierret nodded. Then the man left.


Arthur stopped walking and turned to look at her, saying, “We will talk about the details later.”

Then his eye caught something interesting.

“Out of sheer curiosity, where did you get that vertibird?” Arthur asked and gazed vertibird on the street. It was an older model compared to their own, but seemingly serviceable.
“From Minute Man Air Field. Yes, a place like that exists, not so far from here. Fitting, huh?” Pierret answered.

“The pilot?”

“Much more experienced than your pilots,” she said and then looked at him. “May I ask something, Elder? It might be personal, but what’s your relationship with Initiate Adams?”

“Professional, and as far as I’m concerned, it’s not your business. This conversation is over,” Arthur responded.

Then they saw the guard returning, alone.

“Spencer?” Pierret called her soldier.

“Um, I couldn’t find Adams and then, uh...” the guard glanced Arthur. “someone said that Adams went to Vault 111.”


Then he rushed out from the house, and the guard jumped out of his way in the nick of time. Arthur heard General calling him, but he ignored this and ordered his men into Valkyrie.

On her way to Vault, Andrea stared at the envelope in her hands and thought, could it be?

She recognised the handwriting. It has to be him.

At this moment she would believe anything. After everything that has happened, she would believe anything.

‘Is there any difference between your Elder and uncle?’

Andrea closed her eyes and let out a faint sigh. Maybe for a moment, Shaun had shaken her faith in Arthur. Perhaps she didn’t trust him entirely. She still was haunted by the ghosts from her past.

Andrea brushed aside the whole conversation and continued her way, almost stumbling onto something. She dropped her gaze to the ground at her feet and recognised the helmet of T-45, half-buried into the dirt.

She was close to the Vault.

Then she heard distant sounds of vertibird and looked behind her.

“Oh, fuck,” Andrea said. “Danse...”

She understood why he made contact with the Airport; it was his duty.

But Andrea wasn’t ready to face Arthur. Not yet.

Finally, she reached the entrance of the Vault and noticed that nothing hadn’t changed. She stared faded, yellow number on the elevator and thought, here it all started.

The sound of someone coughing made her freeze and she realised she wasn’t alone.

Was it him?
She turned around to see where the sound was coming from. She looked to the left, and there he was.

The man sat in a chair in front of the campfire, but she couldn’t see his face.

Andrea felt tension thrumming through her body and walked toward him, her heart thudding.

He wore the typical wastelanders outfit; scarf, jeans and leather jacket. However, his navy blue beret didn’t go unnoticed by Andrea.

Biting her lower lip, she twiddled the envelope between her fingers and forced herself to walk over to him.

“I told you to be careful, didn’t I?” the man asked.

One word crossed her mind, and it came out as a weak and quivering whisper.

“Dad?”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I promised to tell you what happened. Not anything super shocking, but everything has its reasons, and someone will explain those reasons soon enough.

But instead of letting Andrea suffer more, I think she needs someone she can trust and a moment of peace.

Oh, little facts. Andrea dislocating her shoulder in order to escape and move her hands front? I got idea from Lethal Weapon 2 where Martin Riggs dislocated his shoulder to escape from a straight-jacket. He was one of my inspiration sources when I created my Sole.

Thanks for reading!
Starspeak

Chapter Summary

Andrea lost Shaun but got someone back instead. But is she ready to lose someone else from her own free will? Andrea ponders her choices.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I told you to be careful, didn’t I?” a hoarse voice asked.

“Dad?” Andrea asked, recognising the sound of his voice. A ghoul. “Is… is it you?”

The man stood up, turning around to face her but kept his distance. He noticed her cautiousness. His eyes were black and his skin decrepit, ravaged by radiation. The man took a deep breath before he spoke,

“You name is Andrea Brandy Maxson, born April 22nd, 2046. We named you after my great-great-grandmother and the song your mother loved. Roger sang the same song when he proposed you… Brandy, you’re a fine girl, what a good wife you would be…”

“But his life, lover and lady was the army,” Andrea whispered. “Just like the sea in the song.”

Then a man sighed and removed something from his neck.

“You used to stir bee pollen into your yoghurt to increase reproductive health,” he explained as he walked over to her and gave her pre-war dog tags. “Especially after Fort Marleen.”

Andrea glanced up to him, taking the tags and examined the steel plates. Adams, Jonathan S.

“As you can see, the war didn’t kill me, instead—”

Andrea dropped the dog tags and pushed him hard against the shoulders, but it didn’t startle him. She could surprise Arthur with her sudden movements, but not the ghoul. As if he had known beforehand what her reaction would be.

“Why didn’t you came to pick me up when the war began!? Why you weren’t there, dad?!” Andrea yelled, pushing him roughly again, and again, and again. “Why you weren’t there with us when CID escorted us to the Vault!? Why didn’t you came to save us when Vault-Tec fucking froze us?!”

Not being able to control her emotions, she broke down in tears.

“Why did you abandon me, dad?” she asked, crying.

“I never forsook you, Andrea,” Jonathan said and grabbed her shoulders, attempting to calm her. “I was here with you whole time until… until a hundred years had passed, and I thought you were gone. I stood here many times and thought about what kind of life you had in the vault.”
“A life?” Andrea asked cynically. “I was test subject, dad. I stared a frosted window in front of me for two hundred years. Did you know about it? Did you know about the war?”

“Yes. I did know about the war. A day before the judgement day, Chris suggested that I should have gone with him to Poseidon oil rig, but I couldn’t leave you and boys…”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because I had arranged a place for you from the Vault, Andrea. You need to understand; I wanted you to be safe. If I had told you about the war, you would have gone to California…”

“Of course, I would have gone. Roger was there, dad!”

“But Mariposa wasn’t a safe place, compared to the Vault…”

“Any other place would have been a better place for me than THAT!” she yelled and pointed an entrance of the Vault with her finger. “Did you know about it? What was down there?”

“No. I never knew about Vault 111. I wasn’t anymore a member of Enclave after your mother’s death. They never told me about the Vault.

“Then why you didn’t come? You had a place there.”

“Because I left my place for Roger, Drea.

“Dad…”

“They started to gather their families to Mariposa after they found out what happened there. Roger sent his men to Boston to pick you up when you were at the baseball game, but Chris ordered them to be executed for treason. I talked to him over the phone, and Chris let them go. I went to Airport myself to see that Wynn and Whitney were escorted back to the plane.”

Andrea covered her eyes with one hand, hiding her tears and sniffed. He had tried to...

“After everything you went through... what you two went through, you deserved a chance to be with him. I hoped he would have come here himself,” Jonathan said, cupping her cheek and then lifted her gaze to his. “And I had to find your brothers. I travelled to Washington and discovered the note George left; he and his family had been sent to Raven Rock. However, I never found Sam and Frank.”

“What about Benjamin? Did you find him?” Andrea asked, still feeling a lump in her throat.

A nod.

“From the Canada-U.S. border, Air Force military base. He... he had turned into feral. Ben never attacked me because I was already ghoulified.” Jonathan stared ground. “He... he didn’t feel anything.”

She sniffed and looked away as a tear slid down her face.

“There is also something you have to understand. That what you heard from that holotape about Roger and Unknown. It didn’t happen because of you.”

Andrea moved her gaze back to him. “What?”

“Enclave had an AI that could predict the future. Because of that, we knew when the war would
start... Enclave knew he would become a threat in the future. And still, for some reason, Chris kept him alive and sent him to Mariposa. Even though he knew Roger would find out what’s happening there.”

She didn’t understand. Andrea shook her head a little bit and asked, “So they knew he would become a leader of an anti-government organisation or something like that and still kept him alive?”

“Yes.”

“But why?”

“That I don’t know.”

“Dad, you were a high ranking officer of Pentagon and Enclave. You know something, don’t you!?” she asked.

“No, I don’t. All I know is... Chris didn’t send Unknown to kill him because of you. But for some another reason… It had something to do with his bloodline.”

Andrea bridled.

“Yeah. Maybe for the same reason why Unknown tries to kill Arthur,” she said and crossed her arms. “He’s last of his family. Kill him and the whole Brotherhood is done.”

“Maybe...” he whispered and threw another stick into the fire.

They stayed quiet for a while. Andrea stared into space and tried to process all this information. Bloodline? What did that mean?

“Brotherhood used to be different, especially when Roger was in charge,” Jonathan said suddenly, and she looked at him. “He wanted to help people, Andrea, but after his death, they sealed themselves into the bunker of Lost Hills and did nothing for outsiders.”

“After his death, I left California and wandered around the Wasteland. Then...” Jonathan dug his bag, taking a magazine and offered it to Andrea. “I got this in my hands at Indiana. This article brought me here.”

“‘View from the Vault’, ” Andrea whispered. “Piper...”

“A friend of mine from Goodneighbour sends me a copy whenever she can. I haven’t been here long, but I’ve been closer to you than you think. At the place that was once named after our family.”

Andrea frowned. “Fort Adams… The Castle.”

“General Pierret took me in and made me a flight instructor. She gave me a chance to do something where I’m good at and stay close you,” Jonathan continued and stared her for a moment. “I know I wasn’t home when you and boys needed me most. I don’t know if I was a good father. But I want to fix it now. You are the most precious thing to me in the whole world.”

Andrea desperately tried to fight back her tears again.

“You have no idea how many times I’ve been standing on the Castle’s wall and gazed over the bay
that hideous rust bucket. That thing has disgraced the Air Force...” he muttered.

Then she burst into laughter, thought a tear rolled down her cheek.

“Dad, I like that hideous rust bucket.”

“It’s still ugly,” he said, then his face turned serious. “But I was surprised you returned to the military. You were so tired and mentally exhausted after what Pentagon did. Still, you joined?”

Now he sounded more like her father — questioning and stern. However, Andrea couldn’t criticise him about it.

“I did it for Shaun. I did everything for him. I don’t know if I found the Brotherhood by accident or if it was fate. I want to stay there, but at the same time, I don’t want to. Brotherhood wants to destroy Institute, but there are families, children… Shaun is there.”

Was Institute worth of saving? Which one could be saved, Commonwealth or the Institute?

‘If the synths reached the point where they outnumbered mankind... How long would it take for them to decide we were no longer necessary? They certainly possess the capability to make more of their kind, so we’d become expendable. And with Institute technology on their side, nothing could stop them,’ Danse had said.

“I want to save them all, but I can’t. Shaun said his people don’t have to worry about things what happens here, but they don’t have to suffer horrors what people here go through because of them.”

She gazed the campfire and then her father.

“My heart tells me to stay, but my head says leave. My heart tells me to save Shaun, but my head says don’t. I don’t know what to do...”

“I’m sure you will know what to do when it’s time. You act when it is necessary, regardless of whether it’s right or wrong,” Jonathan said. “You have always been a shepherdess. You always will be Bo Peep to me, Drea.”

Then the sounds of aircraft rotor blades interrupted their conversation. Andrea let out a frustrated grunt.

“That is one fast vertibird,” Jonathan stated when vertibird rose above the forest and headed towards them.

“Its called Valkyrie,” Andrea explained, gazing approaching aircraft.

“A weird name for aircraft, but so is Prydwen...”

“Elder loves books and mythologies.”

“You seem to know him well,” Jonathan said, and scowled at her.

“Women who enjoy good childhood relationship with their fathers are more likely to fall for a partner who resembles their dads,” Andrea said, thinking Arthur’s scowl.

“I’m not anything like him.”

Andrea raised her eyebrow and then shook her head. “You don’t know him, dad. He has his soft side too.”
“No, I don’t. I don’t want to know him.”

A heavy thud drew their attention to vertibird as the pilot landed it on the entrance of Vault 111. Four power armoured Paladins jumped down before Danse. Andrea noticed him glancing yellow number on the elevator and then her.

Then she saw Arthur’s power armour. Still, no matter what Shaun had said about Arthur, Andrea wanted to run into his arms, but the moment was not right.

“Initiate!” he yelled. “What are you doing here, soldier?”

“I received a personal letter, and it led me here, Sir.”

“And you found a ghoul? Is that your best explanation? You just escaped from the Institute, and it has been a miracle that they haven’t come here. Do you know what—”

“I called her here,” her father said suddenly.

Arthur turned his attention to him and walked over to him. Only a massive amount of willpower kept Andrea in place. Otherwise, she would have run between them.

“And what for?” Arthur asked her father. “What do you want from her?”

“One second,” Jonathan answered. “When you become a father, Maxson, you’ll understand every medal, achievement or promotion, are nothing compared to the time you spend with your child. Even if that moment would last only a one second.”

Andrea studied them carefully. Both men were strong and would not bend under pressure. She hoped they both would behave because she had no idea whose side she was on.

However, she was suddenly overwhelmed with a strange feeling and gazed around them.

“And Adams?” Danse noticed her alertness. “You see something?”

Andrea heard her father calling her as she stared a forest and the heavy mist that surrounded them. Her sixth sense once again told they weren’t alone.

“We shouldn’t be here,” Andrea stated and glanced her father. “Dad, return to Sanctuary. We will talk later.”

She heard Arthur calling her as others walked toward vertibird and followed him.

“Bo Peep,” Jonathan said.

Andrea turned to look over her shoulder, and her father gave her a huge package.

“Early Christmas present. You might need them. Be careful,” he added.

“I’ll be, Sergeant.” Andrea smiled at him.

“Adams!” Arthur yelled again at the top of his voice.

Andrea closed the door of vertibird and then she looked at the packet on the floor. Ignoring other soldiers, she opened the package and unabashed, Andrea grinned widely.
Though sometimes Andrea disliked being at the Prydwen, she was relieved to see that flying, ugly rusty bucket after all of this. Right after their arrival, Arthur ordered her to Clinic to be examined.

“So, no synth components?” Andrea asked Cade.

“No, so it means, you’re our very own Adams,” Cade answered after his examination and glanced her burn wounds and shoulder. “When do you stop tormenting yourself, Initiate?”

“Huh?”

“Your body has its limits, Adams,” Cade stated, taking off his rubber gloves and scowled at her. “A week.”

Andrea stared at him, open-mouthed and said, “W-what? No, Cap, no. My sanity has its limits, not my body.”

“A week or you’re transferred to Logistics. It’s your choice,” the doctor stated firmly. He was the boss.

“I understand,” Andrea said, albeit reluctantly.

She closed the Clinic’s door behind her and sighed. At least she had now time to think about what she should do. Then she noticed Danse approaching her and smiled at him with the faint smile.

“Bad news?” he asked.

“A week. But in your opinion, it’s probably fine.”

“You have to understand. You’re partially Maxson now and after what happened at the Institute...” Danse said but didn’t finish his sentence. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. A conversation with my dad helped me a little.”

“Do you believe it’s him?”

“He knew things about me that only my closest family members knew,” Andrea said. Then she remembered that Danse was also rebuked for not following Arthur’s orders. “Where Elder put you?”

“Cambridge,” Danse answered. “Go see Jenkins and Prince. They have missed you.”

Andrea smiled a little bit again and whispered faintly, “It makes me think how many Quantum’s Fox has stolen this time...”

“What?” Danse asked.


But at first, she had to do talk to someone else. She lifted her gaze back to Danse and said, “Thank you for everything you did for me.”

“Don’t worry about it,” he answered. “I would do it again.”

Once again, Andrea sat on the handrail of Flight Deck and stared the Atlantic in front of her. She thought about what her father had told her and took a sip from her icy cold Gwinnett stout. It tasted
vile; maybe it was spoiled. Andrea gazed the bottle but took yet again another sip. She wouldn’t find a better or fresher beer from the Wasteland.

Soon, she heard someone walking close behind her.

“Get down,” a gruff voice ordered. “I don’t like it when you sit there.”

“Have you ever thought about the stars, Elder? What are they?” Andrea asked as she dropped down from the railing, keeping her gaze on the starry sky.

“Luminous spheroid of plasma kept together by its gravity,” he answered, walking next to her.

Andrea snorted with laughter, taking a sip from her beer.

“You’re cute when you wise off. I think that stars are the place where souls reside. People who are now long gone, are up there, watching us from above,” she said, gesturing toward stars. “They guide us through the darkness. That’s what Roger believed.”

Arthur let her talk, staying quiet and waited for her to continue.

“He would be proud of you. My father told when Roger was in charge, Brotherhood helped civilians, but after his death, they abandoned them,” she continued. “He was always like that in times of need. If someone needed help, he was there for me or anyone else. That’s why he was so damn good soldier. And his dad was the same. He was a UN volunteer teacher.”

She turned to face him and put down the beer bottle.

“You and Lyons followed in his footsteps. You protect people best as you can like they did. There’s nothing to worry about. Your mentor and your ancestor; they would be proud of you,” Andrea said and laced her fingers with his. She touched his cheek, and he closed his eyes for a breath.

“But I’m disappointed in you,” she whispered a second later.

His eyes fly open, and his confused gaze met hers.

“You keep reminding me of honesty and trust, and yet, I hear the truth about Mariposa from Shaun,” Andrea said firmly. “Was it true what he said?”

Arthur sighed wearily and rubbed his eyes.

“Experiments that they did in Mariposa, they violated human rights. Do you think that what happened to you; that what Pentagon did to you didn’t affect his decision? He killed those scientists, and it was the right thing to do. I would have done the same thing. No matter how we try to avoid it, the blood will be spilt. Mankind has been at war since the bombs were dropped, Andrea. Your husband knew it.”

“But you should have told me about it. I had the right known. Roger was my family, our family. I wanted to hear it from you.”

“It is highly classified information—”

“Will you kill Shaun too?” she asked.

No comment.
Andrea shook her head. Then she turned on her heels to leave, and Arthur grabbed her wrist, stopping her.

“Andrea—”

“I love you, Arthur, more than anything,” she said. “But I can’t trust Elder.”

“I—”

Andrea put her finger on his lips, still staring at him intensely and smiled faintly. Then she dropped her hand and kissed him. The kiss wasn’t punishing, rough or teasing, but one swift, soft kiss to his lips.

When their lips broke apart, Andrea touched the scar on his cheek and then grabbed his holotags. She stared the name on the steel plate and looked back at him.

“Sometimes, I wish I could stop loving you,” she said, her voice breaking. “because then everything, my choices, would be easy.”

She caught herself before bursting into tears and turned around to leave.

‘Well, boss… You’re an adult, and you can do whatever you please. Just… Please don’t turn into one of them though I would like to keep you with me.’

‘I only need the Brotherhood to find Institute for me. After I’ve found Shaun, I’ll leave. I’m good at disappearing. I’ve done it already once. I can do it again.’

And now that moment was approaching, but Andrea couldn’t leave. She couldn’t leave Arthur. She came here and fell in love — what a fool.

Her eyes filled with tears that spilt over and ran down her freckled cheeks.

But a distant voice of Kells reminded her that she was at the Command Deck, and Andrea forced to take hold of herself. She wiped the tears from her eyes, even the snot from her nose.

Then she once again noticed blood on the sleeve and touched her philtrum — nosebleed.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Has anyone else a habit to listen to a song on repeat while writing a chapter? I tried to write without it and meh. And now I have a hard time to read my chapters without that music, feels pretty meh. It is like a movie. You need a piece of background music.
Mother's Love

Chapter Summary

The Glowing Sea team returns and Arthur hold a meeting with a small group. Andrea isn't the only who struggles with choices.

Chapter Notes

Arthur/Andrea/Shaun POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Arthur

“Paladin Janet and Burrell, you and your men returned today from Glowing Sea. Tell rest of us about your mission,” Arthur said, eyeing two Paladins in his quarters.

Burrell cleared his throat for his report.

“The journey to the destination took a few days. We lost two of our own, but we managed to find Virgil and the cave. It gave us the blueprints and told us about this… teleport. We need to build a device that will teleport one of us into the Institute using the signal that Coursers use,” he explained. “The Classical Radio station is the carrier signal for the Relay.”

“May I see the notes?” Ingram asked, and Janet gave her papers.

“Molecular transmission via encrypted R.F. waves? Okay, even I have to admit… that’s genius. This explains why we’ve been picking up anomalous energy readings all across the Commonwealth. Not to mention how they get their synths to come out of the damn walls, or out of thin air. And that code which we got from Courser helps us to hijack signal. Instead of grabbing the intended target, it grabs you instead. Impressive.”

“I think there’s not anything impressive on that, Proctor,” Arthur said sternly.

“Of course not, Elder. As a scientist, I admire how advanced their technology is. It’s difficult to make out all the details from this handwriting, but I’m thinking we can start building this stabilised reflector platform,” Ingram reassured, then turned to Star Paladin. “Did you brought the last parts of Prime from the Citadel?”

“Yes, I did. We left parts to the Airport as you asked,” he answered.

Arthur eyed officers in the room, especially Proctor Teagan and said,

“There’s one thing I have to make clear. You may have heard what happened between Proctor Teagan and me. I hope… it will be the last time.”

Of course, they have. Everyone knew about it.
“Brotherhood of Steel is not the U.S. Military; we won’t kill starving civilians over the food rations. We aren’t raiders who steal crops from defenceless families. We aren’t a mob who threaten civilians with violence. That’s sickening. Brotherhood doesn’t operate like that,” Arthur said and gave them a look of reproach.

“I emphasise; we need food. Our soldiers need food. Our Squires need food. General Pierret promised to double the amount of our food if routes of caravans are secured with our help. I accepted her offer. Minutemen will handle the protection of farms; we only take care of those who have been our original targets in the first place. We won’t intervene with their missions, and they promised to stay out of our way. If I ever catch one of you acting behind my back, culprits are arrested and prosecuted. Did I make myself clear?”

“Yes, sir!” everyone said in unison.

“Good. What comes to the Institute... They’re on the high alert,” Arthur sighed and looked at Scott. “We can forget Li. If we sent someone there to find her, there’s a chance we won’t get the data.”

“And we need it. We can’t attack there without knowing where the Institute is or how to get in,” he continued, thinking the same as Arthur.

“We have one chance,” Arthur said to others. “Someone has to go there blind. Our top priority will be the data.”

After some silence, Quinlan spoke, “I’ve got a suggestion, sir.”

“Speak.”

“Initiate has visited the place before. Maybe her memories could help us,” Proctor noted. “She might have seen or heard something which could help us.”

“Memory Den,” Danse stated.

They didn’t have another choice.

“I’ll talk to her,” Arthur stated and then glanced Ingram and Scott. “Proctor Ingram, start building this teleporter. Prime has to wait. Prince, double the security protection at the Airport, checkpoints and strongholds.”

Then Arthur moved his gaze to Danse.

“Danse, go to Goodneighbor and talk to this mayor. They’re… familiar with you already. But I want to talk to you before you go. Others are dismissed.”

Danse waited for the other officers to leave the room before he turned back to Arthur.

“Arthur... About the Institute and...” he began.

“Why did you let her do it?” Arthur asked. “Do you have any idea what could have happened if they had succeeded in...?”

He would never have seen Andrea again.

“I do know, Arthur.”

“Then why did you let it happen?”
“She asked.”

“What the hell is wrong with you, Leonard? You’re the commanding officer. You should have told her to stay aloof or fight.”

“I know!” Danse rasped. “And I should have. But the mercenary—”

“Why you do care about him? He’s not one of us.”

“But she does care. Andrea would never have forgiven me if I had let him die. And she cares about his son, more than we know. Andrea told her son would be Duncan’s age now,” Danse said and sighed. He stayed quiet for a moment. “But someday I have to choose between my friends and the Brotherhood. Between her and you. She hates disloyalty and dishonesty more than anything.”

Arthur snorted, still remembering their conversation at the Flight Deck. “Yeah, I have noticed.”

“What you are going to do with her?” Danse asked. “A whole airship knows about you two. It won’t take long before the West hears the news.”

“That’s not our primary concern. Our primary concerns are the Institute and assassin. Everything else is secondary now,” Arthur said. “Call Adams here.”

“Yes, sir,” Danse stated and headed out his quarter’s door.

Soon Arthur heard the knock at his door. From the pattern of the knock, he instantly knew who it was.

“Come in,” he said. Andrea stomped inside with a scowl on her face and closed the door behind her.

“Elder,” she said formally. “Paladin Danse said you want to talk to me?”

Ever since their last conversation, she had behaved like any other of his soldiers. She avoided his company. When he tried to talk to her, she pushed him away and kept her distance. It hurt and angered him. She believed a man who claimed to be Shaun, and not him.

“The Institute is on high alert,” he began and paced around the room with his arms behind his back. “We can’t send anyone there without...”

“I can go there.”

“No,” Arthur denied and cast an angry look at her. “The mission will be suspended until we have found a solution.”

“Have you, sir?”

“Quinlan suggested Memory Den. He believes we could learn something about the Institute through your memories without sending someone there.”

“I’ll help,” she said, still keeping her gaze up in front of her and scowl on her face.

“Are you sure?”

“I got nothing to hide,” she continued formally. “Was that all, sir?”

This situation couldn’t continue. They had to talk. As he walked across the room to her, he could
see Andrea’s body tensing up. He stopped in front of her, trying to make eye contact.

“What did you mean by your choices?” he asked.

No answer.

Then he grasped her wrist, and she moved her gaze to him, her face expressionless.

“Andrea...”

“Should I let Shaun die or should I save him?” she said, her eyes drilling into his. “I don’t know. I don’t honestly know what I should do with him. But if you’re worried I’ll betray you or Brotherhood, don’t. My mission is to protect people of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic.”

She tried to control her voice, but it didn’t sound convincing.

Arthur narrowed his eyes, but his scowl didn’t work on her.

“Permission to leave, sir?” she asked.

Arthur let go of her and put his hands behind his back, saying, “Granted. Danse is leaving soon to Goodneighbour. He tries to talk to mayor before we go there. We’ll send...”

“Hancock won’t listen Danse,” Andrea said and stared in front of her again. “He has probably heard about Brotherhood’s food-stealing. He’s one of the leading contractors for Minutemen’s caravan routes; so he is mad. I can go there and talk to him.”

He rubbed his eyes and sighed.

“Goodneighbour is a place for outlaws and outcasts, Elder. We can go to Diamond City because they hate synths and ghouls as much as Brotherhood does. But Goodneighbour isn’t Diamond City. If we sent there a platoon of T-60’s without asking permission, they see red. I can talk to the mayor.”

“Go with Paladin,” Arthur said.

Andrea nodded formally and turned to leave the room.

__________________________________________________________________________

Andrea

“Absolutely not, sister,” Hancock said. “The Institute is our enemy, but I’m no fan of Brotherhood either. Do you know how many people suffered because of the actions of that lunatic?”

“Arthur wasn’t—” Andrea said but realised she called him by the first name.

Hancock narrowed his eyes. It wasn’t a good sign.

“Elder didn’t know about it. But he re-organised the routes of caravans with General Pierret and arranged a collaboration with Minutemen. Please, Hancock, let us do this. Just this once. After that, you won’t see soldiers of Brotherhood in your town.”

A captious look filled Hancock’s black eyes.

Andrea continued, “Mayor if I’ve your respect and trust, I would like to trade them for this. The
Commonwealth needs this.”

“If someone else from your circus would have said that to me, I’d laugh my ass off. Fine,” Hancock said suddenly. “But after that, I have no business with you.”

Words hit her stomach like a punch. She just lost her second home. However, she nodded and said, “Understood.”

“Good. You’re welcomed to stay as long as you like, but after you step out, you’re one of them to me,” Hancock stated and walked out VIP-room. At the door, he scowled Paladin, but both of them stayed silent.

Andrea hid her face in her hands, thinking about how it came to this.

“Adams...” Danse said.

“You should make contact with Prydwen, sir,” she said and looked up to him. “We shouldn’t stall this any longer.”

“Are you okay?” Danse asked, concerned.

“Yeah I’m,” Andrea murmured, ignoring what Hancock just said and lifted her gaze to Danse. He looked a little bit orphan without his power armour. “Bet you feel naked without your power armour and flight suit?”

“It’s been a long time since I wore one of these,” Danse stated, meaning his leather jacket and jeans. “Reminds me of...”

But then he quieted down, and his smile faded into an expression of sadness.

Andrea knew whom he thought of; Cutler. She gazed down at her wedding ring. They both loved and missed someone who died a long time ago.

“I’m sorry, Danse, about everything,” she said. Then she looked up to him, and Danse gave her a confused look.

Andrea stood up and bypassed him. If she wanted truly to apologise from someone, it was Danse.

“I know you’re already familiar with this technology, but this will be a slightly different experience than last time. Someone else acted as a host, and you were the one who explored them as Kellogg. However, these are your own memories. It might take a few tries before you can find specific memory you’re looking for,” Amari stated as Andrea sat into the cocoon.

“Let’s do this,” Andrea stated firmly.

At first, she couldn’t see a single memory, as if they would have fled from her subconscious, but slowly sounds and even smell became more clear.

She saw glimpses of flashbacks of her childhood, of her life with Roger and her time at the Anchorage.

‘You’re everything to me, Andrea. If I lose you, I’m halfway through to Hell,’ Roger had said.

And Hell was what they got when the war started. People were expendable, and leaders made sure they knew it.
She finally got a hold of memory of the Institute. Now it was time to remember every detail; everything that she saw or heard.

And they found it they had been looking for; the terminal. After she had escaped from the Coursers and Shaun, Andrea noticed something on the terminal before she activated the Relay. It was connected into Institute’s mainframe. They could download the data from there.

That was it. They had seen enough.

“Miss Adams?” Doctor Amari called her. “How are you feeling? Do you have a headache? Or a blurred vision?”

“I think I’m going to gag,” Andrea said, tasting a bad flavour in her mouth. “Well, that isn’t a new symptom after—”

Andrea stood up, and ran to the bathroom upstairs, hurrying over to the toilet and puked. After it, she cleaned her face and rinsed her mouth with her only purified water. Doctor Amari was right. It had been a very different experience.

“Are you all right?” Danse asked as he appeared to the bathroom.

“Yeah,” Andrea said. “Are we leaving?”

“Star Paladin wants to leave before something happens. I agree with him,” Danse stated.

Outside the Memory Den, Andrea noticed MacCready. She ignored her companions and walked over to the sniper, hugging him tightly.

“Are you okay, kid?” she asked him.

“I should ask the same thing from you, boss.”

“As long as you are fine, I’m too,” she said with a smile. “Where’s Duncan?”

“Taking a nap. He’s turning me crazy with that Pip-Boy of yours.”

Andrea smiled little. “He can keep it. Tell him hi from me.”

“Initiate Adams,” Star Paladin said, interrupting their conversation.

She nodded at him and turned to MacCready. “Stay out of the trouble, R.J.”

“You’re the troublemaker, boss,” he said, smirking, but then his face turned serious. “I heard you found your godson.”

Andrea stopped walking and looked over her shoulder at him.

“Have you made your choice?”

Andrea opened her mouth to reply, but Star Paladin called her again. She stared at MacCready for a few seconds but didn’t answer.

She had made her choice.

Brotherhood had found a way to get intel from the Institute, and maybe a way to bring them down.
They didn’t need her anymore.

And she found Shaun, so she didn’t need Brotherhood anymore.

Andrea glanced deserted Command Deck and grabbed her backpack from the hook. It was a perfect moment to sneak out.

For a moment, she held her gaze on Observation Deck, trying to memorise those large windows, reddish light and couches brought from the Airport. Then she swallowed her emotionalism and turned around. The longer she waited, the harder it became.

She walked over to vertibird and climbed into it, throwing her backpack on the floor. Then she began searching through the dashboard for keys. Usually, they were in plain sight.

“Looking for these?” a voice asked. “I’ve found her.”

Andrea’s heart thudded noisily within her as she heard the voice and the clatter of keys.

“Jesus, Fox. How did you—”

“It was obvious. You haven’t been yourself lately,” Fox answered and put away radiophone. “You have avoided our company, Elder’s, Cade’s... The list goes on. Then I saw you packing your bag. You’re leaving, aren’t you?”

Andrea squeezed vertibird’s cyclic pitch control and let go of it. “Yeah...”

“Why?” Fox asked. “What happened? After everything that we have been through or what you have accomplished here, you want to leave? Just—”

“What I have accomplished?” Andrea asked, speaking now in a low, angry tone. “I’ve almost ruined Danse’s career with my demotion and actions. Half of this base keeps me as a spy of Enclave, and they fear I might kill Arthur.”

Sighing, she laid her head back on the seat and continued, “I want to leave because I want Arthur to be happy. I can’t give him what he wants. His deepest wish and desire are children. I can’t—”

In a few seconds, she heard footsteps outside and then the sound of the sliding door of the aircraft opening. The door made a sharp screech as Stefanie slid it open and then she sat down to co-pilot seat.

Andrea had never seen her look so fiercely angry or upset. Stefanie stared at her, her hazel eyes fierce with anger.

“You selfish \textit{bitch}!” the girl snarled and slapped her once across the face. “Sneaking out in the middle of the night, huh? Do you think your desertion would help Danse’s career?!”

A slap left her skin prickling and tingling, and afterwards, Andrea thought she deserved it.

“A with all respect, Andrea, you’re a coward! You just think about yourself! Everything isn’t about you! Have you thought about how \textit{we} would feel if you leave? Do you think \textit{our} lives will improve here after that? We might be soldiers, but we have feelings too! We care and worry about you!” Stefanie continued as her eyes filled with tears. “Maybe Arthur’s with you because that’s his own fucking choice! Not yours, or West! He loves you, for fuck’s sake!”

Then she snatched the keys from Fox and tossed them at Andrea.
“But if you want to go, take those keys and fly away. Break his heart. Get the fuck out of here,” Stefanie said, sniffing and looked at her before leaving. “For your information, Paladin Danse volunteered to go to the Institute. Go ahead and leave him when he needs you most.”

*What?* Andrea frowned.

Stefanie cast her a dark, angry look; and then left with Fox.

An hour-long minute passed by as Andrea gazed the keys in her hand.

*He loves you, for fuck’s sake! Break his heart. Get the fuck out of here.*

Then she threw the keys with all her strength to help release her frustration with herself and the loss of control of her life. Andrea tried to stop her tears, but they had their own free will, and she burst into wild hysterical sobs.

One man had said her they weren’t worthy of her trust, and she believed him. She had believed their enemy and not the man she loved.

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**Shaun**

Underneath the war zone of Super Mutants, raiders and other factions, Institute shone on its prime. They had pure, radiation-free water; healthy, green trees that produced oxygen they needed and a clean, safe environment for future generations.

They didn’t have to worry about mutants, ghouls, untrustworthy wastelanders and most importantly, radiation.

BioSciene had succeeded to re-create more sunflowers. They had found a way to use them as food. But sunflowers were just one experiment where the Institute had succeeded.

The chirping of black-capped chickadees and other birds filled the main lounge of Institute. For two centuries they had kept animal species alive.

The Institute was able to produce amazing results through science; flowers, food, animals and even synths.

But when it came to lethal illnesses and treatments — it was always a setback.

The sound of black-capped chickadees chirping brought Shaun back to presence, and he noticed one of their chickadees sitting on his balcony, as usual, waiting for food.

They knew Shaun carried sunflowers seeds in his pockets. He reached into his coat’s pocket, taking out another handful of seeds and extended his hand. The bird recognised the movement of his hand and flew to him, landing on his palm.

Admiring the bird’s trust and beauty, Shaun once again fell into his thoughts.

For decades he had thought about ‘what if’. He had imagined the moment he would have met his mother. He had seen this woman in his dreams. Shaun didn’t even know what her mother looked like, but the woman in his dreams was caring and *familiar*.

When someone else had awakened from the Vault instead of her, Shaun had been furious. Without thinking twice, he had ordered the Synth Retention Bureau to take care of the woman.
But he had changed his mind after he realised how much this unfamiliar woman cared about him.

She did everything she could to find the boy she didn’t know. She even travelled into the most dangerous place in Commonwealth for him; somewhere where even Coursers wouldn’t go.

And when Coursers had brought her in front of him, Shaun had hoped she would have survived their experiment.

She was the only one who had known his parents personally.

A sudden movement frightened the bird, and it flew away. Shaun heard sunflower seeds falling to the floor and dropped his gaze to the floor. Then he raised his gaze to his trembling hand and remembered why he needed this vault dweller.

She had his cure.

“Another seizure?” a voice asked.

Shaun turned to look over his shoulder and saw Clayton Holdren.

“Yes, but weaker this time,” he answered and stared a chickadee that returned to eat seeds. Out of the corner of his eye, Shaun saw the doctor drawing the medicine into a syringe.

“Take your hand off your sleeve, and roll up your sleeve—” Clayton began but hummed. “Oh, you have done it already.”

He didn’t comment, and Clayton went on, asking, “Did you saw a dream about her again? Or did you saw her again somewhere here?”

The tumour inside his head caused weird dreams, but he had also begun to see hallucinations. Shaun saw his mother here and there, just a reflection of a gentle face smiling at him. Sometimes he even heard her calling him by his name — if it was her.

If those fools of Minutemen wouldn’t have cremated his parents, he would at least know what his parents looked like.

“Father?” Clayton called him.

“Last time right before our surprise guest arrived.”

“I know it’s hard, but you should reconsider kidnapping her. She’s—”

“Hard?” Shaun asked, scowling at his doctor and snarled his next words. “I might die in a few months without the cure. It was so close, Clayton, and I let it slip through my fingers.”

Then he sighed. He was tired of being angry.

“What should I do? Should I keep her alive, so I could finally hear and learn something about my parents; get to know them before dying? Or should I kill her to save myself and spent the rest of my life without knowing anything about them?”

“You have to remember, your daughter is sick too,” Clayton said and injected the medicine into Shaun’s arm.

“You’re right,” Shaun whispered. “Ayo doubts my capability to run this place. He said I let my godmother go because I was sentimental. And he was right, Clayton. I was too emotional to stop
her. I could have told her the truth about Unknown but...”

“Would that have been wise, Father? Unknown murdered her spouse; he tried to kill her. Your godmother would have killed him, or vice versa, and then,” a fair-haired man said. “… the cure would be gone.”

“My godmother might be full of steroids, but she isn’t ferocious like everyone else are up there. No matter how horrifying things son does, the mother is the one who forgives,” Shaun said.

He knew his mother would forgive him, though his godmother argued otherwise.

“She would never kill her son. Don’t underestimate mother’s love, Clayton; it’s unconditional and eternal. It surpasses any other love.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: He's Andrea's... What?! Oh, dear...

I'm thinking about taking a little break from writing now — I'm a bit tired. So-called, 'winter depression' and shift work are to blame like every year.

Oh, I forgot to tell you why I gave Danse name ‘Leonard’. Leonard = “lion strength”, “lion-strong”, or “lion-hearted”. And lions are symbols of courage. Got the idea after hearing his in-game line years ago when he sees lion statues of the Boston Public Library, “The lion was such a noble and majestic creature. It’s a shame they're extinct.”

Me: “And you're noble and majestic too. ♡ Therefore, I shall call you... Leonard.

Thanks for reading!
Souls and Love, Shining Together

Chapter Summary

Andrea and Arthur share a moment in the least expected, unusual place.

Chapter Notes

A/N: Chapter includes sexual content. You have been warned. Read at your own risk. Like it would bother anyone, lol.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Father?” a voice called Shaun.

He turned around to look at the speaker.

Justin Ayo, an acting director of S.R.B.

“Come in,” Shaun replied. “Any news from the ground?”

“The Brotherhood gave a visit to Goodneighbor, more precisely, to the Memory Den. Your godmother was among them.”

Shaun narrowed his eyes. “They wanted to see her memories…”

“Brotherhood is getting closer, Father, too close. They are building the gantry as we speak. Doctor Li stated it has something to do with this Liberty Prime. Addition to that, they have built some kind of generators around the Airport which prevents us using the Relay in the area.”

“They are preparing for war. What about the Minutemen and Railroad?”

“I don’t think the Minutemen are a threat to us, but we will keep them under the surveillance. The Railroad, on the other hand, has disappeared. I sent a team to the Old North Chruch, but Railroad has abandoned it. We are currently trying to find their new hideout,” Ayo reported. “What we are going to do with Brotherhood?”

“They’re a too big threat to us,” Shaun stated. Then he turned around to look at the figure who stood in the shadows. “You know what to do.”

A figure left, without saying a word.

“Father, I’m not a fan of this... man. Are you sure he is reliable?”

“We don't have a choice. He is stronger than Coursers,” Shaun answered. "If he succeeds, send your men to destination.”

“What about...”
“She will not be there. He will make sure of it,” Shaun stated.

Ayo had a confused look on his face.

“Psychological warfare. It is the most effective method against those whose mental well-being is unbalanced. You will see.”

“Stefanie?” Andrea called her as she reached the sleeping quarters.

No answer.

She walked over to the bed and called her again, “Stef?”

“Go away.”

“I just wanted to say I am sorry—”

“I said, go away,” the girl hissed.

She was still angry with her and Andrea didn’t blame her. Then Andrea turned around and dug her backpack, taking something from there. It wasn’t enough, but she had thought about giving it to the sniper.

“I, uh,... found this from my home. It belonged to my mother,” Andrea explained and fiddled red headband on her hands. “Star Paladin didn't remember to bring your own from Citadel so... so I brought you this.”

No answer. Andrea let out a deep exhale.

“I’ll leave this here,” she said and put a headband on the table. “I won’t go anywhere, Stef, except the guardhouse.”

Still no answer.

“Goodnight,” Andrea said and made her way towards the holding area.

Like usual, a quiet guardhouse was the perfect place for Andrea to listen to her thoughts and conscience. Andrea plucked her cuticles and stared a steel wall in front of her. She had believed she thought the best of others, but in the end, she had only thought herself, her problems and past.

Selfish bitch, Andrea thought.

Sound of the door opening brought her back to earth, and she heard the familiar sound of combat boots.

Arthur appeared in front of her cell door, which, as usual, wasn’t locked.

He touched barred door and slid it open.

“How did you find me?” she asked.

“Prince told me,” Arthur answered and walked in front of her, blocking her view. She had no other choice but to stare at him instead. “And knowing you, you have something on your mind because you’re sitting here.”
“I tried to leave,” Andrea said and dug her pockets. Then she gave keys of vertibird to Arthur. “But I couldn’t...”

“Why?”

“Because of you,” Andrea answered and looked at him. “And others. But you knew about it already?”

“Knight Prince told me about that too. I would have sent you here anyway, but you found your way here. I’m disappointed in you, Initiate.”

His words hurt her. But she deserved it. Karma was a bitch.

“My apologies, Elder,” Andrea responded and stood up. “Whatever punishment you see fit, I accept it.”

“No. You didn’t commit a crime. Almost, but you didn’t. I assume I don’t have to worry about you sneaking out in the middle of the night, abandoning your duty as a soldier and going AWOL?”

“No, sir. I came here to find Shaun, and I did it. I did it for myself. Now I want to save the Commonwealth. It is my duty for others.”

“Good,” Arthur said. “Otherwise, I have to take precautions and, you know what deserter’s punishment is. I don’t want that but as a—”

“...Elder, you have to be an example for others. A role model,” Andrea continued his sentence.
“We live and die by your orders.”

Then she noticed she had hurt him with her words. Andrea apologised, “I’m sorry, I didn’t...”

“No, it’s okay.” Arthur’s expression softened. “I just... hate it when you talk about death.”

“I know you’re thinking as an Elder and I respect that. Don’t undermine your position here for me.”

“I already have,” Arthur whispered and tucked her hair behind her ear, his thumb stroking her cheek with slow stroke. “But we can’t choose who we fall in love with.”

“No, we can’t,” she said and smiled. “But I’m not going to give up my freedom of speech for Elder.”

A smile appeared on his lips and Andrea tilted her head in wonderment after she noticed it.
“What?”

“I’ve missed that.”

“My cheeky personality?”

“Your smile,” he said.

Andrea scratched the tip of her nose as she felt how blush heated her cheeks. Why in the world was she blushing? They had been lovers since their first date, and now she acted like this would be new to them.

This time Arthur snorted, lifting her gaze back to him and leaned in to give her a soft kiss on the corner of her lips. Then he gazed her with those sympathetic eyes of his.
Only she had the privilege to see that stare.

“I’ve missed you, Drea,” he whispered, calling her by a nickname. “Your smile and jokes. Those two things give me the strength to wake up into a new day. I don’t know what I would do if I couldn’t wake up every morning to see your face.”

He pulled her even closer and then he touched her forehead with his.

“So don’t leave me, please.”

He feared loneliness.

“I won’t,” Andrea comforted. “But do you remember what I said, in this very exact place, about the risks of being a soldier? That we take risks even without suicidal thoughts?”

“I do. I won’t deny missions from you. But be sure that you will return.”

“I’ll,” Andrea promised, and touched his scar on the cheek, feeling his rough and dry skin against her fingers. “But, could you promise me something?”

“Anything.”

“No more secrets.”

“I promise,” he whispered as he ran his fingers through her hair, pulling her face little closer.

The feeling passed between them as they stared into one another’s eyes and this time, she kissed him.

Andrea wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling herself towards him and deepened the kiss. She kissed him as if no time had passed since their last kiss at the forecastle, and she could again feel how his beard tickled her skin. What surprised her this time was the fact she didn’t taste any alcohol on his lips.

She let him explore every inch of her body thoroughly with his wandering hands, but when he grabbed her ass, pinching it, squeak escaped from her throat.

“Assman.”

“I couldn’t help it,” he stated and kissed her again.

Andrea let out a faint sound — a mix of giggle and moan — when Arthur lifted her and carried her over to the bed.

Andrea deepened the kiss, slipping her soft tongue into his mouth and begun to pull off his coat. He didn’t even break their kiss while he undressed his coat and threw it down on the floor.

That coat was impressive, but she wanted to see something that wasn’t meant to be seen by other people.

She let out a soft moan within his mouth as the man pressed her against the mattress with his massive body. She unzipped his flight suit, exposing the bare flesh of his abdomen and rested her hand on his chest.

Then she broke their kiss for the first time. “What if someone comes?”
“No one will come. I locked the door so that I could talk to you and be with you. I want to enjoy this moment before you start picking up fights with me.”

“No, you’re the one, so now shut up.”

Arthur kissed her again, but Andrea managed to ask a question about the warden.

“What about the Knight-Sergeant?”

“He is not here, and if anyone comes through that door, they will be thrown down from here,” Arthur intimidated, kissing her once again, so she couldn’t talk.

Andrea smiled mentally, and moved her hand on his chest, slowly approaching his bottom. The man to let out a half-suppressed moan as her hand grabbed his crotch.

“You—”

He wrenched her arm away from his crotch and pressed it against the mattress above her head.

“I’m in charge here,” he said.

“Ah, a few weeks back you didn’t even know where to put that...” Andrea glanced down before looking back to him. “...joystick.”

“As I said, I have a good teacher.”

“Keep talking; you have a lot to learn.”

Arthur pressed his lips on hers, then trailed kisses down her chin until he reached her neck and begun to undress her vault suit. “Keep your hands above your head.”

The way he ordered her around, it turned her on. She couldn’t enjoy sex as she used to, but the partner’s emotion and reactions did satisfy her.

Arthur admired her body as he opened her suit, gazing it with his eyes full of desire and touched every scar on her body. Your body is secondary, he had said. He loved more her personality and loyalty.

That made her want him.

Andrea flinched a little bit when Arthur wrenched her clothes and boots off, tossing them aside. The bed creaked when he stood up to take off his clothes, except his underwear.

Andrea herself admired a bump inside his boxers, letting her imagination wander unchecked. She wanted so badly to take him into her mouth and give him pleasure that way.

Then Arthur moved her gaze from his crotch to his eyes and brushed his lips against hers. She kissed him back and insidiously moved her hand down. She slid her hand under the boxers and finally reached it what she secretly craved. Andrea grabbed him and gently caressed his hardening shaft.

Arthur groaned into her mouth as she continued teasing him. He was getting harder and bigger, and he looked at her with a stare that sent chills down her spine. His eyes were almost animalistic.
But instead of taking her, he leaned down and kissed her again. Somehow he managed to control himself.

Slowly Arthur trailed kisses down her chin, making his way down her neck, reaching her décolleté and the space between her breasts. Shivers went down her body as he continued, feeling how he carefully examined every inch of her upper body. He lifted her sports bra to reveal her small breasts and began to tease them with his tongue and fingers.

He caressed her other breast with his fingers and sucked another, taking it into his mouth. Taking a deep breath, she let him do his tricks and let him a feast.

She loved every touch of his even though not all of them didn’t spark any sensations.

Arthur took off her sports bra and told her to go down to the mattress. There she was, naked, at his mercy, but she didn’t protest. She wanted him as he wanted her.

“You’re beautiful.”

No one hadn’t said that to her after her ‘transformation’.

Andrea pulled him back to kiss. She ached for him. Her body ached for the touch of his hands and lips.

He didn’t kiss her passionately this time. It was a gentle, lingering brush of the lips before he went down, towards her bottom. He kissed every exposed area on her body.

Andrea ran her fingers through his hair, closing her eyes as the man kissed her lower abdomen. God, she loved the touch of his beard.

He accidentally tickled her with it, which made her giggle. For a moment, he stopped to look at her, kissed once her abdomen and continued his way down.

Arthur pushed her legs apart gently and slipped his hand under her panties, touching the most sensitive area in her body.

Andrea dampened her sudden moan with her arm, which surprised her. It happened between times, but very rarely.

“Don’t dampen your moans. I wanna hear them,” Arthur said and leaned to kiss the base of her neck.

Then he touched the entrance of her crotch again and slid one of his large finger inside her. Andrea grunted instinctively. And for nothing. It didn’t hurt.

“Everything okay?” he asked, and Andrea nodded.

Slowly, he began to move finger back and forth inside her, every inch of her graving secretly more. Andrea arched her hips and moaned next to his ear as he continued kissing her neck. He shoved yet another finger inside her and pushed them deeper. Then out. Then back in.

Andrea pulled his hair as she writhed and gasped. “Arthur...”

This man made her feel something that she hadn’t felt in a long time.

Arthur stopped kissing her neck and looked at her while she enjoyed his handling. Their gaze met, and Andrea realised how vulnerable she was. For a moment, she gave herself to him utterly.
Andrea wrapped her hand around his neck and pulled him to kiss, their holotags clashing together.

Arthur pulled his fingers out, and she grunted frustratedly. But then she had a wild idea. She grasped his wrist and guided his hand towards her face, sinking those two fingers into her mouth.

She sucked every drop of her juice and stared him seductively. The woman wrinkled her freckled nose when his body tensed up and his eyes locked onto her mouth — a jackpot.

Arthur clashed his mouth to hers, almost violently and pushed her against the mattress with his body. Now she could feel how his erection pressed against her thigh.

“You’re driving me crazy,” he growled against her neck.

“Told you I was going to kiss you,” Andrea whispered, and the man kissed her again, dampening her moans that escaped from her mouth.

Her hands moved restlessly on his hairy chest. She touched his hard nipples and toned stomach. The lower she went, the less hair there was. But his hair wasn’t her object of interest (though she liked it) but something else down there.

She slid her hand under the white boxers once again, but Arthur stopped her. He kissed her once before standing up and lowered his underwear.

His hard erection stood straight out, as hard as steel. Andrea stared it in spellbound, licking her lips as she almost tasted it. That sweaty, musty taste of salty skin.

Andrea rushed on all fours on the bed in front of him. She grabbed hold of his shaft and caressed it slowly, giving the head a soft kiss. Her name burst from his lips as the soft touch of her hand and lips smoothed the base and glans of his manhood simultaneously.

“I want to taste you,” she whispered, and playfully licked him.

With a groan, Arthur gave up and let her do as she pleased. Andrea flashed him a sly smile and put him into her mouth, sucking his head. Yes, she loved the taste of it and loved to feel it inside her mouth. She loved giving him oral sex. But more importantly, Andrea loved the look on Arthur’s face as she gave her attention to him, and him only. He liked being worshipped as any man did.

She ran her tongue in circles around glans as she stroked him, hearing how Arthur let out a deep moan. She kissed it, caressing it all way down to the base and drew it into her mouth. She took him deep and then pulled him out to do it again. After taking a deep breath, she licked his shaft all way down the base.

Hearing his moans, she was encouraged to continue and returned to glans, kissing and licking it teasingly. Arthur ran his fingers through her hair and gently pushed her against his head.

“Shit,” he muttered.

It was the only word he could come out with when Andrea once again took his full erection entirely into her mouth and begun to suck it. He couldn’t take off his eyes of hers and slowly pumped his hips against her mouth.

However, Andrea pulled her head back when she felt how his shaft almost throbbed under her care and made a little smack with her lips as she reached the end of his length. Then she looked up to him and smiled.
“What?” Andrea asked and wiped her lips.

“I adore your smile.”

The woman raised her eyebrows. Was he kidding? “I’m giving you a blowjob, and you adore my smile?”

“I prioritise things.”

“You’re weird man, Arthur,” Andrea stated, and a man touched her chin before kissing her passionately.

“I adore only you.”

Again, the heat flushed her cheeks.

“Where do you want me?” the woman whispered, letting him know he was in charge.

“On the bed. All fours.”

Andrea did what he suggested, feeling how he climbed behind her but frowned when Arthur touched her back instead of her ass as he usually did. Andrea turned to look over her shoulder and realised he eyed the burn scars on her back.

“They are no longer sore,” Andrea said.

He leaned closer to her and whispered, “If someone wants to hurt you again, they have to come through me first. No one hurts my lady.”

Andrea gazed him, not knowing what to say, but it seems he didn’t expect her to say anything as he kissed her.

After sharing a passionate, but soft kiss with her, Arthur touched her soaking entrance once, sliding his finger there like making sure she was still ready. Andrea flinched once as finger went inside her and then out.

Then she felt how he guided his hard manhood against her. A shiver went through her as Arthur bent to kiss her base of neck softly. Then that shiver multiplied when he slowly thrust himself inside her, feeling how he filled every inch of her.

Arthur let out a faint, but animalish groan when he reached the end of her, his moan making her body shiver even more.

Andrea felt him moving inside her, setting a slow and steady rhythm at first. She thrust herself against him, grunting when he reached the end of her again and squeezed the bedsheets.

He wrapped his arm around her, kissing her ear and began to moan in her ear. Something began to build inside her, and she started to gasp his name as he slowly fastened his pace.

They both knew how to arouse each other.

“Are you okay? I’m not hurting you?” he asked her as he moved in and out of her with passionate rhythm.

“Please, just continue...”
Their heavy breathing and slapping sounds of skins filled the empty guardhouse and their bodies bathed in each other’s sweat. Arthur put more power onto his hips and pushed himself into her with mighty thrusts.

If she could cum, she would have done it several times.

He trusted himself deeper into her and moaned her name.

She enjoyed hearing his groans in her ear before he kissed her.

He was hers.

Secretly Andrea hoped someone would walk into the guardhouse to hear their intense sounds of lovemaking, so everyone would know he was hers. Selfish but arousing.

“Oh, fuck....” Andrea moaned when Arthur grasped her hips hard and pulled her against him every time he went back inside.

Within each thrust, she whimpered his name.

She was his.

And it aroused her.

When she felt him throbbing inside her, Andrea begged him to put more speed.

“Arthur, faster...”

“Repeat it,” he whispered.

Andrea barely heard him from squeaking bed. “Faster...”

“As you wish, my lady...”

A lady, huh? Andrea smirked at his choice of words and groaned when he did as she told. He moaned again as his muscles tightened.

“Can I come inside you?” he asked.

A thought aroused her. She wanted him inside her. And he had fired so much pre-cum inside her that it wasn’t an issue. On the other hand, it didn’t matter at all.

“Yes.”

During the last thrusts, Arthur tightened his hold of her and came inside her with a growl.

Andrea grinned when she felt him filling her and let out a pleased moan. As usual, it felt so damn good.

But, Andrea again hoped she could feel the orgasm too.

Though she had learned to enjoy her emotions, partners pleasure and the closeness of their bodies, she missed a mind exploding feeling — an uncontrollable emotion, which took control of the whole body.

And it happened to Arthur now. He collapsed down out of breath, probably knowing she could
take the weight of his upper body. He tried to focus on breathing, his head on her shoulder.

Then she asked, “Are you okay?”

“Perfect,” he answered and kissed her.

After their kiss, Arthur pulled himself out and went down next to her.

Andrea glanced his manhood and said, “One thing...”

Andrea went down and sucked him clean from their juice. Then she kissed it softly.

“There,” she said and smiled at him.

He flashed her a smile back, and it melted her heart. She went to his arms, burrowing her face against his neck and wrapped her leg around his. Exhausted, they laid on the bed, their hot bodies brushing against each other.

“I wish I could satisfy you,” Arthur said after a long silence and played with her hair.

She gazed up at him and gave him a sad shake of the head. “This is enough.”

“Somehow, it still feels frustrating that I can’t make you...”

“Now you’re picking up the fight, dear,” Andrea reminded him about their conversation and put her finger on his lips. “What is wrong with my body, it isn’t your fault. You satisfy me by being with me.”

At first, Arthur looked sad, but then he smiled a little. Whenever he smiled, he looked his age.

“No one hasn’t ever called me dear.”

“Eres muy querido para mí.”

“What does that mean?”

“That you’re dear to me,” Andrea said and kissed him. Then she snuggled against him and rested her cheek on his bare chest. She closed her eyes for a moment. “What are we going to do, Arthur?”

“With what?”

“With us.”

Arthur exhaled deeply. “I don’t know.”

Andrea stroked his chest with her finger, touching every scar he had on the area, his collarbone, holotags and Adam’s apple. Then Arthur grabbed her hand to play with her fingers.

He gazed her left hand, exploring it thoroughly and tilted his head. “You have taken off your wedding ring?”

“I belong only to one man,” Andrea stated. Though she felt naked without it, it didn’t belong there anymore. “And I love you.”

At first, Andrea thought something was wrong when Arthur closed his eyes and stayed silent until he turned to look at her. Thousands of new questions crashed into her mind as her gaze locked with
his eyes.

Then his expression softened. He cupped her cheek before moving the weight of his body against hers and kissed her tenderly.

“Love shouldn’t fade with time; love is, like a polar star, “ever-fixed” and lasts forever,” he said and rested his forehead on her own. “Stars are unaffected by the times, and unlike the lovers who change over time, stars are proof that love existed once. Souls and love together in the same place.”

Those words and the look in his eyes made her feel unique and beautiful.

Andrea felt how a lump rose in her throat and filled it. She realised how she loved this literature-loving, romantic and poetic man. Arthur was her everything. The love she felt for him was all that mattered.

Arthur frowned in trouble as a single tear fell from the corner of her eye.

“Did I—”

“No, no...” Andrea sniffed. “I just... loved what you said,” she continued and cuddled against him.

“I just thought I did something wrong. I’m not, uh, experienced with crying women.”

“You still have a lot to learn. But you’re a romantic person so you can always talk your way out of the bad situation.”

“A romantic person? I made you cry, and I should have taken you somewhere else, like a beach, and made love to you under the moon and stars, not in dullest place in Prydwen, where we usually hold our soldiers in custody...”

Andrea burst into laughter. “A beach would be so cliché, Arthur.”

“Maybe you cried because we did it here...”

“Now shut up. The guardhouse is the best place in the whole airship for a troublemaker. And honours to me for luring an Elder of Brotherhood of Steel here too.” Andrea chuckled again, making a note that even he shared her emotion. “Maybe next time, we should do this somewhere... more public.”

“Oh, you do have a kink for an act like that?”

“Next time, I’ll give you a blowjob at the Command Deck. What do you say about that?”

“Don’t you know what our rules say about having sex in public places?”

“Ah, excuse me. You don’t even know where your soldiers have sex, evading superiors overseeing stares. Fox and...”

“I don’t want to know. As long as it doesn’t happen in my bed, it is fine by me,” the man pondered, making a woman snort a little bit. “You should sleep.”

“Stay here with me,” Andrea said and closed her eyes.

“Of course,” he said and stroked her hair.

They did it again in the morning.
A/N: This chapter was quite fun to write — for being my first time, and you can probably see it, heh. But I’m okay with this. Props and thank you’s to my friend who helped me! And I’d like to thank every one of you for reading these chapters. It means a lot to me.

Ps. As Arthur is a history nerd and writes poems himself; I made him quote Shakespeare’s *Sonnet 116*. I love it myself.
Unexpected Decisions

Chapter Summary

Everything isn't easy with the Relay. Andrea and Arthur struggle with their 'inner world'.

Chapter Notes

Arthur/Andrea POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andrea realised in an instant that what she was experiencing was a dream.

She wasn’t in the Wasteland or at the Prydwen, but the Anchorage. She stood in the middle of the snowy battlefield, and everything around her had frozen as if time itself would have stopped.

Then she saw something strange in the distance. A familiar object that didn’t belong or shouldn’t be there.

Andrea walked closer to it and heard the squeak of the snow under her boots. She narrowed her eyes, touching the surface of the solid object and realised she wasn’t seeing her own.

The front door of their home — hers and Roger’s — was there, floating in the air.

Hesitantly, she turned the gold doorknob and pushed the door open, revealing a view of their home. Andrea stepped inside and looked out through the long hall, toward the living room. She could even smell the scent of freshly brewed coffee, old wood and smell of sweet and musky paper — Roger’s old books.

Flam!

Her heart bounced as the door slammed shut behind her, and with instinct, Andrea aimed M4 towards the door.

Nothing.

Andrea took a deep breath and returned her attention to their home. She went to the small dining room and touched the long, narrow mahogany antique dining table. Her fingers trailed along the polished edge of the table as she circled it. It felt real.

She was about to enter the living room when she heard noises upstairs.

Thump. Thump.

Someone walked there. Andrea lifted her rifle and climbed stairs.
“Honey?” she called Roger.

No answer.

Andrea arrived on the second floor and moved her gaze to their bedroom door. This time she could hear Roger’s faint voice and footsteps.

Thump. Thump.

As she walked closer to the door, Andrea could feel her heart beating faster and faster and grasped her gun more firmly.

“No answer.” she called him and pushed the door open with the barrel.

The room was empty of human souls. She only saw their king-size bed, extinguished fireplace, bookshelves and entrance to the walk-in closet and bathroom.

Voices had also disappeared.

Flam!

The door slammed shut again behind her. Andrea moved her aim toward it and silently cursed herself for being careless. She glared the white door and turned around, halting instantly.

The bedroom had transformed into a concrete room. Then Andrea noticed the rifle had vanished and she had now her flight suit and her dual pistols.

Then voices returned.

Andrea shifted her gaze from her hands to two figures at the other side of the room, seeing Unknown and Roger. The latter one was lying on the floor, his face beaten with cuts on his forehead and across the nose. His right arm was twisted as if it had been broken.

“Roger!” Andrea screamed and attacked the assassin. But she ran against the invisible wall and crashed to the ground. She held her head and called Roger again, but he couldn’t hear her voice.

“You son of a bitch! Stay away from him!” Andrea screamed at the hostile. “Leave him alone!”

Roger crawled forward on his belly, trying to reach his laser rifle while the other man followed him. Assassin pointed at him with his Desert Eagle and shot him in the leg. The .50 AE bullet tore his leg off.

His blood-curdling scream caused her heart to stutter. It brought hot tears to her eyes, tears of fear and anger. She was powerless to do anything. She couldn’t protect him.

Andrea kicked the glass with all her strength, still calling Roger though he had already gone into shock because of the huge blood loss. Then assassin lifted his pistol again.

She screamed ‘no’ and raised her 10mm pistol, emptying pistol magazine into the glass.

The assassin turned his head toward the sound as if he had heard her.

Andrea stared him into the eye as if she could see them through his goggles.
She clenched her teeth together, but then out of the corner of her eye, she noticed something had changed.

“Arthur?” Andrea asked as she saw him on the floor instead of Roger.

Then the assassin turned his attention to Arthur.

“I swear I’ll fucking kill you if you touch him!” she yelled.

As if she could do something. Andrea tried to call Arthur and then she begged assassin to stop as he lifted his pistol.

“Take me instead. Please.”

The sound of a loud gunshot echoed in her ears, sending Andrea into despair. She dropped her pistol and fell on her knees on the stone floor, bursting into tears.

This was her worst fear. Someone murdered a man she loved, and she couldn’t do anything to stop it.

She cried uncontrollably, barely able to breathe she was sobbing so hard and tried to lean against the invisible wall. But she noticed it was no longer there. And Unknown too had disappeared.

She crawled to Arthur and placed her hands over the bullet hole in his chest, trying to stop the flow of blood. He had a massive hole in his chest, just over his heart. .50 fucking AE had pierced his flesh and bones, ripped his inner organs.

There wasn’t anything that she could do. He wasn’t there anymore.

“No… Don’t do this to me,” she cried, hugging his body. “Don’t leave me.”

Thump. Thump.

Andrea heard someone else in the room, but she didn’t care anymore and wished that assassin would kill her too. She had no reason to live if those two were gone. She squeezed Arthur’s body and waited for the bullet.

“This is all your fault, Andrea,” the cold and cynical voice spoke.

Andrea lifted her gaze slowly as she recognised the voice of her uncle and looked over her shoulder. But she didn’t see anyone.

“Drea?” another voice called her.

Andrea sniffed and fluttered her eyes incredulously. A voice called her again, and Andrea lifted her gaze, staring the roof above her. It was Arthur’s voice. The weight on her arms disappeared as his body disappeared in the blink of the eye.

“Drea,” Arthur called her again.

His voice and touch pulled her out of the nightmare, and Andrea woke up gasping, seeing Arthur’s troubled face. She was in his room.

“It’s okay,” he said, tucking her hair behind her ear. “You were dreaming.”

Andrea dived into his arms and continued sobbing.
“What’s wrong?” he asked, confused.

“I saw how Unknown killed you. I held your lifeless body.” Andrea breathed a soft cry of pain, still squeezing him, just like in her dream. “And I couldn’t do anything. I couldn’t do a damn thing.”

“It was just a dream. Nothing more.”

“But he killed Roger. What if it was a forese—”

“It was just a dream. I’m still here. Your subconscious and imagination created those images.”

Arthur tried to calm her and cupped her face. “I’m fine.”

Andrea nodded and brushed her tears. There was no need for panic or crying. It had been just a dream. But her uncle’s words crushed her self-confidence.

“You’re right,” she whispered.

“Try to sleep. It’s still midnight,” Arthur suggested before returning to his duties.

Andrea glanced his terminal, then threw the blanket away and begun to dress.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“Out. I need a cigarette.”

Arthur stared her as she dressed up the flight suit, and she pulled out a cigarette from her coat’s pocket.

“I’ve spent many sleepless nights before; this isn’t the first,” she stated. “Oh. I’d like to go to The Castle today. Would that be ok?”

No answer.

Andrea walked over to Arthur, who stared a wall in front of him and touched his shoulder.

“I want to see my father. I’m not going anywhere else,” she said, but still no answer. “Arthur, my place is here with you, but I don’t want to abandon my father. He never abandoned me when the others did. Please.”

Finally, Arthur relaxed his shoulders and spoke, “One hour. If you haven’t returned after 60 minutes...” Then he sighed. “Take A-Team and Danse with you.”

“Stefanie and Danse refuse to talk to me after what I, uh, almost did,” Andrea said embarrassed.

Arthur nodded. “Take Ortiz and Jenkins. I’ll talk to Prince and Danse.”

“Thank you, Arthur,” Andrea said and leaned to kiss his temple with a loud smack.

“Yes!” Ingram shouted. A few scribes frowned as the redhead came out from her room and walked to the Command Deck.

“I’ve been trying all night to find the missing parts for our teleporter, and finally, I made it. All four parts located, Elder,” she explained, giving a little smile to Elder, Kells and Star Paladin.

“Two power cores at Trinity Tower and one in Kendall Hospital. And a company called Telecoms Communications Inc had this high-grade transmitter that we need; strong enough to catch and send
even smallest radio waves. It’s one of its kind.”

“According to my Lancers Trinity Tower is full of super mutants. Kendall hospital shouldn’t be a problem; Cambridge is under our control, and the number of raiders has decreased. But I haven’t heard reports about Telecoms Communications Inc,” Kells said, frowning.

“Hmm. It seems we need intel. Hey, Adams!” Ingram called her as Andrea and her team were returning from the Castle. “Do you know anything about a corporation called Telecoms Communications Inc?”

“It delivered telephone, television and Internet services to clients throughout the United States. Their closest headquarters is at the New York,” Andrea explained.

“According to pre-war files, the transmitter should be here in Boston, but it seems this is false data. What are we going to do, Elder?” Ingram asked and turned to look at their superiors.

“May I see it?” Andrea asked, meaning the file and eyed it. Then she lifted her gaze from paper and stared into space.

“Initiate?” Arthur called her.

“If they sent technology here, it means it can be found from a local broadcasting station. There is only one GNN broadcasting station in Boston, and it’s nowadays Gunners headquarters,” Andrea recalled.

“There isn’t another place where we could find one of these transmitters?” Star Paladin asked Ingram.

“As I said, it’s one of its kind. Maybe we could find another transmitter from another city, but that will take more time.”

“Too much time,” Arthur said. “Prince, tell officers we will have a meeting in about half an hour. Kells, order your Lancers to survey area of Kendall and Trinity Tower.”

“Yes, sir. What about GNN?” Kells asked.

“Gunners aren’t super mutants or raiders. They will start to suspect something if we begin to scout the area,” Arthur said. “We’ll wait.”

Andrea crossed her arms. Of course, building teleporter wasn’t an easy task.

“In the power control rooms, but the exact locations of the rooms are unknown.”

“It cannot be hard to find the power control room. What if they’re damaged?”

“Bring power cores to me. I can get them back into working order. I have to,” Ingram stated firmly.

“Then there is Gunner’s headquarters.” Anderson sighed. “That won’t be easy.”

“No, it won’t. We have a highly trained army against us. And most importantly, they have a home
ground,” Scott Prince said. “This can end up in a bloodbath. Do we know where the transmitter is?”

“Broadcasting room, maybe,” Ingram answered. “What would be the worst possible scenario if we attack there now?”

“We could lose dozens of our soldiers before we even get inside the building and there’s a possibility we may destroy the transmitter during an attack. Gunners aren’t raiders; they rival us in training and equipment. Same maniacs killed half of my team in moment,” Brandis murmured. “What if… we send there only one soldier first?”

“Knight Jenkins?” Anderson asked.

“I was thinking our vault dweller,” Brandis stated and turned to look at Danse. “At least we can hear her out.”

Being the only Initiate in the room with Paladins and other officers would have been an anxious experience to someone else, but not to Andrea. She had got used to officers and high-ranking officials after working for the Department of Defense.

“Theyir equipment and training aren’t the only things what will cause us trouble,” she said as she eyed the map. “They can make contact with other strongholds via the radio of GNN. I heard someone giving orders to Gunners through the radio at the Mass Pike Interchange.”

“What if we destroy antenna?” Arthur asked.

“Explosion might draw the attention of Vault if it’s close,” Anderson pondered.

“And GNN was able to send broadcast, even if the antenna was down due to earthquake or lightning strike. Not far, but the signal reached downtown,” Andrea recalled.

“This is a stalemate,” Anderson said, rubbing his eyes.

Then Ingram hummed as if she had figured something out and glanced Andrea, asking, “Isn’t infiltration and sabotage your speciality, is it?”

Andrea resisted the urge to smirk.

“They are. But if I go there without reinforcements, I need all possible intel about building, personnel, ground plan… I need to know where this switchboard is so I can turn off the electricity of the building,” Andrea listed. Then she noticed Arthur and Danse staring daggers at her. “If that would be a plan.”

“Yeah, it was just a suggestion for our problem,” Ingram stated.

“If that would be the plan, how about men on the roof?” Anderson asked, crossing his arms.

“I can take them down without anybody noticing.”

“What if you get caught?”

“I won’t,” Andrea answered confidently. “But if I do, I’ll give them a hell of a fight. There is always the risk of getting caught when you go behind enemy lines.”

Finally, Arthur spoke, ending the meeting.
Paladin Danse, gather your men and clear out Kendall. Paladin-Commander, take four squads with you to Trinity Tower and request air support from Lancer-Captain. We’ll deal with Gunners later. Dismissed, soldiers,” Arthur added. “Except for Paladin Danse and Initiate Adams.”

After the others had exited the room, Arthur took a deep breath and gestured Andrea and Danse to sit down.

“I suppose you two have lots to talk about in private. You will not leave this room until you have talked this through,” Arthur said.

Having said that, he exchanged glances with both of them and left.

After Arthur had closed the door, Andrea opened her mouth, “Look, Danse. As I have said, I’m really sorry.”

“That’s all you can say? Why the hell should I believe you?”

He sounded like a man who had given up pretending that he was not mad. She frustrated the hell out of him, which was perfectly reasonable.

“Because I care about you.”

“Well, if it’s true, you certainly have a strange way of showing it.”

“Yes, I know I have been selfish, but I never wanted to hurt you with my actions!” Andrea said.

“But you did.”

“Yes, I did! And I’m sorry!”

This time Danse raised his voice. “Don’t apologise... act!”

“What do you want me to do?! Don’t punish me for something that I didn’t do! I’m still here.”

“But for how long? You have said it yourself that you don’t want to be here. I realise that it hasn’t been easy out here... for any of us. You’re not the only one—”

“I know that!” She snarled at him, resulting him to stand up.

Andrea followed him to the door and shut it in front of him. He wouldn’t leave until they would be ready.

“I realised it and had second thoughts. Because of you, I got a chance to come here, and because of you, I’m still here. It has always been like that. Danse, I don’t want to undermine your position here. You know that, and I know that because you love Brotherhood,” she reasoned.

“But your second desertion would have undermined it. Do you know how that would have affected my career— or my personal feelings?” Danse asked and glared her with his light brown eyes.

Andrea knew he was right.

“I would hate to see you distance yourself from the Brotherhood... and me,” his voice finally softened, and he reached her shoulder. She felt his firm and a strong hand on her shoulder, giving her a friendly squeeze.

“Look, I’m not mad at you, maybe little, but I’m not going to hold a grudge against you. I’m not
trying to break up our friendship. That’s the last thing I’d want to do. But it is better for me to part company with you. I’ll no longer be your sponsor.”

The last words fell like hammer blows. Danse grabbed the handler, opening the door and Andrea didn’t even try to stop him.

Then Andrea kicked the chair across the room.

“Why did I almost do something so stupid?” she asked herself.

She wasn’t mad at Danse; she was angry at herself. She almost weakened Danse’s position, and that’s what made her feel guilty. Andrea stared Brotherhood flag behind Arthurs’ terminal, and then her attention moved to alcohol bottles.

No, don’t touch, Andrea thought, but the temptation was so great she couldn’t resist.

Arthur didn’t want to send Andrea to GNN, but did they have a better option? He paced around the Observation Deck, scowling and mumbling by himself. Then he stopped and stared outside.

Unawares, he fell into deep thought, thinking about his dream and latest conversation with Cade.

“Elder, 90% of the steroids users won’t be able to father their children, especially in the case of long-time users, even though they would quit taking drugs. Women aren’t immune, either. Steroids suppress the hormones that stimulate the ovulation,” the doctor had explained.

“And we don’t know what kind of drug they gave to her, but you need to understand this. It has been inside her body for almost four years; it’s in her DNA, tissues... Everywhere. It’s not a common drug her body metabolises and eliminates after a certain time. I’m sorry Elder, but anyone else on this ship or out there are more fertile than she is.”

“Arthur?” a voice asked.

He turned around as someone touched his shoulder and spoke his name.

Andrea tilted her head and asked, “Everything alright?”

He nodded. “Did you talk to Danse?”

“Yeah, um, he told me about his decision. Did you know about it?”

“We discussed it while you were at the Castle. I tried to talk him over,” Arthur said, but then he smelled a familiar scent. “Did you drink again?”

“I took one of your bottles. My boyfriend is soon-to-be-alcoholic, maybe I should turn into one too?”

When he scowled at her, she burst into laughter. She was the only one who could react like that. Arthur shook his head and moved his gaze to downtown.

“How’s your father doing?” he asked.

“He teaches Minutemen how to fly vertibird and repairs my old motorcycle,” Andrea stated and crossed her arms in front of her chest. “Arthur, about GNN... I want to do it.”

“Even though it will get us closer to the Institute? Your godson?”
“Yes. Even if—” Andrea said, and in midsentence, she paused. “Nothing.”

And still, she wasn’t sure what to do with him.

Arthur pulled her close and kissed her. Then he grabbed her chin and looked into her eyes.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Anything,” she said.

“Are you sure you can’t have children?”

She sighed in defeat, closing her eyes for a moment and said, “My ovaries are shrivelled. They’re zombies — dead. We tried IVF, but none of our babies implanted after transfer.”

“I’m sorry,” he whispered.

“It’s okay. I know you want children,” Andrea said and looked up to him. “You might be able to have them with someone else.”

“I want children with you. With someone I love.”

“Yeah...” She sighed again. “Good luck with that.”

He stared at her a moment. Then he had an idea and asked, “What about adoption?”

Andrea raised a disbelieving eyebrow. “West is going to love that.”

“I don’t care what they say.”

She dropped her eyes to the floor, avoiding his gaze and then looked out the stained-glass window.

“What?” he asked, sensing her mood shift.

“I don’t know, could I be a mother. I don’t know what I would have done with Shaun if—” Andrea said, shifting her gaze back to his. “I’ve found my calling, and it isn’t the motherhood. Before the war, social workers turned down my adoption applications because I was— I’m aggressive and unpredictable. I’m an only soldier, Arthur. I’m not a woman or a mother anymore.”

The last words were a mere whisper.

“You’re more than a soldier to me,” Arthur said, taking her into his arms, and rested his chin against the top of her head. “Don’t throw away your hope.”

“I know,” she said, leaning her cheek against his chest. “You know, we’re still at the Command Deck.”

“I know,” he said snorting. He just didn’t care if they had an audience.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I used Soles and Danses in-game dialogue here. Never triggered the debate myself, I don't have heart for it.
Thanks for reading.
And if our spirits falter...

Chapter Summary

No more emotions left, no more tears to shed, and no more pain to feel?

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hi, guys. How was your new year celebrations? I've got influenza and an eye infection. Fever is a pain the ass. Oh, and I got a lovely comment about my English. I really didn't have the interest to continue this story after someone told me not to write anything in English.

Anyway, it took me a while, but I got over it.

Warning: torture ahead.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andrea knew someone who knew Gunners Plaza like the back of his hand. She arranged a meeting and summoned MacCready to the Castle since she had no business to be in the Goodneighbour. Arthur refused to send her there alone, so she had to bring a small army with her.

“This is Gunners Plaza, boss. When they see you coming; they'll call support from other posts and strongholds. And I can assure you; it’ll not end happily,” MacCready said.

“That’s why I’m asking you where I can find the switchboard so that I can destroy it. It seems the leader of Gunners can command his soldiers through radio.”

“Captain Wes commands his people through the radio—” MacCready scowled, hesitated, then scowled some more. “Wait, wh— where I can find the switchboard so that I can destroy it?”

Andrea sighed. “Someone has to take down that switchboard before we go there.”

“Are you serious!? Gunners put a bounty on your head,” MacCready yelled, standing up.

“I know,” Andrea said, feeling Ortiz’s eyes drilling through her where she stood.

“I changed my mind,” MacCready said, turning on his heels and left through the same door that he had entered.

“RJ, wait!” Andrea called him and followed him outside.

“I’m not going to give you any intel of that building.”

Andrea grabbed his arm, stopping him. “RJ. You’re the only one—”

“The last time you went somewhere, where no one could follow you, you almost died. Maybe your
family ties with the Director was the only reason why you weren’t killed immediately. But Gunners? Andrea—”

“I’m going there. Without the intel or with it.”

“That clown is going to send you there?”

“Don’t call him a clown,” Andrea said.

“What I said to you before you joined them?” MacCready hissed, gesturing power armoured Knight behind him. “People die after joining, or they disappear without a trace.”

“Everybody dies eventually.”

“Yes, we all do, but my answer is no,” MacCready continued, bypassing Andrea.

“I’m not going there with all guns blazing.”

“Sneaking into the building is suicide too.”

Andrea walked in front of him and stopped MacCready by putting her hand on his chest.

“If I’m good at something, it’s infiltration missions. You know it. I was a nightmare of Reds. I’ll be the terror of Gunners. They won’t know what hit them.”

MacCready grunted after her answer and swore quietly.

“Two caps for Duncan, kid,” Andrea said, smiling.

“You’re the most strong-willed person I know. Give me those,” he said and snatched ground plans from her. He spread the papers before him and scrutinised them. “These are… little old. Half of the building is destroyed, and they have barricaded most of the entrances. Where did you get this? These are a piece of sh— crap.”

“Crap is a swearword. One cap for Duncan,” Andrea said. “We found those from Boston Public Library after killing dozens super mutants.”

“Aha... Wait, what you wanted to know?”

“Where the switchboard is? Frame or panel that is full of breakers, switches, synchroscopes and fuses.”

“That large white panel? There,” MacCready said and pointed room on the map. “At the basement.”

“In the electrical room? Figures. Did they used it to control the radio?”

“No. It happened from Captain Wes’ office. Old broadcast room.”

“It’s in the middle of the building.” Andrea inhaled little as she studied the ground plans with him. “Do you remember anything else? Where their armoury was located? How many people were there?”

“There were roughly forty soldiers and at least three Assaultrons. Think twice about going there.”

Andrea crossed her arms in front of her chest and exchanged glances with Ortiz.
Then MacCready continued, “They have two armouries. A smaller one is on the second floor and bigger behind the statue room. There were always seven to twelve soldiers outside. Wes usually kept two of his most trusted men with him inside his office so he won’t be alone. The entrance to the basement is on the roof, but this intel is six months old.”

“Better than nothing,” Andrea said.

A long, lingering moment of silence followed their conversation. MacCready continued staring the papers, a blank look on his face and Andrea realised he wanted to talk.

She glanced Ortiz again. “Will you excuse us for a moment, BJ?”

Ortiz looked both of them and walked little further.

“You have a bodyguard who isn’t Danse,” MacCready said. Instead of sounding waggish, he sounded disappointed. “It seems you have made your choice.”

“Not what I originally planned but,” Andrea answered, lifting her gaze to his. “...yeah.”

“Shame,” MacCready whispered. “I miss having someone I could depend on with me. Travelling alone scares the heck out of me. I hope it has nothing to do with what Hancock said.”

“I don’t blame the mayor for his choices,” she answered and grabbed his hand with her hand, squeezing it tightly. “He has my respect, and you’re my best friend, RJ. No matter what my choice is.”

“Never had a best friend before... people around me do not tend to stay alive very long.”

He looked melancholy and even slightly depressed as if he were thinking of better times. Then he huffed.

“Fuck... Enough of this,” MacCready said, ashamed of his momentary softness and freed his grip. “Good luck, boss.”

“No promises. Try to be careful,” Andrea said, smiling and presented her hand to offer up a fist bump.

MacCready smiled and fist-bumped her, saying, “Getting myself killed is the farthest thing from my mind, angel.”

“Tell Du I miss him.”

As she watched him leave, Andrea crossed her arms around her own body and then heard someone walking behind her. She peeked over her shoulder and saw Jonathan.

“I’m not overly excited about this mission of yours,” he said.

“You were the one who told me I was wasting my skills when I left the Army.”

“It was when you had more reliable support on the field...”

“Enclave?” Andrea scoffed, cocking an eyebrow. “I wasn’t one of them. They only protected me because of what I was.”

“A family member.”
“Tsk. Unlike them, Arthur puts the safety of his men and civilians above mine,” Andrea said. “Dad, I appreciate your concern, but I’ll be fine.”

“Unlike him, I’ll put your safety above everything else if I have to.”

Andrea smiled and heard Ortiz calling her. It was time to return to Prydwen.

“Words of a father, not a military officer,” she said and turned around to leave.

“I’m both,” he said. “I love you.”

Even though the sound of the rotors dampened his hoarse voice, Andrea heard those three magic words.

She turned around and stared right into her father’s eyes.

He had nothing in him that would remind her of her pre-war father. His ocean blue eyes were now black, and radiation had burned his hair and skin. His frightening, handsome look was now history.

Andrea walked over to him and hugged him. “I love you too, dad.”

Later on, Andrea stepped into the armoury of Prydwen and saw Stefanie there. She stood in front of her locker, attaching a suppressor into her anti-materiel rifle.

As Andrea had guessed, Stefanie was one of the snipers who acted as her backup.

“Stef,” Andrea began. “I know we haven’t talked much after... Um, I just, I wanted to say I’m sorry.”

“I know,” Stefanie said, placing a full clip into the magazine housing and lifted weapon on her back.

Andrea admired how smoothly she handled a big weapon as if it were part of her. Then Andrea saw her mother’s headband on Stefanie’s head, and she smiled.

And even if Stefanie bypassed her without saying a word, one thing made Andrea a little happier.

She was warming up to her again.

Andrea went to her locker, taking her old infiltration suit out of the closet and studied it.

The suit was sturdier and heavier than she remembered, and it still had the Special Forces patches on its sleeve.

“Just like in the old days,” she said and heard the door opening and closing behind her. Andrea glanced over her shoulder and saw Arthur.

“What’s that?” he asked.

“My old infiltration suit. Before you ask, DARPA added to it the strongest ballistic fabric we had. It’s more durable than your battlecoat or any bulletproof vest.”

“No Oppressor Liber,” Arthur said, reading the motto from the second patch.

“It means To Free the Oppressed,” Andrea stated.
“I know Latin,” Arthur said. “Where did you get this?”

“It was inside the packet dad gave me at the Vault 111,” Andrea said and begun to undress her flight suit. “Here, take these. Give them to me when I return.”

Arthur’s dark eyebrows slanted in a frown as she gave him hers holotags and pre-war tags.

“I can’t keep them. If Gunners catch me, they will know I’m one of you.”

“What if they torture you—”

“CIA taught me to resist torture in their ‘POW camps’. My favourite was “water dungeon” where the victim was locked up in an iron cage and lowered down into the water until it reached their throat. The victim couldn’t sit or sleep; otherwise, they would have drowned,” Andrea explained. “They once inserted a tube through my nose into my stomach without lubricant, and they removed the tube and inserted it over and over again. CIA told victims usually died because of aspirated blood. Force-feeding through it—”

“Enough!” Arthur snarled.

Andrea sighed and said, “I just wanted to tell you; I’m ready for anything.”

Then Arthur offered her something and Andrea looked up to him.

“Arthur, I don’t need Stealth Boy. I can manage without it.”

“You’ll take it, and you’ll use it. Its an order,” he ordered. “I don’t want to lose you because your pride stands in your way.”

Andrea cocked her eyebrow. “Look who’s talking. Maxson preaches about pride and ego.”

For her surprise, Arthur smiled, and then he said, “You’re the only one who has guts to talk to me like that.”

“I would be troublesome Sentinel,” Andrea said, snorting.

“Or Lady Maxson,” Arthur whispered.

Andrea gaped him, disorientated and confused and not believing what he just said.

Arthur shook his head, murmuring something under his beard and left. He slipped through the door and shut it behind him, leaving her standing alone.

The Relay was almost ready, according to Proctor Ingram. Her scribes had built it by night and days. The transmitter was the only thing what was missing, and it was Andrea’s job to make sure Brotherhood would get it.

Once the clock hit 2000, the sun had already set, and she reached her destination. Pulling out a pair of binoculars, she laid down on the wet ground and scouted the area.

Then she took the radiophone she borrowed from Fox. “Prince? Matthews? What’s the situation?”

“They have a skeleton crew. Nothing alarming. It has been pretty quiet,” Stefanie answered.

“How many you men see on the roof?”
“Three at the ground and six soldiers on the roof,” Matthews said.

“Affirmative. Make contact with Paladin-Commander when I get to the elevator. They will attack after I’ve destroyed the switchboard.”

“We’re here, just in case,” Stefanie said.

That sounded better.

After a careful survey, Andrea made her way to the rusty staircase and climbed them up quietly as a ghost. Since it was quite dark, her black suit helped her to blend into the darkness, and she managed to climb up without being seen by anyone. Just before the end of the stairs, she heard a gunner walking close by and leaned against the building.

After making sure hostile was far away from others, Andrea grabbed him by the back of his neck and gave it a sharp twist. Then she drew her knife from the sheath and sent it whirring through the air, killing the second mercenary.

She sneaked behind the last gunner and covered his mouth with her hand, taking him out of the game with her knife. The first section of the roof was cleared.

There were still six gunners left so that she couldn’t celebrate yet. Andrea hurried to the highest part of the roof and began to take down hostiles quietly. After hiding their bodies, she jumped from the roof and made her way back to the front yard.

However, when she heard footsteps, Andrea halted and went into hiding, using vegetation as cover.

Heavily armoured gunner walked past her, carrying M249 and scanned the building’s surroundings carefully. Andrea made a mental note to herself not to mess with these ‘heavy armoured guys’ if they all carried machine guns. Her suit was durable, but against machine guns and shotguns? Maybe with luck, she could survive. She waited, then drew her knife slowly from chest sheath and sneaked behind him.

The last two gunners were walking back and forth at the front yard. When another man started to lit his cigarette, Andrea made her move. She took her knife and threw it forward, killing his buddy.

“The fuck?” mercenary with cigarette asked, but couldn’t alarm others as Andrea killed him.

She glared the turrets as she put down now dead gunner. No affect. They couldn’t hear; they used infrared to detect movement.

Getting into the basement was harder than Andrea had imagined. Someone heard the elevator, and she had to hide.

As the elevator’s doors opened, two mercenaries peeked inside and double-checked it.

“Fuck this elevator. Piece of shit. Why it is moving by itself?” the first gunner asked.

“It’s two hundred years old widget,” the second gunner said. “The elevator is empty!”

“Fuck you, Mal. Talk like that to me again, and Ryder will make an example out of ya.”

“Pfft. Yeah sure. Wes put Cruz into guard duty as a punishment, and where he puts Ryder who didn’t do anything? Into fucking basement. He ain’t nothing,” the mercenary said, his voice getting
fainter as they moved away.

Andrea dropped from the roof of the elevator and closed the hatch. She followed them quietly and took them down. She had no idea how many men Gunners had in the basement, so she had to re-think her approach. Then Andrea noticed spotlights.

*Shit*, she thought.

Then out of nowhere, she remembered Stealth Boy she carried with her. Andrea rolled her eyes as she thought about Arthur’s orders and activated it.

Using stealth, she lured the gunners away from each other with sounds and took them down one by one. After she had killed the last gunner on the lower floor, Andrea moved her gaze to upper offices. Switchboard had to be there.

The man inside it paced around the room and talked to someone via radiophone. He would soon notice that something was wrong.

Andrea sneaked behind him and grabbed the mercenary in a stranglehold so that he had no breath to call his friends if there were any left.

“How many men are up there?” she asked, taking the knife from the sheath on her hip and placed it on his neck.

“I don’t know…”

“Of course you do,” Andrea said. “Now, tell me, or I’ll pop your knee off.”

No answer.

Andrea penetrated his knee with the blade of a knife and suppressed his yell, saying, “It takes only one twist.”

No answer.

“Very well...”

“No, wait—!”

She twisted the blade and heard knee popping out of its place. Her victim tried to scream as he squirmed and turned, trying to get away.

“Now, if you don’t want to lose your another leg—”


With one forceful movement, she turned the man’s head around. They hadn’t shown mercy to anyone and, therefore, she shouldn’t either.

Then Andrea stood up and went to the switchboard, cutting all the wires with her knife. Instantly after it, the building’s electricity and lights turned off.

“How’s the building look?” Andrea asked via radiophone and turned on her flashlight.

“It’s dark, and the antenna is down,” answered Stefanie.
“Good, it’s done,” Andrea said and sheathed her knife. Then she heard loud blasts and sounds of a gunfight.

“Cavalry is in,” Stefanie said.

After they had taken care of remaining gunners, found the transmitter and conquered the Gunners Plaza, Anderson called her.

“Adams!” Andrea turned to look at Paladin-Commander. “Elder wants the report. We’re leaving.”

“Yes, sir.”

Andrea reached Command Deck before Paladin-Commander, and she saw Arthur talking with Quinlan. It wasn’t anything new, but the absence of guard was unusual.

She frowned and walked toward them. Her matta black suit helped her to blend into the darkness, so they hadn’t noticed her.

“—no matter what happens, don’t tell her or anyone else. Is that clear, Proctor?” Arthur ordered, a scowl twisting his brows. Then their attention moved to Anderson. “That was all, Quinlan.”

Andrea frowned again as Arthur observed her expression. But then Anderson interrupted their staring contest.

“—We did give the transmitter to Proctor Ingram so that she can finalise this Relay. Hopefully, it won’t take long,” Anderson stated, finishing his report.

“Hopefully not, we have waited long enough,” Arthur stated. “However, we have to be prepared for Gunners’ retaliation attack. Tell men to be ready, Paladin-Commander.”

“Yes, sir. I’ll talk to Paladin Russell about the sentry bots.”

“That was all. Excellent work, soldiers. Especially you, Adams,” Arthur stated, staring at her.

“You did a good job. Brotherhood—”

“Elder Maxson,” someone called him.

They turned to look behind them. Knight-Sergeant appeared to the scene and apologised for his interruption.

“What is it, Sergeant?” Arthur asked.

“I, um, the trader did a bring a letter to Adams, sir. Said it was urgent,” Knight Sergeant replied and offered unopened envelope to Andrea.

Suddenly a wave of anxiety overwhelmed her, and she forgot the conversation between Elder and Proctor. She thanked her superior, taking the envelope and waited.

But the feeling didn’t go away.

She hated when anxiety and panic flooded her mind, no, her body. As if some sort of foresight tried to tell her something has happened, or something would happen.

Andrea opened the envelope and recognised the paper inside it. It was a page of Publick Occurrences. However, the writing wasn’t Pipers’; it was messy, cursive scribble but readable. It
belonged to someone who has learned cursive writing before the war, but due to their poor motor skills, it was messy.

Nick.

That odd, heavy feeling inside her grew stronger. The floor disappeared under her feet, and the walls fell around her. Andrea turned her full attention to the letter, and after finishing reading it, she let it fall to the floor.

She partly died inside.

Other two men called her, but all that Andrea heard was indistinct talk.

“He attacked again,” she said.

“Unknown?” Anderson asked.

“He— He shot MacCready and Duncan.”

With all willpower and self-discipline she had, Andrea told herself not to break down. She couldn’t let Arthur or Anderson see how much losing someone hurt her. It was like phantom pain. Pain that was always there, but couldn’t be healed. Invisible. Constant.

Finally, Arthur told her to speak with Knight-Captain and dismissed her.

Andrea nodded and left without saying a word. Her mind was in a total haze when she walked through the hallways of the airship, making her way to the gym by instinct. She didn’t even notice others as they congratulated her for her successful mission.

Just before she reached the door of the gym, a familiar figure approached her.

Fox said, “Andrea, I want—”

“Not now,” she said, averting Fox’s gaze and closed the door behind her.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Well, next chapter is not going to be any easier... *pushes Andrea closer to the edge* Thanks for reading.
Subject: Medical File MX-928I [Ongoing]

Initiate has refused to speak about her feelings, but when I questioned why she spends her time at the gym, she answered she wants to get stronger. So that she could kill Unknown. She does not keep in touch with her friends or engage in social activities. I’m considering giving her a temporary ban to the gym, but I need your approval.

Her symptoms indicate a mental trauma in which the patient experiences emotional numbness. Emotional numbing is the mental and emotional process of shutting out feelings, protecting from further emotional or physical pain. I believe her PTSD is getting worse. The patient has refused to take medication, referring to a poor experience, and I can’t force her to take them.

Is there a possibility you could talk to her? As a friend and doctor, I am worried. And she listens to you.

Shit, Arthur thought after reading the doctor’s message.

He didn’t want to lose his soldiers because of mental problems, though it was unavoidable. Being on the airship or battlefield were harmful to anyone — even for someone like Brandis and Andrea.

But in her case? Arthur didn’t want to lose her. Andrea was one of their best soldiers. Hell, she and Danse should be Sentinels by now. But Andrea loved her job as Initiate, as a minder of Squires.

Then knock on his door brought him back to reality.

“Come in,” he said and turned to look over his shoulder.

Speak of the devil.

Andrea shut the door, and Arthur managed to hide his message just in the nick of time.

“What’s wrong?” he asked after seeing her troubled face.

“Arthur, they’ll hold the funerals today. General and Nick talked Hancock over, so Danse and I have permission to attend the funerals in Goodneighbor.”
“I don’t know,” he answered. “Unknown just shot two of your friends there. This might be what he wants.”

“He could shoot me whenever he wants. Don’t take this opportunity from me. I couldn’t attend the funerals of my best friend and husband. Let me see them. One last time,” she begged. “Please...”

His eyes searched her face, reaching into her thoughts.

*She cares about Duncan... Andrea told her son would be Duncan’s age now.*

Arthur turned his attention back to the terminal.

“I will inform Danse,” he announced, his gaze once more focused on his computer.

Andrea nodded, taking the letter and gently brushed back of his hand with her fingers.

“Why you don’t want to talk about them?” Arthur asked suddenly.

“Why should I? Isn’t it the way we soldiers should deal with death? We can’t change what it is, so we keep it light until it’s time to get dark. And then... we get pitch black,” Andrea said, and then her expression darkened with an unreadable emotion. “That is what they taught me.”

“We aren’t Enclave. I care about my crew and the people of the Commonwealth,” Arthur stated and grabbed her hand. “You shouldn’t carry the weight of the dead on your shoulders. Being a survivor means many things. One of them is to accept the sacrifices of the dead and carry on their wills.”

Maybe he said it to himself too.

With a small smile on her lips, Andrea raised her hand and ran her fingertips over his cheek.

“Thank you,” she said.

________________________________________

Their vertibird landed to the entrance of Goodneighbor and Danse told pilot return back to Airport.

After stepping inside the town, Andrea gazed empty Kill or Be Killed and Daisy’s Discount. She still could hear Duncan’s voice or thought she heard. Damn ghosts, why they wouldn’t leave her alone.

Danse stopped his movement as he noticed he walked alone.

“Adams?” Danse called her.

“I can still hear them,” Andrea whispered, gazing Daisy’s Discount. “I’ve... I’ve somehow got used to losing soldiers, but they were both still children.”

“Andrea... He didn’t deserve this, but MacCready knew the risks.”

“He killed Duncan,” Andrea said while thinking assassin. “That man doesn’t have a heart, he... Even if Duncan’s father was mercenary, he didn’t—”

A man touched her cheek with his exoskeleton hand, moving her eyes to his. He could calm her with his presence. At least he was with her.

“Thank you for coming with me,” Andrea said.
“You’re welcome. We’ll continue when you’re ready,” Danse said, encouraging her with a small smile of his.

Andrea nodded and straightened her back.

*Be brave,* she thought.

Andrea gestured him to follow her, but her heart sunk as she saw two coffins in front of an old hotel. She felt how her bravery flew out of the window.

Andrea sighed deeply and noticed Nick, Hancock and Daisy standing further. Even Piper, General Pierret and Preston were here. And of course, Deacon was here too.

“Hancock, I am deeply sorry and... thank you for letting me come here,” she greeted a ghoul.

“Hm. It required a lot of persuasions, but I guess I did it for them,” Hancock muttered, glancing coffins.

“You managed to come here, kid,” Nick said, little relieved. “And Paladin, too. I thought you weren’t his friend.”

“I’m here as her friend. Though that doesn’t mean that I’m obliged to report to you, synth,” Danse said firmly.

Andrea sighed. “Nick… Danse, not now.”

“I apologise,” Danse said.

“Me too, Sherlock.”

“Did you find anything else?” Andrea asked synth while staring coffins.

“Eyewitnesses said that shot came from fallen sky bridge,” the synth responded, pointing broken sky bridge above them. “Two clean and precise shot. No hesitation. I have to say this, but professional did this. No wonder why Enclave used him as an assassin.”

Andrea bridled and said, “That doesn’t matter. I’ll deal with him.”

“Kid, don’t put yourself into danger...”

“No, this is personal. Brotherhood and Minutemen can deal with the Institute; I am here to kill him.”

A man named Rufus lighted up their final resting place after coating wood logs with gasoline. Andrea stood close to them, staring coffins intensely but she moved her gaze to the ghoul who walked to her. Then she glanced at Nick and Danse, who spoke further.

“Is she alright?” Nick asked, and Paladin glanced the synth.

“What do you mean by that?”

“She looks weary as if all her energy has been taken out of her. Is she sleeping and eating properly? How long has this been going on?”

“Few weeks. After the Castle and Institute,” Danse answered shortly.
Nick stared at his profile and narrowed his eyes. “Is he treating her well? I do know about their relationship.”

“Listen to me, synth. *That* isn’t your concern,” Danse said, raising his voice.

“I asked, is he treating her well, hm? Hopefully, he isn’t a reason for her fatigue.”

“No, he’s not. He is the one who denied her second trip to Glowing Sea and her infiltration to the Institute. He wouldn’t do anything bad to her.”

Piper called Nick, but they couldn’t hear her.

“For your information, she has friends outside of your organisation. Who are worried about her. I’m just a synth, but I’ve personality and memories of pre-war police. I know everything about humane feelings,” Nick said sternly, stressing word humane.

“To me, you’re nothing more than—”

“Nick, Danse,” Piper exclaimed, interrupting their argue.

Both men glanced reporter and then Andrea, who stared them with a stern-faced expression and shook her head.

“I hope they found Lucy in the afterlife,” Daisy said with her hoarse voice. Her voice moved Andrea’s attention back to the ghoul.

“They will find her,” Andrea said. “And I’ll find him, Daisy. I’ll make him pay.”

“Sweetheart, don’t do this to yourself. RJ wouldn’t want that.”

“He is dead because of that assassin. I’ll take him down before he kills someone else.”

Daisy remained silent for a moment.

“I had to keep my husband’s funerals without his body, and ever since I’ve questioned would it had been easier with him. But now, I know. It wouldn’t have been easier,” she said and touched Andrea’s shoulder. “Now I have to witness funerals of those who had a life ahead of them. Don’t follow them.”

Andrea found herself staring her shoes and heard Daisy leave, but she returned after a few minutes and gave her something. Andrea recognised an object in ghoul’s hand and took it, her hand trembling a little bit.

Pip-Boy.

Someone had tried to clean it, but Andrea noticed a few blood stains on it. While examining the machine, Andrea smiled a little bit. Duncan had defeated hers and Fox’s scores. She lifted her gaze to the small coffin and sighed, her breath whimpering a little bit. After staring his coffin for a while, Andrea threw Pip-Boy next to the boy. Maybe she wanted to send it to Duncan.

To her, it was nothing more than a memory of Vault 111.

“Colonel Garvey?”

“Go on,” Preston said, answering to his radio on his shoulder strap.
“Uh, you asked us to keep an eye on hostiles. I think we saw a man wearing a leather jacket and goggles...”

Andrea’s eyes widened, and she turned to look over her shoulder.

Preston asked, “Where did you saw him?”

“We’re coming back from Finch Farm when we heard a gunfight at the Revere Beach Station. He killed a bunch of raiders on his way towards the south. We did... kzzzhh...”


“Something or someone is interfering radio channels. I can’t get touch with lieutenant or The Castle,” Preston explained while monitoring his radio. “Radio Freedom is down, and so is Diamond City Radio.”

“What?”

“This is the only thing what I hear,” Preston said and turned his radio on the loudspeaker.

‘...is true, but it is not the whole truth. We are the future. Our superior technology represents the future of the Commonwealth. Today, we activate our nuclear reactor, ensuring that we’ll persevere long after the world above ground has ceased to exist. Ensuring that mankind has a future...’

“Shaun?” Andrea whispered, slowly walking back to others as she recognised his voice.

“That’s...What are you doing, Shaun?”

“It is on every radio channel, General.”

‘...unimportant details of your daily lives. We simply ask that you do not interfere with Institute operations. To do so would result in dire consequences. You may rest easy. Know that the future is in safe hands, that mankind will thrive under our guidance.’

Then the transmission stopped.

Andrea’s brows drew together. Nuclear reactor? What the hell he was doing? Her thoughts were broken when one of the Goodneighbour’s spotters called them.

“Hey! I think I saw something, General!” the scout shouted. “Those red SOS flares of yours were fired from The Castle!”

Pierret winced instantly, and her rosy-pale skin turned white. Her emerald coloured eyes were dilated with fear. It was something Andrea hadn’t seen yet.

“—They’re calling backup. Everyone back to bird!” General said.

Andrea thought about her dad, but her eyes widened in alarm when she realised they weren’t the only ones who were under the attack.

“Revere Beach Station... The south...”

Danse mouth opened, and his eyes widened. “The Airport.”

The Observation Deck
“What’s the situation with Liberty Prime?” Arthur asked Kells.

“Good. After the arrival of Professor Scara, things have started to speed up. Ingram said that her work on the project has saved months of work in just a few days. They have put together his torso and head, and scribes are now working on actuators. According to Ingram, it shouldn’t take long. But let’s not keep hopes too high. There are always obstacles.”

“How about security?”

“As you ordered, Anderson doubled security of Airport, just in case if the Institute tries to sabotage our projects. He is down there as we speak.”

“Good. Tell—” Arthur was interrupted by a sudden yelling.

A sound came from Flight Deck.

One of their guards yelled at someone, telling them to identify themself. After that, they heard a bone-chilling scream as if someone would have been thrown over the edge.

With instinct, Arthur and Kells took their weapons when the door opened and a dark figure entered into Command Deck. Someone who didn’t belong there.

*He had dark clothes, boots and a leather jacket, and covered his face with a scarf and goggles. He was muscular, about 5’9 feet, bald...*

A man fitting into description of Unknown Soldier arrived at the Command Deck and stopped at the doorway, glaring the duo behind his goggles. The power armoured guard on the door took his laser rifle and went bravely to face assassin though he knew who he was. Superiors witnessed how assassin took the laser rifle from the man like a toy from a child, beat him and tossed him down to the Control Room of the airship.

A loud explosion was heard from the Control Room, immediately followed by screams of panic and pain. He had dropped grenades along with the guard. For a second, everyone on the airship felt how gigantic beast tilted downward.

The assassin turned his head back towards windows, staring his target. They heard the backup coming from the Main Deck, but assassin pulled out a few grenades more and threw them upstairs.

The man wasn’t far away from the Observation Deck when he reached something under his leather jacket. However, the sound of running prevented his act. Before he could turn around, someone punched him to the face and slammed him into the doorframe of Observation Deck.

Andrea threw him towards Flight Deck’s door with a modified version of Judos’ floating throw, trying to keep him away from superiors. Still, it wasn’t enough as assassin got up quickly and attacked her. Assassin pulled out his knife while pushing Initiate against steel wall behind her and tried to hit her head with the blade.

She avoided a strike when hostile was pulled away from her by Danse. But assassin freed himself from Paladin’s hold, dropped him down with ease, and tried to kick Danse. And Paladin hadn’t his helmet this time.

Andrea, however, deflected the assassin’s attack by going between them. She swiped at the assassin, but he ducked and easily avoided the attack. When he tried to stab her again, a single gunshot interrupted him.
Andrea recognised it as .44 magnum — Arthur’s revolver.

Bullet dropped down as it hit the field and Unknown threw Andrea against the steel wall of Command Deck. At first, she felt how she knocked her forehead against the wall, then how Unknown pressed her against it and kept her steady with his body.

Andrea saw how he unholstered her 10mm from the thigh holster, and with single finger move, he released the safety. Like in slowed film, Andrea watched how he pointed a gun at Arthur.

“No!” she screamed and tried to stop the assassin. “Arthur, get the fuck out of here!”

But Arthur was too petrified to do anything. Just like in her dream, Andrea heard a single gunshot that echoed inside steel room like a clap of thunder, sending her into the real despair this time, when the bullet tore its way through Arthur’s chest to his heart.

One second of their life felt like an hour, when Danse and Andrea stood there petrified, staring how his best friend and her beloved — someone who they should have protected with their lives, died.

Then it finally hit her.

She had failed. The man she loved was killed in front of her by the same man who murdered Duncan. In her moment of horror, Andrea felt that she had lost everything — any reason to live.

Long agonising seconds passed before someone smashed the front door of Flight Deck open, but Andrea didn’t care. In a few seconds, she couldn’t hear them, Danse or Kells who tried to save Arthur. She only heard a sound of faint, thumping heartbeat inside her head and then the silence as she stared how the love of her life bled away.

Andrea knew what it predicted, what was about to happen but didn’t care. The reality began to slip away, and she let it happen.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: *shoves Andrea over the edge and ponders what happens next and if she's okay.*

Chapters named after Shiro Sagisu’s Cometh The Hour. *cough* Yui Ikari and Vasto Lorde Ichigo *cough*

Thanks for reading.
Andrea, stop!

Andrea’s eye flew open as she jumped up in bed. She looked around her, wondering where she was. Then she recognised the place — the infirmary of the Airport.

She looked down as an unpleasant smell filled her nostrils, and her eyes widened in horror. She was covered in dry blood and filth. But she didn’t feel any pain. Whose blood was it? Did she kill someone? She didn’t have any memory of it.

Andrea noticed she was handcuffed to the bed rail. What the hell had she done? Then suddenly she had flashbacks of the funerals, Shaun’s speech and lastly Arthur’s death.

“Arthur…” His name escaped her lips as an inaudible whisper.

Fresh, restrained tears filled her eyes and streaked down her face as she thought about him and MacCready’s. Why did God bring her back to reality where she didn’t want to be?

He’s alive.

“Danse?” she whispered, and her eyebrows bunched together.

His voice, even though Andrea didn’t know, was it real, it gave her hope. And that last strain of hope made her get out of bed.

She had to find Arthur.

Andrea picked the lock of handcuff with needle and stood up, slightly trembling.

She walked to the curtain and pushed it aside to look around. No one wasn’t around. Without even knowing where to look for Arthur, she strolled around the infirmary.

Then she saw two Paladin standing in front of an old coffee shop.

It had to be Arthur’s room. If he was alive…
She had no memory of Danse saying ‘he is alive.’ Was it just her imagination?

But if those two were there, then... But how? It was impossible. No one can survive a bullet through the heart.

No, she had to find him. And considering the fact, she had been handcuffed, and her outfit was full of someone’s blood, Brotherhood didn’t trust her now. She just had to find her way into that room through ruins of the Airport.

Scampering, Andrea made her way to the door she guessed would lead her to the staff’s area. Most of the entrances were blocked or crushed under the ruins. However, there was one door that could lead her to Arthur.

Andrea pushed the door, but it moved only a few inches. The door seemed to be blocked from the other side.

“Move, you son of—” she said, pushing it with all strength and willpower she had left. “You won’t...stop me...”

What was the point of all those push-ups and strength training, or steroids, if she couldn’t move one door and concretes behind it.

“If you can’t move this fucking door, how you think you can beat him!?” she asked herself, thinking Unknown.

No! Arthur, get the fuck out of here!

Andrea clenched her teeth together and pressed her back against the door. Then she lifted her foot against the opposite wall so she could use her leg muscles.

Suddenly, she felt the door and concrete rubble on the other side moving.

“Just... A little more,” she said, pushing the door with all her might.

She gasped as the door, and rubbles finally gave up, and she crawled through the ruins. Hoping the ruins wouldn’t crush her.

At the other side, Andrea noticed she had awakened ferals who had slept there since the bombs were dropped.

She took a rusty steel rod from the rubble and turned to face the ferals, hissing with her deep, raspy voice, “Get the hell out of my way.”

Andrea dropped the bloody steel rod to the floor after she had killed the ferals and let out a relieved sigh as she found the backdoor of an old coffee shop. She shook the handle, noticing the door was locked, and this time she just kicked it open.

That’s how we do it in the Brotherhood, Andrea thought, quoting Danse who went through the doors by smashing them with his power armour.

Andrea walked through the kitchen, and the closer she got the room, the more nervous she was. What if it was just his body?

Another locked door. This time she couldn’t kick it open because of his guards. Instead, she used tools that she found from the kitchen and opened the lock.
Then she opened the door and felt her heart skipping a beat.

Twenty-eight dead. That was the end result after the Institute had attacked the Airport and Prydwen. Even though they got their Elder, they weren’t able to sabotage Prime and to destroy the Airport. All thanks went to Anderson’s men and his leadership.

Danse ran his hand through his hair and walked around the Airship, trying to clear his head. It had been a few days since the attack, but most of the crew hadn’t recovered yet from it. They were in shock, angry and sad because of the deaths of their brothers and sisters.

Danse glanced one of their Knight-Sergeants who sat on the chair, his head wrapped in bandages, covering his eye. He had been one of those who had gone to help Logistics when the attack occurred. And yet, even though he had a power armour, he lost his eye and leg to Courser.

Danse bypassed him, squeezing his shoulder gently and wandered towards the bow of the Airship.

He walked to Observation Deck and stood there a while, staring at the floor. He still saw small drops of blood on the floor.

*How did I let that happen? I should have tried to save him,* Danse thought.

It was his job. One of their tasks was to follow Elder’s order and protect him. No. He wanted to protect him because he was his friend. And he didn’t have many friends.

Weight of his conscience and feeling of guilt seemed to drag him down, sinking like a stone inside him. Danse clenched his hands into fists — trembling, furious fists.

If assassin tries to hurt Arthur or Andrea again, he’ll kill him himself. Then he returned to reality when one of their Initiates opened the door of Flight Deck and walked inside.

“The floor should be all clean now, sir. I’ll try to clean the Main Deck,” Initiate said.

Danse sighed and said, “Go to sleep, Initiate. That’s an order.”

The Flight Deck was now completely silent and deserted except for two Paladin who guarded now the entrance. Danse greeted his colleagues and stepped down the stairs as he examined the floor with his eyes.

There were no signs of blood, Initiate had done an excellent job, but there were still traces of fight. He recognised long, thin lines on the steel floor and crouched down to touch them. They reminded him of what happened and of a moment when the whole Airport was in chaos.

*Right after Unknown had shot Arthur,* Danse saw Coursers appearing through the door, and he instinctively grabbed his gun.

*But then he heard a muffled voice.*

*Unknown was thrown against the railing of stairs, and he fell down to Control Room. Then in the blink of the eye, Andrea attacked Coursers in a blind rage, kicking one down and smashed another against the floor.*

*She was fast.*

*Andrea drew her knife from the sheath and stabbed Coursers’ head repeatedly. Then her attention moved to other Courser when it shot her with a laser rifle. Her suit was tough enough to deflect*
fusion cells.

She unholstered her second pistol and aimed it at Courser. Just as soon as the bullets penetrated its skull, its brains and blood painted the wall of Command Deck.

One of the Courser attacked her with hand to hand, but she blocked its attack and overpowered it with ease. Andrea smashed synths head against the floor repeatedly, but it didn’t even let out a sound as she crushed its skull.

Danse turned his head as he heard steps and noticed Unknown running outside. Andrea hissed like an animal, and she ran after him like a predator.

“Adams!” Danse called her, but then someone attacked him.

Courser.

Danse was stunned by its speed and power. It threw him to the floor and grabbed his throat. However, his T-60 gave him significant strength boost, so he was able to move its hand, but he didn’t know how long.

He detected Courser’s silhouette and aimed his punch to its head, but it less cared about it. It grasped his hand and pushed it away with force. He felt the synths fingers on his throat, but then something happened.

Someone appeared behind Courser and hit it with something. Danse grunted when its blood spilt on his face, and his face winced in disgust. Then he pushed the body of Courser away and glanced his saviour.

“Are you okay, Danse?” Haylen asked, holding her hunting knife.

“Yes,” Danse answered, wiping the blood off his face but heard screaming from outside. “Could you bring some sedative medicine?”

“Paladin?”

“I don’t have time to explain. Get it now,” Danse ordered as he stood up.

Then he glanced Arthur when Cade yelled at someone to bring the 14 gauge bore needle.

Confused thoughts raced through Danse’s head. Was he alive? Then another scream interrupted his thoughts, and he hurried to the door.

He halted for a moment when he witnessed again a pure, raw strength of someone who had lost their mind. Bodies of four Courser lay on the Flight Deck, and their blood covered the floor and the railings of deck. What horrified Danse, even more, was that the view reminded him of Cutler before he transformed.

Andrea was on top of someone, swinging her machete repeatedly. She kept smashing and smashing, even though there wasn’t anything left from Courser’s head except a bloody mass of skulls fragments, organs and brain juice. She screamed like a demon-possessed animal.

“Andrea, stop!”

Andrea stopped, staying in the same position for a quite long time. Then she lowered her machete and swung her head around to look at him. The blood ran down her face, falling like a red rain of
blood to the floor and her eyes were dark and angry.

She stood up, shaking, but didn’t let go of her weapon.

Two other soldiers appeared to the Flight Deck, raising their guns. “Get down on the floor!”

“Weapons down!” Danse ordered.

Danse saw Andrea staggering toward him, and one of their Knights walked in front of him.

“I said weapons down, Knight,” Danse said, shoving the soldier aside.

Andrea was one of theirs. She had just lost her mind after seeing something traumatic. Unlike in Cutler’s case, she could be brought back. Danse couldn’t lose anyone else.

“Paladin Danse!” Haylen called him. “I brought you what you asked for.”

Danse ignored his subordinate for now and walked toward his friend.

“Andrea, put down your weapon,” he said.

She clutched her machete tighter and glared three soldiers behind Danse.

“Andrea.” Her eyes locked on his. “He is fine.”

She took another step towards him. Danse heard others readying their weapons behind him but gestured once again them to stand down.

“Arthur is fine,” Danse said to her.

Andrea took another step but then stopped, gazing him.

“The is taking care of him. Arthur is still here with us. He is alive. Trust me.”

And she was still there somewhere. That sad and a little lost Andrea was still there somewhere.

“Drop your weapon, soldier. Arthur wouldn’t want to see you like this.”

Andrea twirled the machete in her hand, hesitating.

“No one’s going to hurt him. He’s safe. You made sure of it.”

Clank.

She let go of machete, and it fell to the steel floor.

Danse walked over to Andrea and touched her shoulder softly. With the other hand, he lifted her gaze to his and gently wiped the blood away from her face, revealing her freckles and wrinkles.

“Andrea, Haylen is going to give you something sedative. She isn’t going to hurt you, Arthur or me. She’s here to help.”

Andrea glanced Scribe who appeared to the scene, but Danse called her and pleaded her to look at him. Then she let Scribe inject a full dose of medicine to her neck.

“She isn’t reacting. It should—"
Andrea... It’s okay,” Danse said. “We’re safe now.”

Andrea parted her lips, trying to speak, but instead, she glanced at him one last time before anaesthetic overtook her body. Then she slumped forward as she lost consciousness and Danse caught her before she fell to the floor.

“Go help Cade, Haylen.”

Andrea woke up and glanced around her in panic. She was still at the infirmary, sitting beside Arthur’s bed. She took a few breaths and looked at Arthur, who slept (hopefully) peacefully.

Studying him, she stared a tube that ran into his arm, a wire that was attached to his chest and a clear blue plastic oxygen mask on his face.

Then Andrea stared a gunshot wound on his chest. It was unbelievable to see so important and strong man looking so weak and helpless. But here he was, still alive. Andrea couldn’t understand how.

But then she shook her head. He was there with her now.

“I’m here, dear,” Andrea whispered and played with his shaggy beard.

But when the door swung open, Andrea stood up so quickly that she knocked her chair over backwards.

It was Cade.

This time the doctor had an amused look on his face that turned into a laugh. “That.. was familiar. Elder has done the same thing. How did you get in here?”

“Uh, I,” Andrea faltered and half-glanced the door to the kitchen.

“Where there’s a will, there’s a way, huh?” the doctor said, smiling, but it vanished when the guards entered into the room.

“You shouldn’t be here, Initiate. I’ll have to ask you to leave,” the guard said.

Andrea burrowed her brows together, confused. “What?”

“Only medical personnel is allowed to enter into this room. Orders of Anderson. So I have to ask you to leave.”

“I’m not leaving him,” Andrea said.

“Initiate, that’s an order!”

“I heard it loud and clear, sir, but I said I’m not leaving him!” Andrea yelled back at her commanding officer.

She didn’t care about her reputation or how she should have acted as a soldier. If they wanted her to leave, they would have to remove her by force.

Paladin grabbed her arm and held it up.

Andrea punched him in the face, and his nose began gushing blood.
“I’m not going anywhere!” she yelled.

“Initiate!” the second guard said as the other one held his bleeding nose.

Then Paladin-Commander came into the room. “What’s going on?”

“Initiate refuses to follow the orders she is given and punched a commanding officer.”

A man with salt and pepper hair glanced officers and then Andrea, saying, “Adams, come before something else happens.”

“No.”

Anderson walked over to her and regarded her sharply.

“That’s an order. Why put yourself in a worse position than you are in right now?”

“I’m not leaving him when murderous asshole almost killed him!” Andrea stated and backed away when Anderson tried to restrain her.

“Adams, don’t—”

“Let...go of her...” someone said, interrupting him and grabbed Commander’s hand.

They all shifted their gaze to the bed. Arthur barely could keep his eyes open, but still, he managed to speak.

“Elder?”

“Everyone,” he continued and raised his hand toward his face, trying to remove the oxygen mask. “…else leaves this room... except for Adams and Cade.”

Anderson and Arthur had a staring contest, but then Commander let go of Andrea. With a wave of his arm, he called others to follow him out of the room and closed the door behind him.

Andrea turned her head to look at Arthur as he tried to move on the bed.

“Hey, hey... Don’t move,” she said.

“I don’t need—” Arthur replied but coughed uncontrollably and held his chest.

“She’s right. You’re lung shot, Elder,” Cade said suddenly. “You might be on the world of the living but don’t test those lungs of yours.”

Andrea put the oxygen mask back on Arthur’s face.

“Don’t test your luck. Please,” she whispered and flashed him a smile.

Arthur studied her face with his eyes and finally, closed them. Andrea kissed him on the forehead and then walked over to the doctor.

“How in the hell he survived? Unknown shot him straight to the heart.”

“Dextrocardia,” Cade answered. “A rare heart condition in which heart points toward the right side instead of the left side. Unknown thought he was shooting him in the heart, but instead, his bullet hit his left lung.”
“Oh my god,” Andrea whispered and buried her face in her hands.

“May I talk to you, Adams? In private?” the doctor asked.

Andrea glanced at the door suspiciously, thinking the guards.

Then Cade continued, “Don’t worry. They won’t test Elder’s patience, and they will follow his orders to the letter.”

He gestured her to go first, and the doctor closed the door behind them.

Then Andrea asked, “You wanted to talk?”

“Do you remember anything that happened after Unknown shot him?”

“No, I don’t. What did I do?”

“You killed seven Coursers that infiltrated Prydwen. According to Paladin Danse and Scribe Haylen, you weren’t yourself. Don’t you remember anything about it?”

Andrea rubbed her temples, trying to remember what happened, but then she shook her head.

“I just... lost my mind and I didn’t even try to stop it. After Arthur fell and I thought he died, I just wanted to kill Unknown. I didn’t even care about the consequences. I let it take control over me and...” Andrea sighed. “Pre-war doctors called it berserk.”

“Humans can go berserk. It happens when a mind crosses the line and person gains strength, speed and resistance, but with a high cost. They might lose their self-preservation instincts and might do reckless things. But it’s the last resource, and we have it mentally blocked. But it’s more common among steroid users.”

“Maybe that was their experiment’s goal,” Andrea stated, shrugging. “The U.S. wanted to create intelligent super-soldiers by any means; Nordlinger’s work, FEV... People died.”

*Unknown survived and he has everything; speed, strength, endurance and intelligence,* Andrea thought and unawares, she began to pace slowly back and forth. *For some reason, he doesn’t suffer from the side effects of steroids. He’s perfect. But why SecDef sent me to Vault?*

“Adams,” the doctor called her. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. I was just... thinking,” she answered. “What happened then?”

“Danse spoke to you and calmed you down.”

“It has never happened before,” Andrea said. “Last time, one of ours had to knock me down. They said Nate and even Roger tried to talk me, to calm me down, but I didn’t hear them.

“But you heard Danse?” Cade asked.

“He’s the first one who has pulled me back from that darkness,” Andrea whispered.

Maybe he was able to pull her back from that void because he doesn’t judge or fear her as others do.

“If you can hear him in that state, it means you have cemented the bond of trust with him,” Cade said, rubbing his chin. “I suggest we start cognitive-behavioural therapy, considering your
intermittent explosive disorder. Also...

The doctor took something from his office and continued, “here’s a flight suit, a male size, of course. Change your clothes; your current suit is... painted.”

“Zombyish. Remember, it was Halloween when the world ended,” Andrea said, smiling a little. “Thanks, Dwight.”

Arthur was sleeping like a log as Andrea returned to the room, and she kissed him gently on his lips. She changed her clothes and made a mental note to thank Cade again for giving her a black version of the flight suit.

She let the water wash away the blood off her suit and thought should people praise or fear her for what she did. Then a sound of wheezy cough brought her back to reality, and Andrea noticed Arthur had awakened.

As he tried to sit up, Andrea shushed and pushed him back.

“You need to sleep,” Andrea said to him. Then she smiled because for once he did what he was told.

“I’m here. I’m never letting you out of my sight again,” Andrea whispered and stroked his hair, pulling it back from his forehead. “Because like in a game of chess, the queen protects the king.”

Arthur stared at her, studying her face, and then he moved his hand to reach his oxygen mask.

Andrea was about to put it back as he removed it, but then he asked something that immobilised her.

“Will you marry me?”

Chapter End Notes

A/N: You should have gone for the head... My headcanon is Cutler lost his mind during a transformation, so Danse didn't want to go through the same kind of incident. (⌣‿⌣) Anyway, what did you thought about Arthur's condition, or about what he asked or what Andrea did?

And as usual, I would like to know what you think about this story and is there anything in my writing or story that I could improve before the story ends. I would appreciate it.

Thanks for reading!
Chapter Summary

Relay is finally ready.

Chapter Notes

A/N: I’m back. Hiatus and hiding are over. And I’m genuinely sorry for the delay. So what has happened? What did I do? I deleted three chapters and rewrote all remaining ones, and thus +44,000 words disappeared. My story was quite cringey and I didn't like it so I had to make changes.

I made significant changes to scenes and dialogues, but I also altered a storyline a little; Unknown killed Sarah and her team and Roger was murdered because of “the bloodline”.

And I changed the name of the story. The name ‘Silver Bullet’ wasn't good, and I disliked it. I renamed my story after Mumford & Sons song *Ghosts That We Knew*. I’ll reveal why after the story is done.

Chapters are now a lot shorter and ‘easier’ to read. Beware, the story is still full of angst and typos.

Let’s go!

Liberty Prime.

It had been the pride of her former, now deceased commander General Chase.

Andrea pondered would Chase be proud of it now.

After all, he was the one who commissioned a project to build it and blabbed about it all the time. Andrea could still remember his endless speeches about how Prime would help the U.S. liberate Alaska from Chinese.

But Chase’s pride never saw a day on the battlefield, and more protracted and more costly battle liberated Anchorage.

And now it stood right in front of her.

Andrea sat on the railing of Ingram’s workshop and took a deep drag off the cigarette. As she stared at Prime, she thought about someone who would hate the Brotherhood’s decision to use it.

“He probably rolls in his grave,” she said, blowing the smoke out of her lungs.
“Who?” Ingram asked.

“Roger. He despised nuclear weapons after terrorists destroyed Israel with nukes in the 2050s. His father was at the Tel Aviv when it happened,” Andrea explained. “Did Brotherhood find Prime from Pentagon?”

“Yup. We salvaged and brought him into service after we had discovered him in the basement of the destroyed Pentagon.”

“Brought to service?” Andrea asked frowning. “Brotherhood has used it?”

“Liberty Prime helped the Brotherhood in the war against the Enclave ten years ago, but Enclave destroyed it with an orbital warhead bombardment.”

“What?” Andrea asked again. “Enclave had orbital warheads and a working satellite after two centuries?! Jesus Christ...” she scoffed, and looked at Prime. “Is he ready?”

“No. It still requires a tremendous amount of energy to operate, but we have found a solution to that problem,” Ingram said. “And Andreson sent a team to the Glowing Sea to find his weapons. So Prime will be ready soon.”

“Wrentham,” Andrea muttered after a silence, the lit cigarette at her lips and stared scribes who hustled around the robot. “That might explain the location of Glowing Sea’s crater. Enemies targeted Sentinel Site Prescott.”

Then she realised she talked herself and dropped from the railing, saying, “I have disturbed you enough.”

“No, not at all,” Ingram said. “And thanks to you, we did learn about the Sentinel Site before we even needed it.”

“No problem. The sooner this war is over, the better,” Andrea murmured and tossed her cigarette over the railing. “Do you know where B.J. is?”

“On guard duty. It shouldn’t be hard to find one giant bald man.”

And like Ingram had stated, it wasn’t hard to find him. Andrea found Ortiz from Logistic, smoking on guard duty.

“Hey, BJ,” Andrea said as she walked over to him. “I didn’t know you smoke.”

“I don’t but sometimes yes, especially during times of loss,” B.J. answered and dumped his cigarette in the ashtray. “You have something on your mind?”

“When you spent time with Kari, do you ever think of Eve?” Andrea asked, meaning his deceased wife.

The question seemed to take the man by surprise. He turned around to look at her abruptly and gave her an odd look.

“I mean... I’ve got a feeling you know how I feel...” she said, “It’s hard to love two men at the same time.”

“Give it time, Andrea. You just lost your spouse and fell in love again. We may never get over the loss of a loved one, and believe me, it’s hard not to compare your new love to the previous one.”
“Those two are carved from the same tree. It’s hard not to compare them,” Andrea whispered, crossing her arms. Then she glanced around her and looked back to Ortiz. “He proposed to me last night.”

Ortiz looked even more surprised. “What did you answer?”

“Nothing. I froze, and I left him alone after that,” Andrea answered and lowered her gaze to the floor. “I feel bad about it, but I couldn’t give him the answer.”

“But you didn’t say ‘no’?” Ortiz asked.

“In any other case, I would have screamed ‘yes’, but it wasn’t the right time for the proposal. Arthur shouldn’t make any hasty decisions.”

“Knowing him, he doesn’t make hasty decisions. Would be bad for Elder, or any leader.”

Andrea smiled faintly. That was true.

“Speaking of which, where’s Prince?” she asked. “I thought leadership of Brotherhood would pass to Star Paladin as there is no Sentinel.”

“Prince is...” Ortiz said, darkness shadowing his face.

“B.J.?” Andrea asked.

“Without a radio connection, we couldn’t call back up. Institute attacked the weakest first — Logistics division. They took more casualties than we did: Lucia, Clarke, DeShannon...” Ortiz explained, gazing the survivors. “Then Institute attacked the perimeter and Prydwen.”

He stayed quiet for a moment before he looked back to Andrea.

“The reason why Star Paladin isn’t here is... Our princess... She’s gone.”

And only one person held a title princess in Brotherhood.

“No. Not her...No....” Andrea whispered, her voice and body trembling. Then she turned around and ran outside.

“Andrea!” Ortiz yelled. “Wait!”

Andrea ran to the ruins of the Airport, heading toward the office of a signal corps.

The man sitting in the office turned to look at her as she opened the door and stepped inside.

“Move,” Andrea said to radioman.

“What?” Knight-Sergeant asked, confused.

“I said, move!” Andrea hissed and took off his headphones.

The higher-ranking soldier stood up and gave her space.

Andrea took the 6-pin microphone and cursed, trying to find radio channel of Radio Freedom.

“Um,” Knight-Sergeant said, and Andrea glanced him.

“Here,” he said and chose a channel for her. Then he continued, “I’ll go.”
“Does The Castle reply?” she asked, speaking to the microphone after the man had left.

“This is Sergeant Ethans. Is this—” a voice answered.

“Where is my father?”

Agonising silence fell between, and Andrea feared the worst. Then she heard faint footsteps.

“Andrea?” a hoarse voice asked.

“Oh God...” she said and fell to the floor after hearing his voice. “I thought... I thought you were dead too...”

“Andrea, are you okay?” Jonathan asked worriedly. “Honey? Do I have to come there?”

“No. I just... wanted to hear your voice,” Andrea replied and turned off the ham radio.

Then she broke and began to cry, giant sobs of grief and pain. She cried so hard she thought she would never stop.

“Stef...” Andrea said, hoping she could hear her. “I’m so sorry...”

She sat on the floor, crying and hugged her legs until someone appeared to the room and sat down beside her.

“Come here,” Danse said gently and held her while she cried.

“Why God doesn’t take me!?” Andrea asked. “Why Stefanie... Why Duncan...”

She hadn’t cried like this in a long time. She had tried to keep her emotions at bay, but now she had to let it all out. It felt good.

After her sobs had turned into sniffles and she had calmed down, she lay down and rested her head on Danse’s leg.

They were quiet for a while or longer, but it was okay. Danse's presence calmed her.

Then Andrea broke the silence.

“I don’t know what I’ll do if I lose you too,” she whispered, but loud enough so that Danse could hear her.

“You won’t lose me. But you know that I have to go to the Institute. It’s my choice,” Danse said, stroking her hair. “I don’t want to send anyone else there. I don’t want to lose anyone of you. I don’t want to lose you, Arthur, Rhys, Haylen...”

Andrea closed her eyes and sat up. Then she turned to look at him and said, “Thank you for being here for me... and saving me from my inner demon.”

“I’ve already lost Cutler because of that same demon — rage. I couldn’t let that happen again.”

Andrea smiled and touched his cheek.

“You and Arthur, you both are alike. You both love monsters,” she said and then touched his hand.

“The Institute has taken enough people from me,” she continued. “Don’t stay there longer than a
few minutes. They can’t teleport inside the building.”

“Don’t worry,” Danse said. “I don’t plan on dying anytime soon.”

“Damn! Total system shutdown. We’re going to have to recalibrate and try again,” Ingram hissed and kicked Control Console with her exoskeleton leg. “An old piece of shit.”

Andrea stared the signal interceptor, and blue, sparking light top of it and thought about Shaun. What she would...

Then a sudden pain sharp pierced her head, interrupting her thoughts. Andrea held her head as she had a flashback of Unknown escaping from the Prydwen using Relay, and she clenched her teeth together in pain.

“Andams?” Danse called her.

“I’m fine,” she said and straightened her back.

Danse looked worried, his face tight and frowning. But then, movements caught their attention.

They both frowned as Arthur appeared to the old waiting room.

“Elder, you should be at the Infirmary,” Andrea stated.

“I appreciate your concern, Initiate, but I want to be here,” Arthur said, bypassing her and walked over to Danse.

Knight-Captain Michael Colton, Arthur’s bodyguard, followed him like a dog and glanced Andrea sternly.

“Let’s see. Relay’s dialled in; beam emitter’s warmed up. Everything looks green. We’re good to go, Elder,” Proctor said. “There’s a heck of a lot of interference and ghosting. It’s going to take a minute or two to lock-in.”

“You know your mission,” Arthur said to Danse. “Once you’ve entered the Institute, we expect to lose contact, so you must remember everything I told you.”

“Consider it done, Elder,” Danse said confidently.

“I’m well aware that you’re risking your life going into the Institute blind, Danse,” Arthur added and sighed. “Just download the data and get out from there before something else happens, Leonard.”

“Don’t worry, sir,” Danse said and headed toward the platform, but then Andrea grabbed his exoskeleton hand.

“Remember what I said to you at the forecastle,” she said, meaning their conversation after Dogmeat’s funeral.

“I’ll never leave you,” he said and stepped onto the platform.

“I put a clever little program on this holotape that’ll scan their network and download anything it finds. Place it in terminal down there, and it’ll do the rest,” Proctor said and gave him holotape.

Danse examined it before putting it away.
“Well, well, looks like we have a winner. R.F. wave capture complete. Cross your fingers. I’m inputting the code now, ramping the Emitter. Sixty per cent,” Ingram counted, and Danse closed his eyes for a moment.

“Eighty per cent. Emitter’s spiking, but steady. All that’s left is to throw the transmit switch. Transmitting in three, two, one. Stay safe, soldier.”

Just before the flash, Danse glanced Andrea and Arthur and then he was gone.

They backed away as the machine crashed into a pile of trash in a few seconds.

“I hope he made it,” Ingram said.

Andrea stared the remains of Relay and left, walking toward the shoreline.

She stared the ocean for a moment and then out the corner of her eye; she saw something hidden under the wing of an old plane.

A pack of Grey Tortoise.

Andrea took it and pulled out a cigarette. But before she was able even to lit the smoke, the world around her began to sway.

She leaned against aeroplane’s wing, hearing someone calling her and tried to regain her balance before losing her consciousness.

“Andrea,” the doctor said. “Your blood pressure is little off. That might explain dizziness,” Cade said, taking blood pressure cuff off her arm and then asked, “Have you stopped drinking?”

“Yes,” Andrea answered.

“Smoking?”

“Uh,” Andrea faltered and scratched the tip of her nose.

“No, she still smokes,” Ortiz answered for her.

“Are you sleeping enough?” Cade asked.

Andrea murmured, “You know the answer already.”

Then the doctor sighed and continued, “Leisure time—”

Andrea rolled her eyes.

“I’d appreciate it if you stopped rolling your eyes at me, Initiate.”

He sounded like a father scolding a child.

“You’re tired and stressed out, and I don’t doubt why. I’m not going to deny your missions, but you need to rest. I recommend you to spend less time at the gym,” Cade said.

Andrea sighed. He was one hard-headed doctor.

“Fine. Any words from Danse?” she asked.
Men exchanged glances.

She asked again, “What?”

“His power armour returned after you fainted. An holotape and note inside it,” Ortiz replied.

“And Danse?!” Andrea shouted and stood up off the bed.

“He is—” Ortiz sighed. “We don’t know.”

Her heart began to beat so wildly she could feel the pulse of it in her trachea. Her voice shivered, almost disappeared as she spoke, “So Danse is...”

Fear and panic began to surge through her body as Andrea thought what Institute would do to him. They would torture him, or worse; they would kill him.

They should have sent her there.

No matter how hard she fought against it, she couldn’t keep her emotions still. After everything that had happened, she couldn’t control them. They rose like a lump in her throat and forced their way out.

She screamed and slumped to her knees, crying uncontrollably.

Her mental health broke up like a jigsaw puzzle.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: What happens if you put a person, who suffers the intermittent explosive disorder, survivors guilt and PTSD, to Wasteland?

Yeah, in reality, this would happen, especially in her case. Andrea’s theme song would be now Mike Oldfield's Nuclear.

Oh, by monsters, Andrea meant herself and Cutler.

Goddammit, Danse. Come back alive (;_;)

Thanks for reading.

End Notes

Any feedback and constructive criticism is appreciated! Thank you for your comments, kudos, bookmarks or subscriptions!

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