



# 09. Everybody Else

## **BANDIT**

He stared at “Jim” in silence for a good thirty seconds when it hit him. He recognized him from the pictures Vera had shown him.

“OH MY GOD. You’re Vera’s brother, aren’t you? I recognize you now.” Bandit sobered up (as much as he could) right away and got up in a hurry.

“What the fuck are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be with your sister and your dad? They’ve been worried sick about you!”

Jimmy knew denying was useless.

“I am, I am. And sorry for not telling you right away. I can’t talk to Vera actually. She shouldn’t know I’m here. For her own good.”

“Isn’t it for her to decide? I’m calling her.”

Jimmy grabbed his arm, and got in Bandit’s face.

“I really wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

“Watch me.” Bandit yanked his arm away, angled his head so his forehead would touch Jimmy’s.

“Watch me, fuck face.” Bandit stepped outside to call

her. But before he could reach the exit, Jimmy signaled to two of his undercover Sworn agents who had been hidden in the crowd. One grabbed Bandit, and before he could defend himself, the other one sucker-punched him right in the face. They took his phone and took him outside. Jimmy followed.

"I told you not to call her."

"Your sister failed to tell me what an asshole you are. It's ok, I get it. My brother's a dick too."

"Oh yeah? I thought you were an orphan."

"Rentoth. Rentoth is my brother." The blood was coming from his nose. His arms still immobilized by Jimmy's henchmen, Bandit was trying to move it around so it would stop bleeding, with little success. He looked at all three of his aggressors.

"Dumb outfits... dumb faces... dumb manners. I assume you're all Sworn, uh? Vera mentioned you might be a turncoat. In any case... Y'all must be pretty low on the totem pole to not know Rentoth is my brother."

Jimmy smiled. He remembered what Zero had asked him. The great leader's words were still ringing in his head.

"You need to go undercover and join The Militia. I want you to tell Bandit you're leaving the Sworn. I want you to tell him you regret everything you've

done. That you never signed up for any of this. And I want you to mean it all. You need to convince him. He needs to SEE your commitment. You need to renounce your vows, just like they did. Join them. At some point, I will need you to show your true colors. But it will be way, way down the road. You need to convince them by any means necessary.” Zero leaned over his servant, his voice low, deep, and threatening. “And I do mean any. If blood is spilled, so be it. Your mission is more important than your life. IZE WAID SEH, dear Priest.”

Jimmy didn't hesitate. This was his chance right here. He took one last glance at Bandit, took out his gun from the inside pocket of his coat...

And shot both his henchmen in the head. As Bandit stood there, trying to understand what he had just witnessed... Jimmy walked towards the one on the left, who was still alive somehow, and shot him two more times.

He looked at Bandit, who was still processing what had just happened. “Now you can call my sister.”

## **VERA**

Mads didn't even have time to say anything before Vera's phone lit up. It was Bandit calling. Vera and

Mads looked at each other, confused.

“Wha... What do I tell him? Do I pick up? I can’t pick up!” She rejected the call.

“We need to think this through... Also, why is he calling me? I thought he hated us all!”

Mads grabbed her by the shoulders.

“V, look at me. It’s gonna be ok. Who knows, maybe he just wants to apologize for how he’s been acting. I say we meet him and let him talk first, and if he’s sober and in a good mood, maybe we start telling him what we know.”

Bandit was calling again.

“Okay. Okay. If you say so.” Vera wasn’t convinced, but she picked up the phone anyway. Bandit wanted to meet right away. He couldn’t discuss the specifics over the phone. He told them where he was. Only a few blocks away. Mads and Vera were already on their way.

## **EMPIRE FALL**

“They’re coming. Your sister and Mads. Sooooo... Are you just gonna leave these bodies here? I mean it’s the Slums, so no one is gonna care really.”

“Not my problem,” replied Jimmy. “But I think we should go back inside.”

“Nonsense. Follow me, I know a way quieter bar around the corner, we can get some privacy. You guys need to work your shit out in peace.”

Bandit and Jimmy sat down. Bandit explained that it was better if Jimmy stayed here, while Bandit waited outside for Vera and Mads. He wanted to give her a heads up before she saw her brother. Jimmy agreed. Then Bandit saw them in the distance, and he ran towards his two best friends.

“Sorry I’ve been such a moody asshole lately. I love you guys. There’s just so much shit I need to deal with right now.”

“We know you by now, buddy. You’re ok. You know I love you.” Mads hugged him. Vera too, but she could barely hide her anxiety. She knew her brother killed Bandit’s and Rentoth’s mom. But she didn’t know yet how to say it.

Before she could speak though, Bandit stopped her in her tracks.

“Vera... I know this is gonna sound crazy... But your brother is here, with me. He’s waiting inside the bar. He told me he defected. He left the Sworn. And let’s just say... I KNOW he’s not bluffing.”

Vera felt like her insides were melting. She wasn’t ready for this.

“What? Jimmy is here? Alive? And he... he came to you before he came to me? WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!” She pushed him out of the way and ran inside.

He was just sitting there. Vera started shaking.