The Mercs' Lives

by The_Doktor_Medic

Summary

An insight into the Heart of your favourite mercenaries.
Chapter 1

The mercs had met each other the day before, at Mann Co. headquarters. Each of them were brought to the base in a bus, except for Sniper, who insisted on driving in his van, following the rest of the mercenaries.

At the front of the bus sat the never-shutting-up Scout, chatting with Miss Pauling who, judging by her body language, was quite annoyed by it but still continued to answer the kid.

A bit farther, half asleep, the Demoman was communicating (one cannot call it "talking" for it was impossible to decipher the sounds coming out of his mouth) to his bottle of "scrumpy". On the next row, a man whose face was half hidden under a military-like helmet sat, back upright, looking at the seat in front of him, not moving a muscle. Soldier looked as if he was having some sort of staring contest with the back of the seat facing him. Then, two men exchanged laughs. One playing tricks with a lighter, face hidden behind what looked like a gas mask and the other laughing heartily, under his hard yellow construction hat. Pyro and Engineer were having fun and that brought a smile to Heavy's face.

The scent of cigar smoke tickled Heavy's nostrils, and turning his head behind him to see where it was coming from, he realised a man in a suit was sitting behind him. He hadn't seen him enter the bus, nor had he seen him at Mann Co. headquarters. His face was hidden behind a mask though one could see his light blue, almost grey eyes and his thin lips. The man sure did not want to speak to Heavy as when he met the Russian man's glance, he turned his head quickly to the window, sighed and stared at the scenery.

This must be the Spy Miss Pauling talked about the previous day.

The RED base was surely in the middle of nowhere, Heavy thought. The more they rode, the more desertic the landscape became. It reminded Heavy of Siberia although this time, it was not an ice desert but rather a dust one.

Finally, in a corner was sitting a man with a white labcoat. The Medic. Easy enough to spot. He seemed lost in thought, his mind absorbed in the book he was reading. From where the Heavy was sitting, it was easy to read the title. "The Art of Lobotomy". Heavy gulped. That man had specific literary preferences. But Heavy wouldn't judge him for that. After all, with his PhD in literature, he knew almost too well that some books would make you travel to other worlds whereas others, even if they described foreign fantastic places, would not touch your heart at all. He personally loved French literature, especially 19th century authors. His mind escaped to the thought of his younger days, at University. Well, he had liked it there. He enjoyed the lectures, some more than others. And he liked his friends at the boxing club. That's where he trained and learned lots about others and himself. His mind came back to reality and he began looking at the medical man longer and more intensely. Looking at his hair, Heavy saw that they were black except on his temples where the age of the doctor betrayed his young and fair skin. A thin black lock of hair was falling on his forehead. His eyes were light blue though not as cold as the Spy's. They were hidden behind a thin pair of spectacles. His nose was thin and his jaw very masculine. Overall, he was a very handsome man Heavy thought to himself.

Shaking his head as if to shake away some thoughts, Heavy turned back and asked the masked Spy for the time. "It is past seven o'clock."
"Thank you."

Well, he was beginning to feel hungry and now he knew why.

-------------

Hi guys, I'm new around here ^^. Some friends recommended this website to post my story. I also use fanfiction.net, where I've posted this story until chapter 18. I intend to update here regularly (same for fanfiction.net). I generally post a chapter every few days.

Please feel free to correct my English if it's not correct or awkward (it's my 3rd language and I'm not fluent yet).

Thanks :)
Finally. Everybody arrived. The bus took a few minutes to park and Sniper put his van next to it. Everyone got out of the bus.

"Come on in guys, let me show you around."

Miss Pauling said. The young lady led the way to a big house, closely followed by the Scout, still trying to impress her.

They entered the big house and Miss Pauling showed them their rooms, the kitchen, the showers and the meeting room. Each room had a logo of the merc it belonged to on its door. Miss Pauling then left everyone to unpack their stuff except for Engineer and Medic who were asked to still follow her. Engineer had a complete level for himself underground plus the garage. The Medic had his Medical Bay in a different building. One had to go through what used to be a garden of some sort to access it. Unfortunately, nobody took care of this thin strip of land and only small cacti seemed to have developed there.

After half an hour, they all were asked to come to the meeting room. Miss Pauling turned on the big tv screen on the wall and the Administrator began to speak. As the day before, she was wearing a purple dress and her eyes and facial expression were as warm as an iceberg.

"Good evening mercenaries. Now that you are settled, know that you will receive your weapons tomorrow and that training sessions will start the day afterwards and last for a week. After that, we will consider that you can handle your weapons perfectly and the war against the BLU will start. I would like to remind you that failure won't be tolerated. Good night."

The screen went black again.

"There you go guys, I'll let you spend your first evening as a group. The weapon delivery is expected at 9.00am so make sure to be ready to welcome your tools! And on this, I wish you all a good night!".

Miss Pauling then left the meeting room and went outside were the bus driver was still waiting for her. Scout was still going around her, buzzing around like a fly, asking for her phone number and whatnot.

"Whaddy'all say to a good ol' Texan dinner partners?" Said Engineer, joyful.

"Let's go and have dinner maggots, we can't be fresh and rested without our rations!" Answered Soldier.

And on these words, all the mercenaries went to the kitchen and Engie, with the help of Pyro, cooked an amazing dinner. The mercenaries sat around the table and starting eating enthusiastically.

"So Big guy, you're from Russia right?"

Heavy raised his head.
"Da."

"So you fought bears your size right?"

"Da. We use bear for food."

"Woah. You will teach me to hunt bears, will ya?"

Engie chuckled.

"Son, there ain't no bears here", said Engie.

"Oh alright.. what's terrifyin there then?"

"Spiders big as yo' head and with venom that'll kill you in less than a minute."

Sniper's voice was deep and he was talking through his breath, almost growling. Half hidden behind his yellow tinted sunglasses, Heavy could swear the man was half smiling.

"Whot!? You mean like, here, like, there are spiders that could kill us?!

Spy raised his piercing eyes and elegantly wiped the corners of his mouth with his napkin.

"Come on Scout, surely a man of your strength is not afraid by such a little insect?"

Spy pushed his empty plate forward and lit a cigarette. He put it between his lips, smiling confidently.

"Miss Pauling would be disappointed to learn that you're afraid of such unique animals."

"Whot?! Nah, I ain't afraid! Who said I was?! Maybe you are Frenchie?"

Spy chuckled and shook his head.

"I for myself, find them beautiful. Deadly, yes. But they are a beautiful work of art by Mother Nature who made them strong enough to charm you with their colors and kill you with their venom instantly."

He then threw his cigarette away and proceeded to exit the kitchen.

"Let meh help ya with the dishes lad!" Said Demoman.

"Alright, thanks partner."

The rest of the crew exited the kitchen. Soldier went directly to his room. Sniper went outside, followed by Spy. Medic headed to his Medic Bay. Heavy looked around him. He wanted to talk to his colleagues and learn to know them but he was shy. Who should he start with? Surely the easiest pick was Scout for the boy never seemed to stop talking even if one didn't ask him to start speaking. But no. No, Heavy put his hand on his head at the mere thought of the boy talking endlessly.

"Herr Heavy?"

Heavy lowered his hand and turned around. From the kitchen door, Medic's head was peeking.

"Would you be so kind as to help me settle some things in the Medic Bay please?"

"Da."
Heavy followed the man in the labcoat to his place of retreat.

"Well, I find this crate quite heavy to move. Could you help me, I plan to put it there, in front of the window. Be delicate please, it is fragile."

Heavy found it weird that Medic would put a piece of furniture in front of a window. But then again, the man was reading "The Art of Lobotomy" with stars in his eyes so it was not a big surprise. Maybe there is some sort of logic in the madness?

They both carried the huge cardboard box to the said place. It took a minute but throughout the process, Heavy was sure he heard noises coming from inside the box...

"Danke Herr Heavy. Now, to open it."

Medic reached in one of his cupboards to take a cutter and opened the box neatly. Heavy's jaw dropped. It was a huge cage with half a dozen white doves. That accounted well for the noise he heard and for the fact Medic warned him to manipulate the crate with caution. The doctor opened the cage and they all flew out and around their master.

"Hello my friends, I'm sorry I had to put in there but ach... rules...!"

The German doctor shrugged.

"I put you next to the window so that when I'm busy at work, you can enjoy the landscape."

One of the doves flew and landed on Heavy's shoulder. The big man smiled and turned his head to the bird.

"Archimedes, don't frighten our guest! I'm sorry, Herr Heavy."

"Not a problem. I love birds. Used to have one back home."

Heavy put his big index finger on the dove's neck, under its head.

"Oh I see! Then let me introduce you to the whole family."

Medic started pointing and naming all the birds with a lot of passion and enthusiasm. How he could tell them apart, that was a complete mystery to Heavy but he liked how delighted the German doctor seemed around his pets.

"Danke again Herr Heavy and sorry I got carried away while presenting my friends to you. Can I do something to repay the favour?"

"No, nothing I can think of."

Then thinking quickly he said:

"Well, da, there is. You play chess Doktor?"

Heavy was fond of that game and never went anywhere without a miniaturised chess set.

"Ja, I used to play it a lot at medical school."

The doctor's face darkenend for a second and then lightened again.

"I would love to see how good my memory is!"
"You stay here Doktor. I bring the chess set."

"Alright Herr Heavy."

Heavy was excited. He found a chess partner! But something bothered him. That dark and sad expression Medic had when mentioning his time at medical school. Heavy wanted to know more about the man and a few chess rounds would make a perfect occasion to chat.

"Doktor, you remember the role of each class?"

"Ja, I zhink so."

"Good. You are white, you begin."

They were both sitting in Medic's office. The sun was long set now. It was pitch dark outside and in their cage, the doves were cooing softly. A whistling noise came in.

"Oh, if you'll excuse me Heavy, I'll be a minute."

"Da."

The doctor came back with 2 cups of herbal tea.

"That trip must have exhausted you as much as it did to me, there."

"Thank you Doktor."

"Nein, you don't have to thank me, you helped me settle my birds right. It's the least I could do."

Heavy moved a pawn.

"Doktor, you are from Germany?"

"Ja. I was born and raised there. I studied in medical school there during the war."

"Oh, must be deeficult."

"The war or the medical school?" Medic was smiling, one eyebrow raised.

"Erm... war and medical school."

Medic chuckled. He moved a pawn.

"Well, ja both were hard. The Nazis wanted us to work for them in the end. I had friends of mine who were Jews in the school. They were fired and never to be heard from again."

Medic stopped talking. He lifted his eyes to met Heavy's. He hesitated.

"Well, it was too hard for me. I graduated and left Germany."

Silence fell upon the room. Only the cooing of the doves could be heard.

"But tell me mein freund! What about you? What did you do in Russia before joining the team?"

"Studied literature. Russian and foreign literature. I have PhD in this."

"That's amazing kamarad!"
"Thank you Doktor but PhD in literature is useless. You cannot save life with it. Whereas you..."

"Well I had to learn by heart all the bones in your body and all the muscle whereas you had the chance to read and discover realms that the human mind could invent!"

They looked at each other and laughed.

"There is no point in comparing our studies", said Medic with a big smile on his lips.

"Da, Doktor is right."

"What is your favourite kind of literary style then?"

"19th century from France. Balzac and Maupassant are my favourite writers."

Medic looked puzzled.

"Sorry mein freund but I have no idea who these authors are."

"Then Doktor needs lesson."

And Heavy proceeded to tell the story of Bel Ami, the French novel by Maupassant. How George Duroy climbed the social ladder by having affairs with ladies who had a good position in society.

"I am surprised Herr Heavy. I wouldn't think it possible to progress in society that way!"

"What is more interesting is the evolution of the character. How he sees himself like... erm..."

Heavy was looking for the right word.

"Sorry, words are deefficult in English."

"Kein problem, take your time."

"Well he is poor and not handsome at the beginning and in the end, he is veery charming man. Goes to fancy dinner with important people and seduces lots of beautiful women."

"I see. I would like to read that book. Do you have a copy of it?"

"Da but is in French."

"Was?! You can read French?"

"Only literary, da. When they speak, is too fast."

"Heavy I am impressed! Any other talent you're hiding?"

Heavy blushed and laughed.

"No, I don't think so. But what about you Doktor, any talent apart from saving lives?"

"Well, I can play the violin. I used to play in the medical school orchestra. I was the first violin."

Heavy's eyes widened.
"Please play, I want to hear Doktor!"

"Now?"

"Da, please."

"Alright."

Medic got up, walked away and came back with his violin.

"Any requests?"

"Something you like."

"Alright."

He adjusted the instrument on his shoulder and rested his jaw on it. He raised the archer with his right arm and started off. Heavy didn't recognise the piece at first. He felt like time itself stopped. The German doctor was moving elegantly, almost dancing with his instrument. He looked focused, his eyebrows tensed. Sometimes he would go slower and close his eyes but when he played faster, the lock of hair on his forehead was accompanying his moves along with the labcoat and he would look fiercely at his instrument from the corner of his eyes. The light of his office shone particularly bright on his flying labcoat. Heavy's jaw dropped. He was in awe. The performance was breathtaking. He felt something weird deep in his guts, slowly closed his mouth, put back the pawn he had in his hand on the table and leaned back on his seat. He enjoyed every second of the performance who seemed like honey to his bear ears and brought warmth to his cold Russian heart.

Medic then stopped. Heavy applauded loudly and the doctor bowed to his audience.

"Woah, you play very well Doktor!"

"I used to be better, some notes were just not that good."

"No Doktor, it was perfect."

Heavy stood up and continued applauding for a couple more seconds.

"Danke mein freund."

Did Heavy dream or did Medic blush?

"Anyway, it is getting late now and we'd better get some rest Herr Heavy."

"Da, is good. We will continue chess game tomorrow?"

"Alright, I'll make sure to finish what I have to do early enough."

"Good night Doktor!"

"Good night Herr Heavy."

On those words, Heavy walked out of the Medic Bay and went through the alley of "dead garden". He walked lightly and was smiling, as if he were floating above the ground. He found a friend in Medic and that was sufficient to make him happy.
Hi again, here is chapter 2!

Tell me what you think of it and I hope it matches your expectations :)

Cheers!
"Mon ami?" Sniper turned to face Spy.

"Yeah?"

"Do you mind if I accompany you back to your van?"

"Nah, it's alright."

"Merci."

Both mercs walked to the van. Spy lit a cigarette and followed Sniper.

"There we are mate."

"I was wondering about something."

"Wha'?"

"Why did you lie to Scout?"

"I'm sorry?"

"You know there are no such spiders 'ere."

"So do you and you kept on lyin' about it!"

Spy chuckled.

"You are right. I was trying to frighten zhe boy, playing around."

"Same mate. Plus he'd never shut up! I wanted to give 'im a good fright and shut 'im up!"

"Ah. I see. Shall we?"

Spy was pointing at the van's door as if it was his and he was inviting Sniper in. The latter look a bit surprised but then nodded and opened the van's door and waved Spy in.

"You want some tea or some'in'?"

"Well, a cup of tea would be good, yes."

"Alright."

Sniper turned his back to Spy and proceeded to prepare some tea.

"I understand you are from Australia?"

"Yeah, and you're French, innit?"

"Oui."

A few seconds of silence were interrupted by the whistling sound of the boiling water.
Sniper had brought 2 cups on his tea table, in front of the couch/bed on which Spy was sitting elegantly. The Frenchman was sitting, back upright and holding his cigarette in his gloved right hand. He crossed his legs, one on the other. In the dimness of the evening and with Sniper's van's flickering light on, Spy's eyes were shimmering beautifully like water droplets on the grass at night.

Sniper poured the tea in both cups and sat down, putting some biscuits on the table.

"Help yo'self."

"Merci."

Spy looked around him. The van was quite messy but had this feeling of a home you're comfortable to live in. His eyes stopped on a framed picture.

"Is this your family?"

"Yeah, me mum and dad actually. Lovely people."

"I see. And in the background, is it their house?"

"Yeah, it's me home, in the Outback. Used to live there until Mann Co. contacted me."

"You didn't have a previous job?"

"Well, I played the saxophone for fun in some pubs. Made a bit of money to buy hunting equipment."

"Oh, you do hunt then?"

"Yeah, but only for food, not for trophies and that kind'a nonsense. That's murder."

"I understand."

"Mmh. Was it true what you said?"

"What mon ami?"

"About them spiders?"

"Yes it is. I truly find them beautiful."

Sniper smiled and look by the window.

"I agree with what you said back in the dining room. I mean, Nature is our greatest treasure."

"Agreed."

"Any other things you like, apart from your croissants and baguette I guess?"

Spy smiled.

"Well, you are correct. I like good food. Not the American stuff, not the English insulting dishes. French and Italian cuisine are the best. I can try and cook some for the team some day."

"Yeah, that'd be good. I don't know lots'a French stuff."

"Then I'll make you discover."
Sniper looked at Spy's eyes. Those ice drops of his were fascinating.

"I see you own quite a collection of kukris."

Spy was pointing at the wall were Sniper hung a few ones.

"Yeah, they're useful in the Outback. And they're beautiful, I love'em."

"I do collect knives myself. Not kukris, short blades. You might want to have a look at them sometime?"

"Yeah, why not?"

"Thank you Mundy."

Sniper's eyes widened, his glance was now fierce, he was furious.

"How d'you know my name?!"

"Ahem, sorry. As a Spy, I know lots about everyone in this team..."

"What else d'you know about me?!"

"Well, I know some stuff but..."

"Get. Out."

Sniper's voice was now very calm but Spy felt the rage growing in the Bushman who lowered his head and was staring angrily at the ground.

"I'm sorry."

"I said GET, OUT!"

Sniper stood up and slammed the van's backdoor open. Spy stood up and got out of the van, he looked back.

"I-"

The door slammed shut.

Why? He thought to himself. Why does he always have to ruin it? It was not the first time he let some intelligence out. In his younger days, it was a common mistake but he worked on it and he now was a very competent spy. How could this happen? He was afraid to answer that.

---

Hey guys, here is Chapter 3! It's a closer look to the Spy/Sniper 'business', I hope you'll like it!

Feel free to give you opinion/advice, I read everything!

Thanks again.
Chapter 4

-- Next day, RED Base. --

All the mercs were up and busy unboxing their new toys.

"Oh oh oh! That shotgun is beautiful!"

"Calm down boy! It is a weapon, you shouldn't cuddle it. You should give it the flesh of your enemy as foo- MY SHOVEL!"

Soldier held his gardening tool up high as if God himself had given it to him.

"Oh, ain't she a beaut'"

Sniper was feeling the sharpness of his new kukri with the tips of his fingers.

"Herr Heavy, can I ask you to help me with these crates?"

"Alright Doktor."

The Russian man carried 3 Mann Co. crates piled one on another and follow the doctor who was carrying the last one. They went through the alley of what Heavy now officially called "the dead garden" and arrived at the Medical Bay. Medic pushed the door open and held it so that Heavy could enter. The doves started cooing loudly and their wings flapped with joy and excitement.

"Wait a minute mein lovely friends, I vill free you after I deal vizh all zhis. You can put zhe crates here Heavy."

"Alright." And Heavy proceeded to help Medic with his last crate.

"Oh danke, I'm not as strong and young as you but I could have managed."

"I only wanted to help Doktor."

"Danke."

"You need help with crates?"

"Erm, why not. I have lots of stuff to unpack. Here, you open the crates and give me what you unbox and I vill sort it out."

"Ok Doktor."

"Ludwig."

"What?"

"My name. It's Ludwig. You can call me by my name as long as zhe rest of zhe team is not here. I don't trust zhem completely yet."

"Oh alright. I am Mikhail, you can me Misha."

"Nice name, it suits you."
Heavy blushed, hid his head behind the crate he was kneeling next to and began to open the first one. He handed Medic everything there was, from bandages to organs sealed in cold special boxes. In half an hour, they were done.

"Alright Misha, ve are done vizh all zhis, I cannot vait to vork! I have a few ideas to help us on zhe battlefield. You vill let me know if zhere is anyzhing I can do to repay zhe favour again."

"You know what I want? To finish the chess game we started yesterday."

"Alright, zhat was agreed on but it shall be now a promise. Come to my office after dinner and we shall end this game."

"Thank you Doktor!"

Heavy came back to his room with his weapon. A mini-gun. He tried it but it did not please him. It needed improvements. He went to Engie's garage. He found the worker, cloth on his shoulder, a wrench in his hand, working on a 3 legged, beeping machine.

"Engineer?"

"Yeah? Oh hello big fellow, what do you need?"

"I need tools to improve Sasha."

"Sasha?"

"My mini-gun."

"Oh I see. You know what you need and what you'll do?"

"Da, used to build weapons."

"Alrighty then, help yourself to mah collection. I hope you'll find everythin' you need. If you're missin' somethin', just gimme a shout, Imma be next door."

"Thank you Engineer."

And on these words, Heavy walked to the cupboards and starting looking around. All the tools were neatly organised, which made Heavy spend only a couple of minutes to find and take all he needed. He turned on his heels and went back to his room. He opened the door and put the tools on his bed table. He took Sasha and put it between his legs. He raised his hand to take a screwdriver but he stopped, raised his eyes, made an annoyed face. Something was missing. Oh. He knew. He got up and put some Russian music. Now he could work comfortably.

He worked until lunch and joined the team to have some food. This time, Spy had prepared a "tradiational" French meal. 3 course meal. "Entrée-plat-dessert" as he said. Heavy knew about this way of serving a meal, he had read it in some books. It was all delicious and the team was in a cheering mood. They all exchanged jokes and laughs. They all tried to guess the names of the delicious food they had, but to no success.

"Gentlemen, let me know reveal the names of the dishes you enjoyed. The entrée was a salade au magret de canard. The main dish was a blanquette de veau and for the dessert... a charlotte aux fraises, my personnal favourite."

He smiled and Sniper raised his hatted head and saw the Frenchman's teeth. White as snow.
"Thank you Spy, is delicious!"

"Merci Heavy."

"Ja, it vas a delight for the mouth and stomach! You need to give us zhe recipes."

"Ah-ha! I will give them away the day you all become French!"

"NEVER MAGGOT! DO YOU HEAR ME?! I'M NEVER BECOMING A SURENDERING BAGUETTE EATER!"

"Calm down, partner, t'was only a joke! But heck yeah! T'was awesome Spah!"

"Merci, merci."

"Whaddya think Snipes?"

"Mmh, it's very good."

Sniper's tone was very low and he spoke without raising his head. The other mercs felt uneasy for a second.

"At least, you managed to shut the young boy up, congrats!"

All eyes went to Scout who was chewing "elegantly" on the charlotte.

"Well, you can 'ave the finest food but still the filthiest manners..."

Spy said, rolling his eyes up.

"Wha' did ya say fancy pants?!"

"Eh, nothing young boy... nothing..."

Everybody laughed at Spy's apparent despair.

The mercs soon got up and cleaned everything.

----

Hey, chapter 4!

Please leave a review, it encourages me a lot!

See you around for Chap 5 ;)
On the battlefield for training, the team proved to be good but individually. Teamwork still had to be worked on. They spent a few hours training on wooden targets and then came the time to test the respawn system.

"Partners, we got a message from Miss Pauling, she told me to make a special gun. A revolver, like the ones Spah's usin'. She sent me the blueprints and I spent my mornin' on it. Now, I'm gonna ask you Spah to fire it at each one of us."

Scout gasped.

"Wha'?! You gon' ask fancy pants to kill us?! Are you mad or somethin'?!

"Nah, it's only to test the respawn system. As soon as we're done with it, I'll destroy that damn weapon. Administrator's orders. Now, Heavy, go in front of Spah and don't move."

Heavy did as told. Deep down, he felt afraid. Normally he would be calm. If he died, his health insurance would go to his mother and sisters and they would never have to bother for money again. Thinking about it, he had no reason to be afraid of dying, or did he?

He walked forward and stood in front of Spy.

"Are you ready mon ami?"

"Da."

Heavy looked at the other mercs. Scout was terrified. The others tried to hide their fear except for Medic. His mouth was half open and his eyes, wide open. Heavy still looked right in front of him at Spy. The latter raised his arm and fired.

Heavy fell to the ground, a bullet between his eyes. Everyone held his breath.

"5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and..."

As Engie finished his sentence, Heavy's body disappeared.

"Follow me partners, to the respawn room."

Everyone followed the small worker.

"'Ere, take this mon ami, you are sweating heavily."

Spy handed Medic a handkerchief.

"Danke."

"Are you that afraid?"

"Erm... Ja... We only have one Heavy..."

"Mmh, I see."

When they arrived, they found Heavy standing up, a hand to his forehead.
"I feel aliiive!"

"Zhank goodness!"

Medic rushed to Heavy's face and with his gloved hands, he examined the Russian's forehead.

"Doc is right to be cautious and afraid. Miss Pauling told me to ask you to examine each and every one of us right after respawn. She and the Administrator need a complete report on everyone's health. Don't wanna have people in bad condition for combat!".

"Alright zhen follow me Herr Heavy, to zhe Medical Bay. I'll stay zhere and examine all of you after you respawn. I'll go zhrough respawn at last."

Heavy followed Medic through the dead garden.

"You vant some help to walk?"

"No thank you, I feel... weird but is ok."

Medic pushed the door and held it open. They went through the hall, and instead of going to the office, Medic opened a door. The sign above it read "Waiting room". They entered and Medic rushed to open the last door. He raised his hand and pointed at an empty bed. Heavy sat on it.

"Is anyzthing hurting you? Your head?"

"No, Doktor. I feel good. Bit dizzy but is good."

"Alright, turn your head and cough".

Medic was holding a sthetoscope and listened to the Russian man's heart beat.

*Boom-boom. Boom-boom.*

He lowered his head so as to be out the Russian's line of sight. He closed his eyes.

*Boom-boom. Boom-boom.*

He blushed and smiled.

*Boom-boom. Boom-boom.*

*Boom-boom. Boom-boom.*

"Doktor?"

"Ern.. Ja?"

Medic raised his head quickly and prayed to God his blush vanished. His eyes were open wide in surprise.

Heavy pointed at the door. Pyro was there, waving hello with his hand.

"Oh sorry Pyro, please sit on zhis bed. I'll be a minute."

"Mmmh-nh!"

Medic finished with Heavy.
"You may go now. You are in very good healzh."

He lowered his voice so that Pyro wouldn't hear him.

"See you tonight Misha."

He smiled. Heavy returned his smile and said loudly "Thank you Doktor!".

"Now, Pyro, is anything hurting?"

Medic did that routine for the rest of the team. All went well. A few words were exchanged here and there. Only small talk. (well, small talk and big talk with the young boy Scout) but nothing special. Except with Sniper.

"Is anything hurting?"

"Nah I feel alright Doc."

Medic looked at Sniper. He answered with a monotonous voice, not even looking at him in the eyes.

"Sniper, I must ask you somezhing."

The Bushman turned his head, surprised.

"Yeah?"

"What is bozhering you?"

"Wha?"

"You were ok when we arrived but since this morning, you have been quite... erm... sad. Tell me why."

"I'm alright Doc."

"I won't tell anyone, my mouth is sealed by the medical secret." 

"Well... I... I... erm..."

Medic turned his back, grabbed a chair and sat next to Sniper who was sitting on a hospital bed.

"Take your time to sort your ideas mein freund."

The German doctor put his notebook and pen away.

"It's the damn Spook."

"Spy?"

"Yeah."

"Has he done somezhing wrong to you?"

"He knows my name."

"Oh. Well.. I understand that you are not the most social mercenary we have, nor the most chatty one. But may I ask why it bozheres you?"
"To be honest... I don't give a damn about my name. I just hope he doesn't know more about me."

"Mmh, I see."

"There are things about me nobody should know about."

Sniper had lowered his head, looking at his floating feet now.

"I understand you almost too well, Herr Sniper. To be completely honest vizzh you, I have a lot of information about all zhe team."

Sniper raised his head to meet Medic's eyes.

"I mean, it is vital for me, your Medic, to have your medical files as complete as possible. So I know your name too. But don't be afraid. As you see, I'm never addressing any of you by your names nor am I telling anyone anyzhing."

"Mmh I see."

"Do you vantz me to try and find out watzher zhing Spy knows about you?"

"No, he might as well know nothing and if you ask 'im, he'll become eager to know more."

"I understand. But if zhere is anyzhing I can do to help you, come to my Medical Bay. It is alvays open and I'll listen to you anytime."

"Thanks Doc."

"Nein, don't zhank me. As a teammate and as a medical man, I care for all of you."

What the two mercs did not know is that Spy was eavesdropping, just behind the door. He was cloaked in case anyone entered the Medical Bay.

Spy was listening very carefully. He tought "Et bien, as long as he cares as a teammate and medical man...".

"Anyzhing else you vantz to tell me?"

"No, thanks mate. It's already been a lot."

"Alright. Zhen you can go. You are in fine healzh, like zhe rest of zhe team."

"Thanks doc."

Sniper jumped off the bed to the ground. He grabbed his hat, put it on and walked to the door of the consultation room. He opened it.

"Dammit" He thought.

Spy was now sitting on a chair in the waiting room. He held a cigarette in his hand.

"Are you alright mon ami?"

"Mmh."

Sniper didn't even look at him. Spy got up, looked at Sniper walking away. The Australian opened the door and left. The door slammed shut behind him. Spy lowered his head and threw his cigarette
in the direction of the dustbin.

Medic opened the door to the consultation room.

"Come in!"

Spy entered, looking half sad, half angry against himself. And by the way, he missed the dustbin.

"Hallo Herr Spy, come in!"

Spy did as told and sat on the hospital bed.

"Is anything hurting?"

"Non Docteur, merci."

"Turn your head and cough."

Once again, Spy obeyed.

"Mmh..."

"Is anything wrong?"

"Vell, your heart beats a little too fast. Are you stressed or worried about something?"

Spy smiled.

"Same as you Docteur..."

"Was?"

"My thoughts are busy with a man."

Medic blushed instantly and became furious.

"What do you mean?"

"I saw how you got worried for Heavy during the respawn test."

"Ve vere all worried!"

"Oui, but not to the point of sweating heavily."

"I-it-I mean-"

"Don't be ashamed, it's ok. Though I don't really understand what you find in that Russian brute."

"So you have feelings for someone?"

"Oui, or rather I had feelings for someone. But it seems like, as usual, I am being too impatient. I want to go too quickly and I ruined everything. Well, that was a disaster."

Spy chuckled.

"Do you really zhink all is lost?"
"Oui."

"Don't you have any flame that yearns to be vizh zhat person?"

"Oh yes I do. I would love to know him a bit more. But as we say, j'ai brûlé ma cartouche!"

Medic made a face to Spy.

"That litterally means I have burned my bullet. In other words it was a one shot try and I used it. Time to move on."

"For a Frenchman, you should be more optimistic."

"What?"

"Aren't you supposed to be good at romances?"

Spy smiled.

"Well, there is no smoke without fire. Of course if people go one with that stereotype, it might be true. But..." 

"But was?"

"Well he doesn't want to talk to me."

"Do you have anyzhing you want or need to tell him?"

"Oui, lots of things."

"Zhen go and tell him!"

"Aha, but that is useless! He would not listen to me!"

"Ach, goddamn your French sense of pride! Go and tell him what you need to tell him! Shout it at him if necessary!"

Medic raised his voice on those last words.

"I see. You are surely right. Merci mon ami."

Spy jumped off of the hospital bed, took a cigarette out of his case. He saw a matchbox on a desk next to Medic. He took one, lit his cigarette and threw the burnt match in the direction of the bin. This time, he did not miss.

---

Hello people!

Tell me what you think of this new chapter!

Please feel free to leave a review, it helps me and keeps me going on :) 

Thanks a lot guys, I really appreciate that you read my ideas :) 

See ya around for Chapter 6!
CHAPTER 6:

The whole week passed and all the mercs at RED base were busy with their training. They all saw their skills grow better everyday. Now it was time the war began.

"MISSION BEGINS IN 60 SECONDS."

There were speakers everywhere on the battlefield and you could hear the nice and mellow voice of the Administrator.

"Are you all ready maggots?!"

"Ja, come here, I vill over-heal you a bit."

"You deserve a medal Doc'!"

"Can I get an over-heal meself please doctah?"

"Ja Demo, just a second."

"MISSION BEGINS IN 10 SECONDS...5...4...3...2...1..."

A siren blew their ears and the gates opened.

"ATTACK!" Shouted Soldier and he flew off, rocket jumping out of the respawn room. He was closely followed by Demo who sticky-jumped. The rest of the team ran forward with Spy entirely cloaked and Sniper staying at the spawn for the moment.

"Get behind me Doktor!"

"Jawohl!"

A rocket exploded right in front of Heavy who aimed Sasha at the BLU Soldier. He destroyed him and with the help of Scout, they stepped on the control point.

"Achtung, Spy!" Shouted Medic. He saw the BLU double agent disguised as Scout. Immediately, Heavy turned around and took his shotgun out. First shot made the mask of the BLU Frenchman fall. Second one, he got wounded and ran in a circle to get behind Medic and backstab him. The German got his Bonesaw out and sliced into the Spy.

"Zhe healing is not as rewarding as zhe hurting!"

"Thank you Doktor!"

BAM! That was a sniper rifle shot. But which one was it from, BLU or RED? Medic quickly grabbed his medigun back and aimed it at Heavy to over-heal him.

"Pyro!"

The BLU Sniper had taken Pyro out.

"Aaaaargh!"
The Red Spy took care of him and before the BLU Pyro could fire his flamethrower at the RED Frenchman, Sniper shot a bullet to his head.

"Wave goodbye to your head, wanker!"

The control point turned red.

"YOU HAVE RECEIVED ADDITIONAL TIME."

The second control point was more difficult to take as it was heavily guarded by a big sentry. But Spy took care of it with his sapper and Sniper put a bullet in the BLU Engie's skull. Soldier managed to get the BLU Demo and the RED Demo took care of both the BLU Scout and Soldier.

All in all, they managed to take the second control point.

"YOU WIN."

They all got back to their spawn room, exhausted but delighted. They were all putting their weapons in their lockers with a big smile on their faces.

"We make good team!"

"I knew we would win. D'you know why? Cause they ain't as smart and handsome as me!"

"Shut up, young maggot! We won because stars and stripes always win, that is the American spirit and as Americans, God will save us and make us win!"

Medic was about to protest and correct Soldier about his country of origin but then thought that it was surely better that way.

"Any wounded?"

"Non, Docteur. Everyone is fine."

"Very vell. Zhen if you'll excuse me, I vill go to my Medical Bay."

"See ya Doc' and good job back in the battlefield!"

"Zthank you Engie."

The man in the now yellowish, dusty labcoat left the respawn room and did as he told the team.

Heavy went back to his room, took a shower and sat on his bed with a book. He was enjoying the reading when he heard a knock on his door.

----

Hey guys,

A shorter chapter and an insight to the battlefield all TF2 players know so well!

Thank you all for your reviews, it really helps me go on!

As always, please feel free to give me feedback :)
"Da?"

"It's me, Medic."

Heavy jumped out of his bed, and opened the door.

"Hallo Misha, I made a breakzhrough in my research, may I come in? I need to tell you more!"

Heavy nodded and smiled at the leettle man's excitement. Medic entered his room and Heavy closed it after him.

"I found a vay to make anyone of us invicible!"

"You sure?!"

"Ja! Vell, it's only effective for a few seconds. 8 to be precise. But zhat gives us an immense advantage on the BLU!"

"Is very good, Doktor!"

"I told you, you can call me Ludwig."

"Ah, da, sorry Ludwig."

"Kein problem. Where was I... Ah, yes, invincibility! The only thing is zhat I need to put a small device on everyone's heart."

Heavy gulped and opened his eyes wide.

"Don't worry, it is a pretty simple procedure. A little open-heart surgery, nozthing more. And zhat's vhy I came to see you. I vant to try it on you first, Misha."

"Me?!"

"Ja, you are a very strong man, you have the least risk of dying. And even so, there is always respawn. Please, vould you kindly accept? It vill only take an hour or so?"

Heavy thought this through in his head. As Ludwig said, even if he died, there's the respawn system. It would save him and erase whatever the doctor did to him.

"Alright Doktor."

"Danke mein freund! You vill not regret it! Follow me to the Medical Bay!"

Heavy followed Medic who was almost running with excitement. They soon got out of the building and through the dead garden. Medic kicked the door open and waved Heavy to the operation room. Heavy entered and saw that everything was in place.

"Please lie down, I'll be a minute."

Heavy did as told and waited. It took Medic a second to put on a snow white labcoat and a new pair of gloves.
"Alright, zhere we go!"

He grabbed the medigun which was hanging from the ceiling and aimed it at Heavy. He flipped a switch and Heavy began to relax. He waited for a few minutes. Looking at the clock, 5 minutes had passed. He took a scalpel and began the operation. He cut Heavy's chest open neatly and put his gloved hands on the Russian man's heart. He blushed.

"Should I be awake for this?"

"Erm, not really but don't worry, zhe Medigun is keeping you safe!"

Medic turned around, took a small device that was put on the table and plugged it into Heavy's heart.

"Now, most hearts couldn't vizhstand zhis voltage but I'm pretty sure yours..."

Heavy's heart burst into Medic's hands.

"What was noise?"

"Zhis mein freund? It is zhe sound of progress!"

As he promised, the whole thing took less than an hour. At the end, he aimed a medigun that was hanging above the operating table and sealed Heavy's torso back.

"What now?"

"Now" Medic laughed, "Let's go practise medicine."

He took his field medigun and aimed it at Heavy who was following Medic's orders but was not understanding what exactly he was supposed to do. He sat up on the hospital bed. Then the doctor flipped a switch and Heavy and himself turned bright red, as if a shining red shield was covering them.

"HAHAHAA! I AM A GOD!" Shouted Medic.

Heavy looked at his hands and saw them glowing. Medic was right, that surely gives an advantage against BLU.

"I shall call it zhe Übercharge!"

Medic took out his bonesaw and tried cutting his own head.

"DOKTOR?!!"

The blade of the bonesaw didn't cut him; even better, when pressed against the man's flesh, it made a clinging sound as if was pressed against something made of metal.

"JA! I AM ZHE ÜBERMENSCH!"

The red glow flickered and went off.

"Woah Ludwig, is powerful!"

"Jawöhl, I'm so glad it works! I just have to perform zhis surgery on everyone and zhen ve'll crush zhe BLU team."
He was grinning maliciously and went and put both his hands on the Russian's shoulders. Misha's eyes widened in surprise then his glare softened. All he could see was Ludwig's face. And God that man was handsome. Those piercing blue eyes hidden behind the small spectacles. Misha wanted to take them off and...!

He bit his lip. No. No, no, no. He had noticed Ludwig hand used to bear a ring. It was during lunch. Now that he thought about it, that lunch went weird. Everyone was cheering and in a good mood when the phone rang. Engie got up and answered it.

"Doc, it's for you."

"Alright."

Medic had got up and took the phone.

"Hallo?... ach... Ja..."

Heavy couldn't understand what Medic was saying as he was speaking in his mother tongue. But he saw the German's mood go from cheerful a minute before, to sad and depressed. Anyway, when he hung up and resumed his seat, Heavy asked him to pass him the salt. The German handed it to him and it was at that moment that his eyes stopped at the difference of tan on his ring finger. He had felt his heart drop to his feet.

Such a little, fragile yet brilliant person. No wonder he's married. He thought to himself.

His face was now a bit sad. Yet another person that life had put in front of him just to mock him.

"See that handsome, nice person? Well, here's the funny bit: HE IS TAKEN."

"Are you okay mein freund?"

Ludwig's question broke Misha's train of thoughts. He shook his head to shake away those thoughts and realised that he was still with Ludwig in the operation room.

"Erm... Da... is ok..."

"I can clearly see you are not. Tell me. Are you feeling unwell after the übercharge? Is something hurting?"

"No, no, is ok, Doktor. Übercharge felt good."

"Alright."

Medic began to turn his back to grab his notebook but stopped.

"Can I ask you something zhen Misha?"

Heavy's heart beat accelerated. He felt a drop of sweat on his brow.

"Da?"

"Why are you pretending that you can't speak English fluently?"

"What?"

"Oh come on. You are a literary person. You know at least Russian and French. Surely you know English to an excellent level."
Heavy sighed. And he had to be incredibly intelligent with all that.

Well, I'm a bit shy and I don't want people to ask me questions about myself. So I pretend I can't speak fluently. Worst case, they think I'm dumb. Best case, they try to help me improve my English. Anyway, they don't ask me about myself."

"Ah, I see."

"You're very clever, Ludwig. Do you think anyone else guessed it?"

"Nein, I don't zhink so."

"Good."

Silence fell in the doctor's office.

"Now my turn. Can I ask you something?"

"Vell, I guess you can after all."

"Why were you sad during lunch today? Was it that phone call?"

Medic raised his eyes, he was surprised.

"Ahem... Zhat is a little bit too personal Misha."

"Oh... I see, I'm sorry."

"But... Given zhat I confronted you vizh something personal, I might as vell make an effort myself. Zhat's how friendship vorks isn't it?"

He cleared his throat, put a clenched fist behind his back and started walking in circles in the operation room.

"Vell, here is zhe story. I used to be married to a woman. Beautiful and very gentle in her manners. Ve vere living a good life until very recently."

He stopped walking, lowered his head.

"I discovered zhat she vas cheating on me vizh someone else."

Heavy gasped a bit.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Ludwig."

Technically yes, he was. But deep down, he was feeling otherwise.

"You don't have to be. She betrayed my trust. And she tried to hide it from me. Anyvay, soon after I found out about all zhis, I started vorking more at my clinic and I tried all I could to avoid being home."

Ludwig jumped on the hospital bed next to Misha's, facing him.

"Zhat's vhen zhe funny bit happened. She zhought zhat I vas seeing someone! She confronted me and I told her zhat I vas doing nothing but trying to drown my pain in vork because I knew what she had been doing... In she end, she made me pack my stuff and leave. As if I vas the guilty one."
"But you were doing nothing wrong!"

"Ja. But being weak and broken as I was, I didn't object. I did as I was told, rented a small flat in Teufort, quitted my job and started living there. That is until I was hired by the Administrator and Mr Saxton Hale."

"I'm sorry for what you have been through..."

"Danke. I'm sorry for myself, ja, and for the kids. We have 2 lovely kids. Now she forbids them to see me."

He paused, got up and fetched two cups that he filled with water. He gave one to Misha. He thanked him with a nod and Medic sat down again. He drank a bit and continued his story.

"So yesterday, I got this phone call. She's filling the forms to ask for a divorce. It turns out that she was only with me for my money. I tried to tell her that maybe we could arrange things, for the kids, for us, for me... But she was determined. I accepted but insisted that I should have a permission to see the kids. She was difficult to convince for that but she finally accepted it. When I hung up, I took my wedding ring out of my finger and..."

He put his hand in his pocket and took the ring out.

"Put it in my pocket. To be honest with you. I feel free now. She betrayed me, my trust and my children. She's been having this affair for a year...! A year of lies. A year of deceit. A year of fake 'I love you's. A year of..."

Tears were streaming down his face. He covered his face with his hands and started crying silently. The ring fell to the floor. Misha's glance hardened. He put his cup of water away, got up and hugged the German tight. He felt him crying, startling slightly at times.

*What the hell is wrong with his woman?* Heavy thought. She had a loving and caring husband who no doubt was a good dad to their kids and she threw it all away for what? Another man? Surely you can't find as good a man as Ludwig. Okay he goes a bit crazy at times but that's the charm of him. God damn that wicked woman!

Misha's thoughts were interrupted as he felt Ludwig's arm around him. Little by little, he stopped crying and calmed down.

"Danke Misha and I'm so sorry, I didn't want to... I mean I couldn't help-"

"No problem Ludwig. It's ok."

They stayed like this for a couple of minutes. To Misha, it felt like eternity as he appreciated each and every second of it. To Ludwig, it felt incredibly good. He felt safe in those big arms. He broke the hug and looked up at Misha's face. The latter saw him with red, swollen eyes but still found the man irresistible. Their heads were a few inches away. Misha was fighting against himself to not yield to the temptation. He put his forehead on Ludwig's and closed his eyes, smiling.

"Don't worry Ludwig. Now I'm here. I'll take care of you."

Heavy gasped. He didn't mean to say that aloud! Oh God, why did he speak aloud? Now he knew what was going to happen. As always, the man is going to push him off, to mock him for his sentimentality. That was none of his business! He should not have been that intrusive. Oh congratulations Misha, you ruined it again. If there was any awkwardness award, it would go each year to you!
"Danke, Misha"


His thoughts were interrupted again. But this time it wasn't a hug. Misha smiled, blushed and felt his heart explode in his chest. The German had thin lips but by God he knew how to use them! Misha was on a cloud in the sky. He didn't have to try and hide his sexual preference anymore. He was free. He was not made fun of. He was not at the boxing club at Uni. He was not kicked out after his body betrayed him at the shower with his teammates. He was here. At Ludwig's office. And he was receiving a kiss from that very man he thought was sculpted by the Gods themselves. He was receiving a kiss by the one his heart was beating for. He was receiving a kiss by the one he was anxious to not see again if the respawn system failed. Now he could admit it to himself.

He broke the kiss. Ludwig opened wide eyes.

"I'm-I'm sorry Misha, I don't know what-"

"Thank you."

"Was?"

"I said thank you."

"Ja, I heard but why? You're not going to push me away?"

"No. I've been feeling that way for you since the bus ride."

"Really?"

"Da. But obviously I thought you were not interested by men and then I noticed your ring and..."

"Misha"

"Da?"

"Promise me to never leave me."

"I will never leave you on one condition."

Ludwig's eyes looked afraid.

"Get that divorce as fast as possible."

Ludwig smiled and jumped at Misha's lips again.

"Of course, mein liebe."

---

Hey guys!

Things are getting intense with this one :) !

I hope the style is not too awkward/clumsy.

As always, please feel free to leave a review to tell me what you think of my ideas. I always read all your feedback.
Oh and by the way, sorry for the typos, you might find some. The thing is I write on my note on my phone and then I send them on my computer but I don't take much time to proofread cause I'm lazy!

Thanks a lot!
-Engie's garage, evening.-

"Mmmh-mmie?"

"Oh hey Pyro, how are you partner?"

Pyro cheered.

"Since you're here, I wanted to thank you. You've been a real help on the battlefield. I mean that nasty BLU Spah can be a real pain if he starts messing with mah contraptions. But you were always around with that fire o' yours, thanks."

Engie smiled. Pyro bent his head on one side. He liked to see his friend happy. He looked at Engie for a second and jumped on him. He gave him a warm hug.

"Hahaha, I'm the one s'pposed to give you a hug to thank you Py'! You mind if I call you Py' ?"

Pyro shook his head and let go of Engie.

"So, why did you come'n'see me at night? Somethin' needs repairin'?"

Pyro shook his head.

"Uh? Then why?"

The pyromaniac went straight to a chair on which a guitar was rested. He pointed at it, clapped his hands excitedly and mumbled a "please".

"Oh you want me to play? I see, give me a second to wash mah hands and I'll play somethin' to you, just sit down and make yourself at home."

Engie turned his back and went on one of the corners of the garage to the sink. That workshop of his was immense, half of it was full of tools, metal scraps, blueprints hung on the wall. The other half had a chimney, a sofa, a couple chairs and a fridge.

He took the guitar, sat on the couch. Pyro sat on the floor in front of him.

"Anythin' you wanna hear in p'ticular?"

Pyro shook his head.

"Alrighty then."

Engie took off his glove, hat and goggles, and started playing a calm ballad. He starting singing after a short intro. He sang about his family, his life in Texas. The vast landscapes, the ranch, the horses. His brother, who seemed to be a lovely person. How he missed all this. Pyro rested his head on his palms. He was soothed by the song and Engie's voice. He was feeling that kind of nostalgia Engie was describing. The song was efficient. Soft but deep.

The song then took a cheerful turn. Engie started to sing about the teams and the war; not in a military or sad way. No, he was singing about the funny side of it. How you could die and respawn which was nonsense for a war! How you could be instantly killed by a small knife to your back,
even if you were the biggest Russian bear. How some rockets, syringes or grenades were randomly more deadly than others. It made Pyro giggle.

Engie stopped his song. Pyro mumbled sadly.

"What is it Py'? Oh you want another song? Well, alrighty then. This one is for you."

Engie adjusted the guitar and started singing.

"Do you believe in magic, in the young girls heart...?"

Pyro smiled. Engie smiled as well. He finished the song and then stopped and put the guitar away.

Pyro clapped his hands excitedly.

"Thanks Py', I hope you liked it. There was a little improvisation here'n'there but hey, that's what makes it fun!"

Pyro nodded.

"You know what Py', you remind me of mah kiddie."

Pyro looked surprised.

"Yeah I have a son back in Texas. He would'a loved the lighter tricks you showed me in the bus ride! He's still a small kiddie."

Engie was smiling sadly. Pyro got on the couch next to him and gave him another. He gently put his head on Engie's shoulder.

"Hahaha, you're cute Py', thanks."

Engie returned the hug. Both of them were having a lovely time together. Completely ignorant of the fact that a few meters away, some teammates were not as cheering.

"Please Sniper, open your door. I need to talk to you."

"Get away you Spook!"

Spy continued knocking on the van's backdoor.

"S'il vous plaît mon ami. I'm sorry, I did not want to overstep the mark. I did not want to show off. It was a mistake and a very unprofessionnal one."

"I said GET. LOST."

"D'accord, now listen to me you Bushman..."

Now Spy would try the less nice way to communicate. He raised his voice.

"I only wanted to make friends with your unsocial self! We are both lonely souls and I thought that maybe, maybe we could cooperate because remember that we will have to cooperate on the battlefield and-"

Sniper opened his door quickly, jumped off the van and took Spy by the collar.

"You talkin' about cooperatin'? You mongrel, it was I who saved your skinny arse back on the
battlefield, those headshots came from ME! I always had your back you Spook, wherever you went, I was always watching you from far away! So now quit your fancy talk of "moon amee" and that nonesens and tell me what the bloody hell you want to tell me! And then after that, I'll go back in me van you're gonna leave me alone! Spy, what the-

Spy was smiling, cigarette in his mouth.

"Why the bloody hell are you smilin' now?!"

"You opened your door."

"And?"

"Maybe we can continue that chat inside?"

Sniper sighed. He let go of the Frenchman and raised his hand in direction of the van. Both went in and Sniper shut the door behind him.

"So, what is it you want to tell me?"

"I would like to apologise."

"You already said that."

"Oui, but I don't know if you accept my apologies or not."

"Let's imagine I do, then what?"

"Then-"

Spy was looking for his words. Sniper looked at him and realised that it was the first time he saw him confused.

"What's the problem mate, lost your tongue?"

"Shut up Bushman, let me think. I would know how to say it in French but in English, it's another story."

"Then say it in French."

"What?"

"Say it in French."

"Oui but you wouldn't understand a word."

"Spook...!"

"Alright alright, no need to get angry."

Spy paused for a few seconds, cleared his throat and began to speak.

"Je m'appelle Lucien et je suis espion depuis maintenant longtemps. Dévoiler une information ne m'arrivait que dans mes jeunes années. Je suis désolé Sniper, vraiment. Je ne voulais pas t'offenser. Je- je-"

"Havin' trouble even in frog-eating language?"
Sniper was now smiling, he guessed now what Spy couldn't say aloud and was decided to make him say it.

"You know you're not helping me, right?"

"Yeah, but it's funny to see you like that."

"Like what?"

"You know, you're usually all very confident and now, you just can't speak your bloody mind. But I interrupted you, please go on, and if I may ask you, go back to English."

"I'm not some sort of dictionary you can control Sniper!"

"Yeah but I'd prefer to be sure to understand what you're sayin'."

Spy sighed.

"Alright. Listen, I said my name is Lucien and I'm very, truly sorry for what I did. It's a mistake I used to do when I was young but now..."

He laughed a bit.

"I know what you're thinking, you will say that I'm an old frog eater."

"Yeah that is exactly what you are, mate."

Both laughed.

"Spook?"

"Oui?"

"I think I might know what you want to tell me."

"And I know that you know, Bushman."

"Don't say it."

"Why?"

"Well, first it seems you can't, which makes me doubt about what you want to say, but if it's truly what I think it is, please don't say it."

"But, Bushman-"

"No. I- well, here is the thing. I have something in mind. Something I want-no I need you to say to me. All my life I've been looking forward to that moment when a special man says those words to me. When you came to me the other night, I felt comfortable talking with you about my passion for hunting and even my family. That never happened bef-"

"Je t'aime."

Sniper's body tensed instantly. He knew nothing about French but he understood that sentence perfectly.

"Did you just say-"
"I love you, yes. I doubt that it was what you expected but there it is."

Silence fell in the van. Sniper's jaw dropped. Spy lit a cigarette.

"Well, there, I said it. Now I can go away in peace."

Spy got up and was about to open the van's door to exit it.

"Lucien?"

"Oui?"

Spy turned around.

"Sit down."

"What? Why?"

"Now it's my turn to tell you something and I'm not letting you out of this van before I say it."

Spy resumed his seat.

"Oui?"

"Me too."

"What?"

The cigarette fell from his lips. It was now pitch dark outside and in the flickering light of Sniper's van, Mundy could see the wide, surprised icy eyes Lucien had.

"But why did you-"

Sniper threw his hat and aviator glasses next to him, and jumped at Spy's lips. The latter didn't regret that his cigarette had fallen a few seconds before, or it would have been a very awkward moment.

---

Hey guys, as always, thanks for reading! I hope you enjoyed the little Engie-Pyro business, and of course, the Sniper-Spy one :) !

As usual, feel free to leave a review to tell me what you think!
A few months had passed. The war was going on as smoothly as a war can go. Sometimes, the BLU would win. Other times, the RED would triumph. Each merc of each team now had lots of different weapons and they all mastered them. The good thing with Mann Co. is that you could complain if a weapon was overpowered or next to useless. Saxton Hale was personally very involved in the process of perfectioning all the weapons he provided the Mercs with.

In the RED base, everyone was now aware of Medic and Heavy's relationship. Same for Spy and Sniper.

That cold morning of December, all were enjoying their breakfasts. It was a day off for both teams and it happened to be the first day of snow for that winter.

"Hey guys, it's snowing outside! Look!"

Scout was glued to the kitchen window and his eyes were following the snowflakes as they were falling slowly from the sky. The other mercs joined him. Heavy was putting his arm around Medic's shoulder. Sniper was busy making coffee for Spy and him. The latter was playing around him, stealing his mug from his very hand and asking for a kiss in exchange for the mug. Sniper was very modest about their relationship. He blushed and looked around. Seeing everyone was busy looking at the snow, he quickly kissed Lucien and he kept his word.

Pyro was also at the window, jumping and clapping his hands excitedly.

"Good to see you that cheerful, Py'! Come on, let's finish that breakfast and go outside, whaddya say?"

Pyro nodded. They both came back to the table. Demo was excited.

"C'mon lad, let's go like Engie and Pyro!"

"Let's first finish our morning rations. And I'll show you by God how we got our independence from you!"

"We didn' invade ya, ye know, that's them bloody Englishmen! I already told ya, I'm from Scotland!"

"Scotland doesn't exist! You're just an Englishman with a dress!"

"And Nessie, what is he?! English as well?! Nah lad, he's as Scot as me and me scrumpy!"

Demo and Solly were always having fights over small, unimportant matters. Like brothers, they would fight and finish with a bottle in their hands. Scrumpy for Demo, American beer for Solly.

Ludwig and Misha stayed at the window. Ludwig had both his hands around his mug of coffee. Heavy had a toast. They were both looking at the snow.

"What are you thinking about Ludwig?"

Misha was half whispering as he still pretended to not be fluent in English to the rest of the team.

"Ach.. I zhink about Germany. My children, zhey must have grown so much. Sometimes I doubt I would even recognise zhem."
"Maybe, but they will recognise you for sure. They love you."

Ludwig blushed. He knew Misha was right. He would receive a phone call once in two weeks and talk with his kids. They were grown ups, Misha realised. The oldest was 20 and the second was 18.

Ludwig had told him that the oldest entered a medical school, like his father, and he was doing pretty good. The second was to become a science teacher. Ludwig was immensely proud of both of them. They were both good people. They were old enough to live on their own and of course Ludwig encouraged them so. He didn't want them to feel abandoned by him.

"You know Misha, they called me this week."

His eyes instantly filled with tears.

"Is something wrong?"

"No, on the contrary. Now zhat bozh of them are adults, zheir mom can't forbid anytzing anymore. They vant to spend Christmas vizh me in my small flat in Teufort."

Misha was about to bite in his toast but stopped, he turned to face Ludwig.

"That's excellent news!"

"Ja but... I told them that I would not be alone to meet them."

"What? Is your ex-wife going as well?"

"No, God no! I thought to present you to them."

Heavy gasped and dropped his toast on the floor.

"Doktor, head is hurting, can you give me pills?"

That was a code phrase for "we need to talk, let's go to the Medical Bay".

"Oh, jawohl, come on, follow me!"

They both exited the dining room and went to Ludwig's office.

"Alright, vhat is it?"

"Why did you say I was coming?!"

"Vhy not? You don't vant to come?"

"No, of course I'd love to come but.. look at me! They were used to you being with a beatiful, thin woman, now you're with me! That will be a shock for them!"

"Zhey vanted to make your aquaintance, Misha. Zhey want to know who gave me hope after what happened vizh zheir mozher, who vas zhere when I needed it zhe most."

Heavy sighed.

"You don't realise how strange it will be for them, Ludwig."

"Ja of course I know! I'm not stoopid! But Misha, zhey are grown ups now. And zhey vant to spend Christmas vizh you and me. Bitte, liebe... Come vizh us."
At that point Ludwig was in Misha's arms, looking up to him. The Russian pondered for a bit, looked down at Ludwig. Those eyes, that face. How was he going to resist? Plus, it was very important for Ludwig. And he was curious to meet them. Would they look like their dad?

"I guess we can't avoid that, I'll have to meet them someday and if they insist..."

"Is zhat a yes?"

"Da, it would be my pleasure."

Misha was smiling, Ludwig got on the tip of his toes to kiss him but Misha put his finger on Ludwig's lips. He looked confused.

"First things first. What are their names?"

"Peter and Paul."

"Peter is the oldest?"

"Ja. You vant to take notes?"

Ludwig was handing his notebook and a pen to Misha, mockingly.

"Stop mocking me you unconsiderate doctor!"

"Nein, not unconsiderate, on zhe contrary, I'm trying to help my favourite patient!"

Misha grabbed Ludwig and put his hands around his waist.

"Now that's not very ethical, is it?"

"Was?"

"To have some preferences in the patients you have to take care of!"

"Oh, as if you didn't like it, come here you insolent patient."

They exchanged a long and passionate kiss. When Ludwig opened his eyes, he saw Misha, looking down at him, eyes half closed and blushing slightly.

"You know whazh touches me vizh you?"

"My lips?"

"Cheeky boy, I'm not talking about zhat!"

Misha chuckled.

"Sorry Ludwig, only a joke. But tell me."

"Zhe fact you blush each time ve kiss, even now. Zhat makes me zhink back about our beginning. It gives zhe impression zhat you love me each day like it vas."

"The first, yes, I do. Each time I look at you, I- hey, you almost got me! You know I don't like to talk about my feelings aloud."

"Ach..! So close yet so far..! Anyvay, any ozher questions, mister inspector?"
"Da. What food do they like?"

"Why?"

"I want to cook something for them. It will be Christmas, it's good to cook lots of delicious food."

"Oh danke liebe but don't worry, zhey like eveyzhing. You could try to cook somezhing you like? Christmas is about sharing after all."

"You're right, I'll have to buy some things and I'll cook something good for them."

"Danke Misha."

"No problem. Now should we go out as well? I'll have to show you how to use the snow, I'm pretty sure you don't have any back in Germany!"

"Nonesense! I told you ve have snow every winter! It's not because you know Siberia and zhat it gets pretty freezing zhere zhat ozher places don't get snow!"

"Then come and show me if you're good with it!"

While having this conversation, they were both putting on some winter equipment. When they were done, Misha opened the door and was keeping it open for Ludwig. The latter went to the door and was stopped by Misha's powerful arm.

"You have to pay to go enjoy the snow."

"And what are your fees?"

"You know them."

Misha bent his head down a bit, just enough for Ludwig to be able to kiss him if his was on the tip of his toes.

"You never lose an chance, do you?"

"No! Never! I love you too much for that!"

Ludwig paid the fees and both went out and joined the rest of the team who were already enjoying the snow.

Pyro and Engie were building a snowman, Solly and Demo were having a snowball fight. Ludwig laid down on the ground and moved his arms and legs in the snow. He got up and showed Misha the angel he made.

"But you are my angel, Ludw-"

Misha had his back turned to Solly who hit him with a snowball.

"COME ON STALINGRAD! COME AND SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT!"

Heavy turned around to face Solly and roared.

"RUN COWARD, RUUUN!"

Now the fight included Misha and Ludwig as well.
Not far from there, in Sniper's van, the atmosphere was totally different.

Sniper had put some jazz music on. Spy was sitting on the couch, reading a book and Sniper was laying on the same couch, using Spy's lap as a pillow. The latter was running his naked fingers in Sniper's hair while he was closing his eyes, enjoying the moment.

"You're getting skinnier by the day."

"Does that mean I'm not comfortable enough for Monsieur?"

"Nah you're not, you crouton!"

"Ah, Bushman, do you even know what a crouton really is...?"

"O'course I know! You think I'm an idiot!?"

"I don't think you're an idiot, I know you're my idiot."

Lucien was an expert at that kind of smooth talk and Mundy loved it. He blushed.

"Oh by the way Mundy, can I ask you a favour?"

Sniper's eyes opened and he raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah?"

"Can you play for me?"

"Wha'?"

"Remember the first time we talked? You told me you were playing the saxophone at some bars. I'd like to see a performance, s'il te plaît."

Sniper looked up at Spy's eyes.

"Okay."

He got up and knelted down. He looked under the couch. He got a dusty box from under it. He put it on the coffee table carefully, opened it. The box was black and had a layer of dust outside. But inside... Spy's eyes widened. It was covered with purple velvet and the golden shiny instrument laid down in it. There was a few pictures thrown here and there in the box. Spy leaned down and took them to get a closer look. Meanwhile, Sniper was assembling his instrument and readying himself.

The first picture was old. It was all set in Australia and portrayed young Mundy and his dad. He was teaching him how to hold a rifle.

"Ah, I tend to forget there was a time when you were a young boy!"

"Wha'?! You're the old one around here!"

Spy smiled. He looked at the other picture. It depicted a completely different atmosphere. Mundy was surrounded by friends in a pub. All of them were raising their beers up and smiling. Mundy was having such a good time, even his hat was half falling from his head!

"I see you had good times before my time."
"Jealous?"

"No, not jealous. Envious. And you are right, I am the old one here. I regret I didn't meet you earlier in life."

"Well, being a French Spy, you were busy with them frogs' secrets, whatever that might be. Do frogs even have secrets? Like baguette recipes?"

Lucien looked at Mundy and smiled.

"You can't take things seriously, can you?"

Mundy blushed.

"Nah mate, life's short. No time to lose being serious and all that. And now that I found you, I'm going to enjoy everything to the fullest."

"Merci mon amour. But let's come back to that picture. Tell me more about it."

"Ah"

Mundy sighed.

"Well it was couple of years ago. I told ya I was playing the saxophone in pubs. Well, those were the people I played the music with. You had Garry at the drums, Joe at the bass and Jack at the piano. We were havin' fun with jazz music, we all loved it."

"I see. You 'ave any news about them?"

"Nah. Used to. Until I joined RED."

"I understand."

Silence fell in the van.

"I'm ready to play if ya still want it."

"But of course."

Mundy got up and put his saxophone to his mouth.

"Let me try on some stuff, just as a warm up. Then I'll play good stuff."

"As you please, you're the artist."

Mundy began playing notes just to stretch his fingers and warm them up. It lasted a few minutes.

"Now, to the good stuff. Anythin' you want to hear?"

"Mon amour, as always, please blow my mind."

"Okay."

He started playing. He has standing up in front of the coffee table. Lucien was sitting on the couch, leant back and was closing his eyes. He was enjoying the atmosphere. His lover was playing some music just for him. They loved each other. What else could he dream of? Alright, a part from being in his little flat in Paris...
The more Mundy played, the more comfortable he was until at some point he was dancing slowly and almost seductively with his instrument. When he opened his eyes, Lucien could see how dedicated to the music Mundy was. He was closing his eyes and was feeling the sound. Oddly enough, his eyebrows were the most expressive when he was playing. Frowning when he gets to a technical part or completely relaxed when he gets to a romantic part.

He soon finished.

"So, did I blow you mind?"

"Oui, and you did more than that..."

Lucien put a pillow on his lap, to hide the reaction of his body to the whole scene. Mundy saw it and understood instantly.

"Oh, I have that much effect on you when I play?"

"Not only when you play to be 'onest."

Mundy smiled. He liked to see how reactive and expressive Lucien's body was; contrarily to Lucien's speech which was always very calm.

"What? Why do you smile? Are you mocking me now Bushman?"

Mundy giggled.

"Nah, I'd never mock you, you know that."

"But of course..."

"Anyway, I didn't know you were that sensitive to music."

"That's why I stopped it."

"You used to play?"

"Non, I used to sing. But sometimes, I would feel things too purely and violently and I would just stop."

"Why?"

"Because if I continued, I would not be able to control my emotions any more and that's unacceptable for a spy."

"Oh, I get it."

Mundy put his instrument back in its velvet box.

"Now, your turn."

"What?"

"C'mon you heard me despite your age!"

Mundy loved teasing Lucien.

"Sing me some'in"
"But I told you I-
"Lucien, you're with me now. You can let go of your emotions and feelin's."
Lucien sighed.
"Ah, you're right. Alright Bushman, let me get ready and I'll sing something."
He got up and went in front of the coffee table. He adjusted his tie, cleared his throat. He began with some weird sounds, just to warm his vocal chords up. Then, he started singing.
"Quand il me prend dans ses bras,
Qu'il me parle tout bas,
Je vois la vie en rose."
He sang the whole song with such elegance and such sensuality... Mundy felt like he fell in love for the second time. His heart was burning in his chest. He wanted to jump at Lucien and kiss him fiercely and at the same time he wanted to listen to his magnificent voice for the rest of his life.
On Lucien's side, he was making every effort to perform the best he could. He wanted to give Mundy back the chills he felt when his was on the couch. He was feeling what he was singing. That song of, a classic, made a lot of sense for him and he wanted Mundy to remember and like that song as much as he did. Lucien felt like he was getting naked in front of Mundy, showing him a part of himself only very few people knew about. But he was his lover, he wanted him to know all there is to know about him, to share everything he could.
When he finished, Mundy looked at him, took the same pillow Lucien previously used and did the exact same gesture.
"I see I had some effect on you myself."
Mundy looked in shock.
"Lucien, your voice... It's..."
"I know, it used to be better. But with a bit of practise, it will come back."
"No, I mean it's... perfect.."
Lucien smiled and blushed.
"Well thank you mon amour but it's far from the truth! Sinatra 'as a perfect voice and I... well I 'ave a voice only for you."
Mundy blushed and lowered his head.
"It is getting quite late, let us have some rest."
Lucien was pointing at their bed.
"Shall we?"
"Yeah but let's get rested a bit later, okay?"
Sniper was grinning.

"Avec plaisir."

Mundy got up, took Lucien by his tie and went to their bed in the van. He sat down and pulled the tie closer. He took Lucien's mask off, put his lips on Lucien's, and threw the mask away. They spent a great night, so great that in the morning, Lucien had trouble finding his mask again.

---

Hey guys!

Here is chapter 9! I hope you like it :)

As always, feel free to leave a review :)

By the way, go check out "La vie en rose" by Edith Piaf, it's the most romantic song I know :)
Chapter 10

-December 24th, Teufort.-

"Are ve missing anyzhing?"

"I don't think so. We have their presents and the food. Oh and we have wood for the chimney and the christmas tree and decorations are in place."

"Alright so let's get ready. I bought 2 tuxedos, come to the room, I'll show you."

Misha followed Ludwig to his bedroom. The doctor had put both tuxedos on the bed. One was much larger than the other but both were beautiful. They both had black trousers and the same white shirt. The only difference (apart from the size) was the color of the velvet vest. Misha's one was deep blue and Ludwig's one was dark purple.

"They look ravishing. You have a very good taste when it comes to clothes."

"Danke liebe. Ve still have to try zhem on. But first let me go take a shower."

"And you expect me to wait here patiently?"

"Well, if you want you can go first?"

Ludwig had said that while getting his shirt off. When his head came out, Misha took him and put him on his shoulder.

"Vhat zhe hell?!"

"Come on Ludwig, we must take a shower!"

"Let me go Misha!"

"Nein"

"Oh you know how to speak German now?"

"Only when I want your stubborn head to listen to me!"

The giant entered the bathroom with his leettle man. From the bedroom, only laughs and kissing could be heard.

Half an hour later, both were dressed up and fresh. Misha started to feel anxious and worried as the time of the meeting with Ludwig's sons came closer. He sat down on the sofa in the living room, his eyes locked on the clock. Ludwig was busy in the kitchen, making sure the wine and champagne were ready. When he came out to the living room, he saw Misha completely petrified on the sofa.

"Somezhing's wrong liebe?"

"I- No, no... I'm juste waiting for your sons."

"Nervous, aren't you?"

"Ah, I can't hide anything from you. Yes, I'm a bit nervous. What if they get scared of me? I'm big
and strong, people usually are scared of me.

Misha truly looked anxious now.

"Ach! Nonesense! You are an adorable leettle bear!"

"Are you making fun of my accent?"

"Nein, I love it. And zhey will be everyzhing but afraid of you, I've talked to zhem, zhey are very excited to meet you. Oh by zhe way, ve vill have dinner together and zhen ve'll exchange gifts but zhey won't sleep here. I paid for a hotel room for zhem. Zhey insisted to let us have our first christmas togezher as a couple."

"Oh, they're so lovely!"

"Ja, see? Zhey won't be afraid, now relax. Zhey will come any minute now."

Ludwig hardly finished his sentence and the doorbell rang.

"Ja, I'm coming!"

Ludwig went to the door and opened to the to young boys.

"Hey Dad!"

The oldest one hugged his dad tightly.

"Oh Paul, you have grown so much! Look at you! And you Peter! You're bozh men now!"

"Thanks Dad, you, on the other hand, you haven't aged a bit!"

"Danke Peter. Please do come in. And make yourself at home!"

A few meters farther, in the living room, Heavy was standing up and waiting. He wanted to meet them and run away at the same time.

"Let me introduce you to Misha. If he did not come to me and talk vizh me, I vould not have overcome everyzhing!"

"Nice to meet you sir."

"Erm... oh come on, you can call me Misha, no need to make things formal! Welcome to both of you and I'm delighted to meet you. I heard a lot about you two!"

"I hope it's nice things!"

"Of course it is! You two seem like fine young men, your father is very proud of you."

Peter looked an exact replica of his dad. Same eyes, same hair color and even the lock of hair was there! Paul was completely different and after seeing some pictures of Ludwig ex-wife, Misha saw the resemblance with his mom. He had blue eyes, but their shape was totally different from his dad's. Plus, he had blond, curly hair. Both were very good looking.

"Come on let's have dinner kids!"

"Am I a kid now?"
"Jawohl, you always have been, Misha. Plus, given my old age, everyone here is a child compared to me!"

Misha wanted to tease him more but the presence of Peter and Paul stopped him from doing so. They all took a seat around the table and Ludwig came back from the kitchen with a bottle of wine.

"Who wants some Bordeaux? It's a Domaine des Graves. Our French colleague assured us it was of the best quality."

All wanted to taste that fine wine. While Ludwig was pouring it in each glass, Misha got up and began to cut the turkey.

"By the way kids, you should know Misha prepared the turkey. He didn't want me to come near him while he was preparing it. He told me he used a special recipe."

"Da, my mother used to prepare bears like that and I thought it might as well work with a turkey!"

Misha sliced it easily and served each man.

"Let me give you some potatoes Dad."

"Ja, bitte. But not too much, I must keep some space for dessert!"

When the plates were all filled, they all started tasting the food and wine.

"The wine's excellent! Your French colleague has excellent taste!"

"Danke Peter, I'll let him know. You know he mocked us, the devil! He thought the only thing the Germans could appreciate was beer! What a cliche!"

"Don't get angry Dad, he's only teasing you."

"Ja, ja, I know but I can't help it."

"Oh by the way, mom told us to wish you a merry christmas."

"Peter!"

The older brother look at the youngest fiercely. Misha's jaw dropped. He had already seen that look... on his dad on the battlefield! It is oddly funny to see how the older son, the one who wanted to become a doctor like his dad, already looked a lot like him, even in his manners.

"No problem Peter, don't get angry at your brother. Well, send her my best wishes when you see her and thank her for me bitte."

Ludwig said those words in the most calm and peaceful way there is. Misha had never seen him woeaking about his ex-wife so calmly.

"By the way, how is she?"

Paul wanted to answer but he was interrupted by his older brother.

"She broke up with the other guy. She's living alone now."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Is she alright?"
"Well, she's been looking for a job and she found one. She's a secretary at the bank in downtown Teufort."

"Zhat's good if she found a job."

"Problem is, she hates it. You know how she never got a job in her life because she-"

Silence fell.

"Because she found me? Is zhat what you wanted to say Peter?"

"Ja, dad. I'm sorry I didn't mean to be rude or anything."

"No problem, son. Plus it's zhe truzh after all...! Anyway, you vere saying...?"

"Ja, she's hating her job. I told her to go and take some classes about something, get a proper degree and do something she likes. But you know how she is, she doesn't listen and she's very stubborn. So in the end, I quarelled with her and she said she doesn't want to see us anymore. That we were all 'Ludwig's products' and that we were 'worth as much as him'."

"Woah, I had no idea zhings got zhat bad vizh your mozher... Can I do somezhing to help?"

"Nein, Dad. Best thing you can do is stay as far away as possible from her. She doesn't know we're spending christmas with you and Misha. She doesn't even know about Misha!"

"I see."

"Sorry I might have the ruined the atmoshpere there."

"Nein, son, kein problem. But you are right, let's change zhe subject ofzhis conversation."

"Dad?"

"Yes Paul?"

"Can I ask you about something?"

"Jawohl, what is it?"

"How did you meet with Misha? I understand you are both colleagues but how did it... you know... get beyond that?"

"Zhat's very personal Paul, but if Misha agrees, I'll tell you about it."

Misha nodded and Ludwig explained that for him, things began when Archimedes landed on Misha's shoulder and he saw how Misha was looking at him. Then the Russian gave his version of the stry and said that for him, all began in the bus. They all exchanges laughs and funny stories until dessert.

"Shall I let you get it Misha?"

"Da."

Misha got up, went to the kitchen and came back with a huge chocolate cake. It looked fabulous with whipped cream and cherries on top.
"I don't know how to cook lots of things but this cake... mmm... even the smell brings me back years ago when I was still living with my mother and sisters. Let me tell you about that birthday we got Sergei."

"Who's zhat?"

"Our pet bear."

"Are you kidding? You had a pet bear?"

"To be precise we have a pet bear, Sergei, he's adorable, very fluffy and very loyal. You would not believe how we got it."

Misha went on with his story was Ludwig was cutting the cake in slices and giving each one a slice. He looked at Misha's face. Well, he looked way more relaxed than a few hours before! Then his eyes went on his kids. Both were looking comfortable with Misha. That alone made Ludwig feel overjoyed. He could not imagine a better way to spend Christmas than with the love of his life and his two children who were now nearly adults.

In a few minutes, all plates were emptied.

"Misha, your cake is delicious, do you think you can teach me how to make it?"

"Da, of course Peter, the recipe is really simple. I'm not a good cook so if the recipe is complicated I don't even try the thing. You'll see, you can't mess it."

"Danke."

"Bitte. Is my pronunciation right time?"

"Ja, you're making progress, zhat's good! Now, you go get zheir presents, I'll clean up zhe table vizh zhem."

"Ok Ludwig, I'll be a minute."

Misha got up and went to the bedroom. He got 2 boxes, wrapped with shining, glossy blue wrap paper and a red ribbon. He came back to the living room.

"Merry Christmas Peter and Paul. Here are your presents."

"Thank you Misha, you shouldn't have!"

"No, it's my pleasure. I made them myself. I hope you'll like them."

Both Peter and Paul unwrapped eagerly their presents. One was a wooden sculpture of Ludwig and both his kids looking much younger. They couldn't have been more than 6 year olds on it. Ludwig was holding them both by their hands and seemed to be walking happily, a smile on his face.

Peter looked astonished.

"You made that Misha?!"

"Da, I love to work on wooden sculptures or pieces of furniture. I used to build small toys for kids sometimes, back in Russia. It was a hobby of mine."

"I'm really impressed at the level of detail, dad really looks younger on this!"
"Bah! I don't look younger than in real life!"

"But how did you do it?"

"I carved some wood and burnt some of it, to give it some shadows. Oh and I found a picture your dad always keeps with him. That was my model for this."

Paul finished to unpack the second present.

"Woah what is that?"

"There are 2 books. The one called 'Mrs Dalloway' is for you Peter, your dad told me you loved Virginia Woolf and that's her best for me! The other one is 'Le Horla', it's for your Paul. Your dad told me you were about to go study in France and I thought about an excellent short novel in French."

"Oh and by the way boys, if you need literary advice, ask Misha, he has a PhD in literature, he knows lots about it!"

"That's very cool! You did it in Russia?"

And so the conversation went on between the four men. Misha told them about how life was at his time in University, how the studies at that time were very hard.

"Our turn to offer you something! There, that's for both of you."

Paul handed a present to his dad.

"Ah, danke Paul, you really shouldn't have."

"Ken problem Dad."

Ludwig unwrapped it. It was one of those cameras that printed the picture as soon as you take it.

"Oh! Danke schön kids, it's really a beautiful gift. You know what? I have an idea, come close to me, all of you!"

Ludwig held the camera and turned it to take a picture of all four of them.

"Now, all say 'Merry Christmas'!"

They all did and Ludwig took the picture. The thin picture came out of the camera. Ludwig took it and shook it for a second then he looked at it. That's when he realised.

This is it. I am living with a man who literally kills people to save me and I have two marvelous kids. What more could I ask for? He thought.

"You okay Dad?"

"Ja, ja Peter. Come and see the picture!"

"Can we take a couple more? One for Peter and one for me and some more, just for fun?"

"Of course!"

They took more pictures and Ludwig handed one to each of his children.
"I have a present for you Misha."

"Oh... alright."

Paul gave Misha a box. He was very curious. He took his time opening it.

"Oh my God... that's... beautiful...I-..."

It was a photo album. But not any kind. Ludwig must have participated. There were pictures of young Ludwig, grown up Ludwig with his baby kids, more of Peter and Paul growing up... And then there were some pictures of Ludwig and him at the RED base and even on the battlefield!

"Dad told us lots about you. You're family now. That's our album now."

Paul was speaking as Misha was turning pages. When he arrived at the end on the filled pages, Misha was about to close the book but Paul put his hand in it.

"Wait... Look at that... Now, that looks better!"

Paul put some of the picture they just took.

"I can't thank you enough, I-..."

"You don't need to, it was the kids' idea, I just helped them with some pictures. I even asked Engie to hack the Administrator's camera to get those on the battlefield!"

"Come here."

Misha embraced both kids.

"Thank you, thank you both a million times. It means the world to me."

"No problem, Misha, you're like Dad for us now."

Misha lowered his head down. He didn't want them to see that a tear was running down his cheek.

Peter came to him and hugged him.

"Dad, can you leave us for a second?"

"Ja, ok, I'll clean up some stuff in the kitchen, call me back when you need me."

Ludwig went to the kitchen and left Misha, Peter and Paul in the living room.

"Dad told us what you meant to him. He never talked about anyone like that, he never talked about mom like this."

"I-"

"No, let me please finish. What I want to tell you is that our father has never been so happy. We've never seen him telling jokes during dinner, we've never seen his eyes shine like this, we've never seen him look at someone like he does with you. We know what our mom did. It's unforgiveable. It's so unforgiveable that even we don't talk to her like we used to. Anyway, the idea is, we want to thank you, isn't it Paul?"

"Yes, you took care of Dad when he was at the saddest point in his life and you turned it into the
beginning of the happiest part of it. Danke Misha, really, thank you."

Misha was taken aback. His jaw dropped more and more as the two brothers were talking.

"I don't know what to say, really. No, wait, I know."

He paused for a second.

"Your father is a blessing to me. I've always been mocked and humiliated in my life for my size, for my - Anyway, I've never felt at ease with anyone, even my own mother, except your Dad. He means the world to me. I promise both of you I take care of him, best as I can."

"We have no doubt about that, thanks."

"No, thank you for accepting me the way you are doing. I feel like I have a family of my own now, it's..."

Ludwig himself interrupted the discussion.

"Can I come back, I washed all zhe dishes and I'm starting to wonder if it's not some kind of strategy for you guys to avoid it!"

"Da, you can come back, if it's ok for you two."

"Jawohl."

Ludwig came back. He had taken his vest off and rolled up his sleeves. Despite being a medical man, his arms, like the rest of his body, were muscular.

"By the way Dad, it's getting late, we'd better head back."

"Oh ja, you're right. Alright, let me get your coats."

"No, let me do it, you've been doing everything since they arrived."

Misha put his hand on Ludwig's shoulder as he went past him.

"Danke schön Dad, dinner was amazing and Misha is a very nice person. I'm very happy for both of you."

"Danke Paul. Oh make sure you don't forget anyzhing in zhis flat."

"Don't worry, we got everything."

Misha had got their coats and they put them on.

"Alright, merry christmas again dad and to you as well Misha."

"Thanks Peter."

They all exchanged hugs and the two boys went away. Ludwig closed the door and sighed.

"You miss them already, don't you?"

"You know me too well liebe... Ja..."

Misha went straight to the bedroom and put on some music.
"Ludwig? Come please, I need you here!"

Ludwig went to the bedroom.

"Ja?"

Misha had drawn the curtains closed. He came and put his hands on Ludwig's waist. He started dancing slowly with him. Ludwig put his arms around Misha's neck and rested his head on the Russian's shoulder. They danced, slowly, in a delicate way and no words were exchanged. They both enjoyed the moment, there, now. When the music stopped, they still continued to dance for a minute or so. Then Ludwig raised his head and kissed Misha in the neck. They both stopped dancing.

Despite the freezing cold of the night, the couple spent a very warm night.

---

Hey guys!

As always, thanks and please leave a review to tell me if you liked it and your opinions about it.

That chapter is a bit long for obvious reasons!

I had to put lots of effort to translate my ideas and to make that Chapter as sweet as I could!

I hope you like it and more to come...! :)
CHAPTER 11:

-Paris, December 24th-

"Bonjour Marcel."

"Lucien! Quelle surprise!"

Mundy still didn't know what he was doing here, in one of the fanciest restaurants in Paris, with Lucien. He had to dress sharp, Lucien insisted.

"I have a surprise for you, but you shall be dressed up in the finest manner for it!"

He had said.

And now, here he was standing, in the hallway of one of the most beautiful and finest restaurants in Paris, on the Champs-Élysées. Lucien seemed to know very well the staff, which surprised Mundy.

"Please, Marcel, I'll ask you to speak in English. My partner is Australian and it is his first time in Paris."

"Ah, I see! Welcome mister...?"

"Mundy, you can call me Mundy."

"Ah, nice exotic name! Please, follow me. I booked the best table for you, you will be in a quiet corner, and you will have the best view of the stage."

"Merci Marcel."

The couple followed the waiter to a table and indeed from there, Mundy could see a large stage with a jazz band playing.

"Please take a seat, I will be a minute."

Both sat down. Mundy looked at Lucien. He was very well dressed, even better than usual. He was wearing a dark blue tuxedo and a red rose on the pocket of his vest. The lights were dim in the room so that Lucien's eyes were shining bright with the candle light.

"Lu', you... I mean your..."

"Take your time mon amour."

Mundy blushed.

"Can I tell you somethin'?"

"Anything."

"Alright, you know what I find mesmerising with you?"

Lucien smiled.
"Everything?"

"Quit your cheeky attitude, I'm tryin' to say some'in."

"Oui, sorry. And non, of course I don't know."

"Your eyes. They shine when everything is dark except for a small source of light. It's like the first
time you came to my van. It was dark and the lights were flickering. That's when I..."

"You what?"

"Ahem... Let's say that it was at that moment I knew I was...erm... attracted to you..."

"I see. Well, Mundy, I'm afraid I cannot pinpoint the exact moment when I felt that way for you for
the first time. But your personnality. The way you were secretive. That's what attracted me to you."

"That's so much like you..."

"What?"

"Isn't it such a Spook thing to be attracted by secrets?"

Lucien lowered his head and laughed.

"You are right, you always are. Oh Marcel, thank you, mon bon ami."

Marcel brought a bottle of wine and two white procelaine plates.

"So, what are those marvels, make us dream!"

"Well, I asked the Chef for his very best. You both have a filet-mignon à la forestière, with some
shallots, potatoes and champignons de Paris. These potatoes, as well as the shallots and
champignons, are organic and the sauce's recipe is kept a secret. Just for your interest, know that we
served the exact same meal to the President and Prime Minister who came last week with a foreign
leader."

"Woah, erm, mercee."

Lucien raised an eyebrow. It was the first time Mundy tried to speak French. He loved his accent.

"De rien Monsieur Mundy. To accompagny you delicious meal, I have personnally selected a very
fine wine, one of our very best, a Château Yquem, 1994."

As he described it, Marcel poured a bit of the said wine into Lucien's glass. The latter raised the glass
to his nose, shook it a bit and looked at it with his cold icy eyes. He tasted it, kept it in his mouth and
swallowed it.

"Mmh, I knew '94 was a good year but that surpasses my expectations! It is simply divine!"

"I am glad you appreciate it Lucien. Oh by the way, in case you were wondering, Jean-Paul left us.
He was offered a position in Washington."

Marcel poured the wine for both mercs.

"I am delighted for 'im! Is he doing well?"
"That's a way of saying it. People have said that he is earning a fortune in his new restaurant!"

"Good for 'im, he is an excellent chef."

"Indeed. Now please don't let me delay your dinner. Bon appétit."

"Merci."

"Mercee."

Marcel went away.

"Lu', how do you know all these guys?"

"I used to work 'ere before being a proper spy. I was a waiter and my boss was surprised how I could know things about our clients. Of course it was no espionage but simple listening, 'ere and there. I used to be the best waiter, the one clients asked about. One day, a client asked for me. I went to 'im and it turned out 'e was the head of secret services 'ere in France. He offered me a job. And 'ere I am today."

"Woah, I'm impressed..."

Both were enjoying their meal.

"Lu', this food is amazing. I don't what the chef put in there but it's simply marvelous!"

"You're right Mundy, it is divine."

They exchanged laughs and funny stories about their respective careers until they finished.

Lucien raised his hand.

"Oui, Lucien."

"Tout est prête?"

"Oui."

"Alors allez-y."

"D'accord."

Mundy was lost. He didn't understand what was going on. Marcel clapped in his hand twice and a new band came on stage. Mundy's jaw dropped. Three men he recognised instantly. Jack, Gary and Joe from the pubs back in Australia! They began playing a piece they used to present in pubs. Mundy had tears in his eyes, he was speechless.

"How the bloody hell...?"

"Remember, I'm the Spy. I know where people are."

"I-I mean..."

Mundy was overwhelmed with the feeling of joy. His old friends were there with him.

"It's a bloody Australian Christmas miracle!"
"Non, it's a French one."

Lucien winked, he was delighted to see Mundy was appreciating the gift.

"Would you like to join them?"

"O'course! But I don't have my-what?"

He was about to say "saxophone" when Lucien handed him the black box containing his instrument.

"What the-"

"Enough questions! Proceed, come on, I don't have all day!"

Mundy got up, took the case and jumped on stage. He got his saxophone out and played with his friend. Like the good old days.

"I told you it would work Marcel."

"I still don't know how you could do it but I guess you have your ways. I remember you were very good at gathering information about people. But look at him now. Monsieur Mundy looks overjoyed."

"Oui, mon ami, indeed."

"So you won your bet. The food and wine is on the house!"

"I told you I could have an australian jazz band for tonight. You should never take bets with me Marcel!"

"I'll make sure to remember that."

At the end on the song, the customers applauded loudly. When the applause ceased, Mundy whispered a few words in his friend's ears and then, the piano began. Lucien dropped his fork. He recognised those chords. He felt a burning sensation in his chest. In his whole body. Mundy was waving his hand to him, calling him to join the stage. Lucien got up, straightened his bowtie and jumped on stage. He cleared his throat, took the mic and started singing.

"Quand il me prend dans ses bras,
Qu'il me parle tout bas,
Je vois la vie en rose."

He began singing and turned to face Mundy. He didn't care about the customers, he only cared about the man who gave his life a meaning, a purpose. He wanted to sing only for him.

The atmosphere completely changed in the restaurant. It went from jazzy to romantic. The lights were dim and only a couple projectors lit Lucien, Mundy and his crew. Throughout the whole song, Lucien was looking straight into Mundy's eyes. In the end, people applauded again. Lucien took the mic and began speaking.

"Mesdames et messieurs, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to say a few words if you allow me."

People got quiet and starting listening to Lucien.
"In this Christmas Eve, I'd like to tell a story. Once upon a time, in Paris was this young boy. He wasn't doing that bad at school but he knew he didn't want to become a lawyer like his dad. They often quarrelled until the young boy finished school and was a young man. At that point, he started working in cafés, bistros and then, in the most luxurious restaurant in all of Paris. He met good people there who became 'is friends and the customers loved 'im. 'e was always chatting with them and helping them decide on their meals or wine until one day. On that day, the head of the French secret service noticed 'im, 'ow 'e could gather lots of information on his customers simply by observing and listening. 'e offered 'im a job as a spy. Since then, 'is career 'as been filled with danger but 'e loved it. And one day 'e quitted his job as a spy for the French government. 'E was soon recruited by a company which needed 'is expertise in spying business. That's where 'e met the love of 'is life.

Before 'him? Well, a few women here and there. 'E was so careless with them that legend says 'e got a child. Only legends, rumors. Anyway that man he met was the reason he was living for. The reason 'e wanted to stay alive. "

He paused a bit.

"Ladies and gentlemen, that boy who became a man, an expert spy, that is me. And the man who gave a purpose to my life, that is you Mundy."

He turned and raised his hand in direction of the Australian.

"My point is, you are the best gift I could possibly dream of and when I am with you it is Christmas everyday. I wish you all a merry Christmas and I wish everyone here had that special person in their lives. Merci."

People applauded loudly again. Mundy held his head low. His friends had withdrawn from the stage only leaving Lucien and him. Tears were streaming down his face. Lucien came to him and with a delicate finger to the chin, raised his head to meet his eyes. He saw the swollen eyes and the tears.

"You are crying?"

"Nah, I'm a fruit shop owner and I just cut onions, you mongrel."

Both smiled.

"Come, we monopolised the stage long enough."

They returned to their table, with Joe, Jack and Garry.

"We're so happy for you mate! You found your man, after all those years!"

"Ah thanks guys! But how did you...?"

"Well it's your French mate, he told us he could get us a job in Paris, and a good one! So we accepted and here we are with nice tuxedos and our instruments. He told us he knew you and planned to make a surprise for you, we accepted without hesitating a second!"

Mundy hugged each of his friends tightly.

"Oh mates, that's the most beautiful thing you could do to me, thank you all, truly."

"No worries mate, it was nice seeing you again, can we get a chance to meet again someday? You staying in Paris for a long time?"
"Couple o'days."

"Perfect, we'll be in touch then!"

"Okay!"

"Have a lovely night and thanks again for the job Lucien!"

"My pleasure."

The three Australian musicians went off, leaving the 2 mercs at their table.

"Erm Lu', mind if we go home now? It's been too much for me, I need a good night of sleep."

"But of course."

Both went in direction of the exit. Mundy stopped at the reception to pay for the meal.

"What are you doing Mundy?"

"Well, I'm going to pay for-""Monsieur Mundy, Lucien took care of everything. Have a lovely Christmas night and we hope to see you both again very soon."

Mundy opened his eyes wide.

"How the bloody hell did you..?"

Lucien took him by his arm.

"Merci Marcel, see you soon!"

Lucien dragged Mundy out of the restaurant. It was snowing. What a beautiful scenery. But Mundy was still surprised.

"I don't get it!"

"It is a long story mon amour but I arranged it, no need to pay."

"How did you do that?!"

"Well, no need to go into these details."

"Nah I wanna know. Tell me."

Lucien sighed.

"Alright, alright. The restaurant was in desperate need of a jazz band. But not an American one. They've 'ad enough of those. They wanted something more... exotic! So I got in touch with Marcel and explained to 'im that I knew a very good Australian jazz band. The rest you can guess. Voilà!"

"Woah... You bloody Spook sure know how to get what you want!"

Lucien smiled.
They walked their way back home. Lucien was now renting a more spacious flat than his previous tin can. When they arrived, Mundy threw his vest on the sofa and collapsed on it. He undid his bowtie and threw it away.

"You can't dress properly very long, can you?"

"Nah, I bet I looked like them penguins in that suit. And that bowtie was stranglin' me, how can you bear it?"

Lucien bent in front of Mundy, put his hands on the Australian's knees.

"So tell me mon amour, did you like my present?"

"Oh, Lu' it was more than perfect. Thank you. Thank you and bless you."

Lucien came closer to Mundy. He closed his eyes.

Hopefully, Mundy undid his bowtie previously or he would have been distracted and would have taken ages to do it. And now was not the time to fool around.

---

Hey guys!

As always, thanks a lot and please leave a review so that I know if you like that kind of content or not!

That's another very romantic chapter, I hope you like it!

See y'all! :D
CHAPTER 12:

The war had stopped for a couple of weeks. Administrator's order. No one had any explanation for that but all the mercs, both in RED and BLU, were enjoying this improvised holiday.

-RED Base, spring of that new year-

Medic came out of his Medical Bay to get some food from the kitchen. He liked to have something to share with his doves while he was working. He was about to cross the dead garden.

"Oh!"

Flowers had grown there and it was gorgeous. Someone had been taking care of that alley and had put lots of effort into it. The dusty soil had been replaced by compost and some beautiful tulips and orchids had grown. Misha came out at the opposite end of the alley. He was holding a watering can.

"Is zhat you Misha?"

Ludwig was pointing at the flowers.

"Da. I've come to water them. This desert could be fatal to them."

"It looks gorgeous! Have you been doing it for a long time? I didn't even realise that the soil changed."

"Couple of weeks."

"You sure are an amazing gardener!"

"Thank you. I love gardening. It's like raising kids, you see the seeds evolve. But it's much easier."

"Ach, don't tell me about it. You vant some help maybe?"

"Da, take this."

They both took care of the thin strip of now flowered land that separated the Medical Bay from the central house. A loud ringing sound interrupted everyone.

"Was that the front door?"

Asked Scout.

"Is anyone waiting for someone or something?"

"Nah Spook, I don't think so."

In a few seconds, everyone gathered at the door.

"Let us open it partners."

Engie opened the door and to everyone's surprise, the BLU Spy was standing.

"Sorry to pop in unannounced. I 'ave come as a neighbour and not as an enemy, we need to discuss
something. It's equally vital for you and us."

"How can we believe ya, you lyin', sentry sappin' snake?"

"Look at this."

The BLU Spy showed them a metal thing.

"You think you can frighten us with your weird tin can, you crouton? Let me show you why you'll be really afraid..."

"Solly, calm down. Herr Spy, I think I recognise this face, it's-"

"Heavy's head, oui but in metal."

"What's that mean?"

"That's precisely why I've come to you. Now may I come in?"

Engie stepped forward.

"Alrighty then. You can enter but if you try to do somethin' that ain't normal conversation, you'll be lyin' down. Now, let us check for any weapons on you."

Demo went to search the BLU Spy. Surprisingly enough, he wasn't carrying any weapon, not even his knife.

"Must be really serious for ye ta come here without weapons!" Said Demo.

"Let's all go to the meeting room."

The 10 mercenaries went to the meeting room. All of them took a seat and the BLU Spy kept standing at one end of the big conference table.

"Gentlemen. We are having 2 problems at BLU. First, our Demoman 'as been fired. He was 'aving an affair with a married woman while being married 'imself... That's why all combat 'as ceased, if you were wondering. The Administrator is supposed to 'ire a new one."

Misha opened wide eyes. He had had Peter over the phone a few days before and the young man had told him that the man his mother had been having an affair with was a black Scottish man, with a cloth on one eye... He looked at Ludwig. He didn't look shocked at all. He must have missed the link there. Good. He thought.

What he didn't know was that Ludwig had perfectly understood. He nonetheless didn't care at all. Even better, he was feeling sad for his ex-wife.

"And for the second problem, a gigantic vessel landed behind our base a few days ago. We didn't know what it was and to be 'onest, as long as it was 'armless, we didn't care. We had our Sniper watching it day and night. Yesterday, the vessel opened and an army of robots attacked us, near our base. We fought and thought we defeated them. But it seems there are more of them, and a lot more. 'Ere, 'ave a look at this."

He put the robot head on the table.

"Our Engineer 'ad a look at it. They are all replicas of us. They 'ave Heavies, Medics, Snipers and all of us, even Spies!"
Scout gasped.

"Even me?!!"

"Yeah, you wanker, what part of 'all of us' didn't you understand?"

"We 'ad an idea with the whole BLU team. But we need your 'elp. We need to gather information about those robots but I can't infiltrate their vessel alone. A second Spy would be much appreciated. And as we are in a truce, we thought your Spy and all of you in fact, could 'elp."

"Mnh seems a good idea. But how are we all gonna make it?"

"The plan is quite simple. Both Snipers keep an eye on the vessel. Both Spies go inside and gather as much information as we can about the robots' weaknesses and how to defeat them or send them back to where they're from. Both Engies work on some upgrades to equip both whole teams. We attack them and destroy every last one of them. Questions?"

BLU Spy stopped to take his breath and light up a cigarette.

"Oui, dear friend. I 'ave a question. Is the Administrator aware of all this?"

"Ah, but that is the problem. We've been trying to contact 'er or Miss Pauling and we can't get them. It's like they've just both vanished in thin air."

"Was?!"

"And there is another problem that can be solved by this... erm... collaboration. As we can not contact our bosses, we can't ask for more ammunition, metal or whatever we need. But if we collaborate, that would give the Engies twice as much metal to work with."

The BLU Spy paused. He took a chair and sat down.

"So, what do you say RED team? Would you 'elp us?"

"And how do we know you're not trying to make us into a trap you damn frenchie? That's my American instinct kicking in!"

"Oh, very simple. Engineer, please look at that robot head. Could we 'ave manufactured it?"

Engie took the robot part and examined it. He took a screwdriver from his pocket and started unscrewing it. He managed to open the head. Medic was watching him from above his shoulder. Engie was clearly showing he was having trouble understanding the role of each part.

"What a fine piece a'work... It's a beautiful thing... but erm... well..."

He scratched his head.

"What's wrong? Can't get your head 'round it?"

"Well, Snipes... With all mah PhDs, I find this completely new, I've never seen anythin' like it. And I don't think the BLU Engineer can come up with somethin' like this..."

"So, now, are you starting to believe me?"

"Alrighty then BLU Spah, as much as I hate to say it, you're right."
"Whot's happenin' then? We're going ta work with them bloos?"

Demoman opened his lonely eye wide and raised his arms (and his bottle up). The RED Spy got up.

"Bien, mes amis. I think we have listened enough. Time to take a decision. Gentlemen, those of you who think it is a good idea to join the BLU team and defeat this so called 'army of robots', please raise your hand."

They all raised their hand (and bottle of scrumpy).

"It's not as if ve have anyzhing else to do anyway."

"Da, Doktor is right."

The RED Spy looked around.

"Bien, let's make a deal then. We 'elp you get rid of the robots and then we come back as we were; that is to say, as enemies."

"Non, that is not satisfactory. We must find the Administrator and Miss Pauling too. Without them, we can't 'ire a new Demoman and we can't fight again."

"BLU Spah's right. We oughta find the Admin' and Miss Paulin'. But first we should all gather to your base and have a big meeting with the rest of your team. C'mon everyone, let's put all our gear in the big truck we have and let's go the BLU base!"

They all exited the meeting room and while Engie was making sure the truck was correctly filled with gas, all the RED mercs gathered their stuff in the truck.

"I will drive truck."

"Alrighty then, thanks Heavy."

"I vill go vizh him."

"Alright Doc'. As for the rest of us, we have a bus. We should all fit in there, ain't it right Py'?"

"Mmmm-mmh!"

"I'll go with my van and I'll take RED Spook with me."

"Alright Snipes. Then let's all go!"

---

Hey guys!

Thanks for reading and as always, leave a review! It helps me know if you like the content and it encourages me a lot!

As for this chapter, I thought I could spice things up with a bit of adventurous stuff!

See y'all!
"C'mon partners, we've arrived at our destination."

All RED mercs and the BLU Spy got out of their vehicles and stretched their limbs a bit. They had spent 3h in the bus/van/truck.

"Gentlemen, welcome to our Base. Follow me please. Everyone is waiting for us in our living room."

The RED mercs followed the BLU Frenchman. The BLU common house was similar to the RED one. Only the pieces of furniture were different and the way they were organised. The RED mercs were nonetheless not feeling comfortable walking in their enemy base. When they arrived in the living room, all the BLU mercs were indeed waiting with tea, coffee and biscuits. Scout's face brightened at the sight of the food.

"Oh man, we should come here way more often!"

The BLU Spy rolled his eyes.

"I have not brought you here for tea and whatnot! Now listen up boy!"

The BLU Engie stepped forward.

"Welcome to y'all. Now, pardon me if I'm rather straight to the point but time's flyin'. Before we can cooperate on this mission, we still have to fix some things. First, the respawn system. It will bring you guys back to your base. We have to figure out a way of changin' that."

RED Engie interrupted him.

"Then there's the fact that if ya miss your shot and there's a member of the opposite team, you will hurt him! We have to find a way to change that as well."

BLU Medic stepped forward.

"Ve should also modify our Mediguns so zhat zhey heal people from bozh teams!"

"Ach, you are right, I haven't zthought about it!" Said RED Medic.

"As for you Spahs..." BLU Engie said.

"We have to make new diguises. You should change as robots. And a simple lil' tweek at your sappers could kill or slow them damn robots."

He paused.

"All of that means we have a lot a' work ahead of us, partners. Are you willing to help us?"

"Would we 'ave made all that trip just for a couple of biscuits and some tea?" Replied RED Spy, sarcastically.

"Alrighty then, RED Engie, I suggest you come to mah garage. We'll have plenty a'tools and all the
metal we could require."

Both Engineers were about to go when BLU Spy interrupted them.

"A last thing, Gentlemen. Last time, when we fought against the robots, each time we killed them, they seemed to drop some money. That is what will fund our war against the machines."

"Oh and by the way, when are you supposed to infiltrate their base?"

"As soon as the Engies finish to prepare what we need."

"That shouldn't take much time, partners. We should be ready by tomorrow mornin'.""

"Then we will go on our mission tomorrow night, after sunset. Meanwhile, we will help you unpack and settle here. We have a couple of spare rooms. Heavy, Demo and Soldier, please go and help RED Engie to unload the truck. Meanwhile I will show you to your rooms. Unfortunately we don't have 9 so you will be asked to make pairs."

Misha and Ludwig looked at each other as if to ask if the other would be okay to share a room.

"I'll stay in my van. Spook, wanna join?"

Lucien was feeling a bit nervous. If he said yes, the BLU team would understand that they were together and they could use it against them in future combat. Same could go for Ludwig and Misha but surely it seems more normal for Medic and Heavy to pair up than Spy and Sniper. Lucien was at a loss. He did want to spend his nights with Mundy but he did not want to compromise future missions. BLU Spy was looking at Lucien and waiting for his answer. He saw something was troubling his RED counterpart. He went to Lucien and whispered something in his ear, in French. Lucien lowered his head to hear him. Then he suddenly raised his head to his BLU colleague, open his eyes wide and smiled.

"Oui, Sniper, I will."

I don't know what he told him but in the end he's coming in my van, which is fine. Thought Mundy.

"Gentlemen, if you please."

The BLU Spy was leading the way. He lead the RED mercs in the spare rooms.

"I guess Heavy and Medic will stay together?"

"Ja, bitte."

"Da."

"Then, here is your room. Oh and bathrooms are common to everyone but I guess it is the same in your base."

"Danke Herr Spy."

"Many thanks."

Ludwig and Misha entered their new bedroom and closed the door behind them. Misha put his bag on the bed. He turned around to face Misha.

"Could you move a bit please Ludwig? I have an idea."
Ludwig nodded and moved. Misha bent in front of his bed and carried it the closest to Ludwig's own bed.

"That way, it's like we are sharing the same bed. Is it ok for you Ludwig?"

"Of course liebe, zhat's a gut idea."

- In the corridor -

"Now, both Scouts will go in the same bedroom. You are both very chatty and we reckon you'll get along very well."

RED Scout was about to protest but BLU Spy raised a finger.

"Jeremy!"

Pyro opened his eyes wide under his mask. He was surprised how the BLU Spy knew RED Scout's name. He looked at Demo and Solly but none of them seemed surprised. Well, one was drunk and the other was busy looking for mics and cameras everywhere... Even Scout wasn't surprised.

Pyro thought he'd talk about it later with Engie. The RED Engie. His Engie. Now that he thought about it, it was one of the few people he knew who would not be afraid of him, of his mask. He was a truly good man, kind hearted. But now the BLU Spy was talking to Solly and Demo.

"Scottish Cyclops and American hummingbird, there is your room. And please, quit your drinking, or at least try red wine."

"I'll stop drinkin' me scrumpy the day ye stop smokin' and backstabbin' people, ye snake!"

"Come on, King George! We need to settle our camp here!"

"George was king of England when ye got yer independence! Nuthin' ta do with us Scots!"

"Listen here private! As shocking as it might seem, I already told you Scotland does not exist! You are a British invader!"

Demo and Solly started fighting. The BLU Spy rolled his eyes and sighed.

"Anyway..."

He said as he shut the door. He turned to face Pyro.

"Now, to you, you mumbin' monstronsity... There is a spare room in Engie's garage, you and your Engie could fit in there, would that be alright for you?"

Pyro regretted he had been disarmed or he would have grilled that crouton to death!

"Mmh." He finally answered. He was still hurt by the insult but deep down, he was happy he was staying with Engie.

"Bien. Now, follow me."

They went to some stairs and through another corridor. Finally, they arrived and saw both Engies working hard on some new machines. The BLU Spy coughed as if to interrupt them but with all the clinking and clonking of their wrenches, neither of them heard.
"MMMMMH-MMH!"

RED Engie got startled, looked straight at Pyro and put his wrench away.

"Py'! Good to see you! BLU Engie here told me we gonna share a room, ya happy?"

Pyro ran and hugged both Engies.

"Hahaha, alright, alright, you're welcome there partner! Now, maybe ya could help us?"

"Yeah, I taught him all the tool's names, he's a quick learner! C'mon buddy, we got a lot'a'work to do!"

The BLU Spy looked at them both. Did I turn on my invisibility watch or did they really just ignore me? Oh alright, they're ignoring me, fine. Better get out of this filthy garage before my suit gets dirty.

And off he went to meet with his Sniper in his van.

---

Hey guys!

As always, thanks and please leave a review :) ! It helps me know if you like the story so far :)
Chapter 14

- BLU Base, RED Sniper's van -

"I'm sorry my van isn't that spacious. I should get a new one, a bigger one for..."

Lucien turned his head to face Mundy. Both were lying next to each other in Mundy's bed. It was big enough for the both of them to sleep. His piercing eyes were looking at Mundy who got the impression that Lucien was staring right to his soul. But Lucien looked like he was demanding the end of the sentence.

"I mean, I know you're not a big fan of the van but we can find a good one, a classy one. We.. erm.. I mean you... erm..."

"Mundy?"

"Yeah?"

"If your native language wasn't English I would have asked you to speak in your native language."

Mundy opened wide his eyes and smiled. He remembered the first time Lucien had told him he loved him. Say it in French, Mundy had said to him, to help him be at ease and find his words more naturally.

"Now, take a deep breath mon amour. Good. Now tell me what you want to say. It's okay, it is just me."

Mundy took another deep breath.

"I'd like to share my van with you, have pictures of you and me, have your nice tuxedos here, your masks... You... I mean.."

He paused, turned his head to face Lucien again.

"Would you like to come live with me here?"

That's it. Now he said it. He felt a drop of sweat on his brow. He knew Lu' hated to live in such a secluded space. He knew he loved classy, modern stuff. Oh God, why did he even ask? Well, because deep down he wants to share his life with Lucien. Everything. That's why he asked!

"Mundy?"

"Yeah?"

"Why wouldn't you share my flat with me? I know you would hate to have a modern van. You like yours because it's the last gift from your parents. Don't you ever give it away. You should always keep it. Just leave it as it is, it doesn't need pictures of me and you."

He paused for a second. He frowned and raised his finger.

"However, you need to settle. To have a house you can call home. That way, it will be definite for you, you are not going anywhere alone anymore. I am here and I always will be."

He paused again, lowered his finger to put it on Mundy's cheek.
"And that, Monsieur, is your curse!"

He smiled. Looking up at Mundy, he saw he has been looking at him with wide open eyes. Lucien knew this question was a risky one. Mundy had always loved his van. But they need to have their own home.

This man really reads into my soul. He knew that deep down I would have regretted it, had I changed my van. And he is right. After this life of hunting, going from one place to another, now is the time to settle down. For good.

Mundy looked at Lucien, he stared into the Frenchman's beautiful eyes. Lucien knew, from what Mundy had told him last Christmas, that he loved looking at his eyes.

"I know I have the most beautiful eyes God ever created but could you please answer the question?"

Mundy smiled. He had taken a decision. The decision. The one you take confidently once in a lifetime.

"Yeah, I will."

Lucien opened his eyes wide.

"Vraiment?"

"Whot's that mean? I told you to teach me croissant language little by little!"

"I said 'really'?." 

"Yeah, mon amoore. I'd gladly share a house or a flat with you."

Lucien hugged Mundy tightly. He left a kiss in his neck. Then another. He traveled a bit down south and the temperature rose.

- BLU Engie's garage -

"Now that's a fine piece a'work."

"And it completes the collection, partner!"

"Let's call it a day, we'll help both Docs tomorrow, first thin' in the mornin', whaddya say?"

"Alrighty then, I'm-a go to my room, get a shower'n'some sleep. See ya tomorrow and sleep well!"

"Thanks, you too!"

On these few words, both Engies parted. BLU Engie entered his room on the right of the corridor while RED Engie entered his, on the left. He saw Pyro sitting on the bed, wearing his unicorn pajamas.

"Ready to sleep Py'? Lemme just take a quick shower and I'll be with you buddy!"

Pyro nodded excitedly. He had stuck both beds next to each other.

When Engie came out of the shower, Pyro clapped his hands excitedly.

"I missed you too, mister Py'!"
"Mmmh-mh mmh-mmmh-mmh!"

"Yes I'm listenin' buddy, tell me."

Pyro began mumbling again but this time Engie had a hard time understanding him.

"Wait a minute. Here, take this notepad and this pen. Now, draw what you wanna tell me."

Pyro took the notepad and the pen on his laps. He started drawing a mask.

"Is that Spah? Our Spah? No, he's the BLU Spah."

Pyro nodded. He drew a bubble with the word 'Jeremy'. He had such a childish handwriting, it was touching. He went on with drawing the RED Scout next to it.

"Well, Spah called Scout by his n-"

Engie eyes opened wide.

"How the hell does he know Scout's name?"

Pyro raised his shoulders as if it say that he didn't know.

"Were you the only one noticin' that?"

Pyro a face half hidden by a helmet and a face with a patch on one eye.

"Oh, Demo and Solly know?"

Pyro shook his head. He drew a bottle next to Demo.

"Ah, it's his alcohol. Alrighty then, there's only you and me knowin' that? Alright. Well Py', I don't know how he got Scout's name but hey, Spies have their own way! Their business is collectin' intelligence so it might as well be part of their job."

Engie paused. He frowned and turned to face Pyro.

"Why did you seem so concerned? Oh..."

He realised that while he was speaking, Pyro fell asleep. He smiled, patted on Pyro's head and put the cover sheet on him.

"G'night Py'."

What Engie did not know was that Pyro was in fact pretending to be asleep. He did not want to answer that. Not now. Not ever.

---

Hey guys!

That's all for this one! As alsways, thank y'all and please leave a lil' comment ;)!
Chapter 15

- BLU Base, RED Sniper's van, morning after arrival -

"Bonjour mon amour."

Lucien sat on the bed and started caressing Mundy's hair. The latter smiled and opened his eyes.

"Mornin' love."

Lucien turned around, grabbed his cigarette case on the night table and lit a cigarette. The sun shone through the blinds and Lucien realised that part of Mundy's hair was shining in a light brown with the sunlight. He smiled.

"Come on Mundy, we must get prepared for tonight's mission."

Lucien got up, began to dress up. Mundy sat on the bed, his back turned to Lucien.

"Lu'?

"Oui?" Lucien turned to face Mundy's back while making his tie.

"What did he tell you?"

"Who?"

"The BLU Spook, yesterday. What did he tell you to convince you to come to my van?"

Lucien lowered his head and smiled.

"Well, 'e told me what I would 'ave told 'im if 'e were in my place."

"Which is?"

Lucien was trying to avoid the subject but now he had to answer. He sighed.

"'e told me 'je sais'."

"Whot's that mean?"

"It means 'I know'."

"That's it? Damn Spooks with their complicated language..."

Lucien laughed.

"What did you expect?"

"I don't know, some'in like... erm... 'do as you like, it's ok'!"

"Sorry to disappoint, Mundy. Spies like to be precise and efficient. If you can express your idea in 2 words, do it so!"

Mundy shook his head, got up and got dressed.
"Let's go for the 'petit dejoonay'!"

"It's 'petit-déjeuner', you're making progress!"

On this words, they exited the van to join the rest of the teams to have breakfast.

- Misha and Ludwig's room -

Misha woke up slowly, he turned to grab his lover but the bed was empty. He opened his eyes, sat on the bed and looked around. Where is he? Why did he not say anything before leaving? Misha began to feel anxious and even afraid. He thought. Better get dressed before looking for Ludwig. No need to bump into any teammates in underwear.

He got on his feet and in a few minutes he got dressed up. Now, to look for Ludwig. He went to the door, grabbed the knob and opened.

"Ah Heavy!"

"Doktor?"

Ludwig entered, pushed Misha in and shut the door behind him.

"Sorry liebe, I had to wake up early to get to vork vizh zhe ozher Medic. You'd be glad to know zhat now, we can heal people from bozh teams!"

"You could have woken me up with you, or at least you could have told me you were going to work."

Ludwig looked up at Misha's face. He looked half annoyed, half sad. Ludwig lowered his head.

"I'm sorry, you were sleeping so peacefully... I reckoned I might let you enjoy zhat calm and peace. Look liebe, I didn't mean to-"

"Remember the promise I made to you?"

Ludwig looked surprised as he fell Misha's tone was serious.

"Ja, you promised to never leave me."

"Da. I will keep it and now I will ask the same of you. You have no idea how it feels when you wake up and the person you care for is nowhere to be seen."

Ludwig was surprised. Surely it was no big deal, so why all the fuss?

"Misha, is zhere anyzhing wrong?"

Misha went to sit on the bed. He put his arms around his own body, as if to give himself some comfort. He sighed.

"I don't want anyone to know about what I'm going to tell now, ok?"

Ludwig understood from both the tone of Misha's voice and the way he was sitting that what he was going to narrate was serious. He took is labcoat and gloves off, threw them on the nearby chair and sat next to Misha. He put one arm round his waist.

"Of course, you can trust me."
"Good. When I was a kid, back in Russia, my dad was a local leader of a revolutionary movement. He was strong and determined. Everyone respected him in the neighbourhood. As a result, the whole family was safe nowhere. He had sent my mother and sisters in a small house far up North. That's where they still live. But he and I had to stick together. 'One day, you'll be strong, Mikhail. You'll take care of the family and you'll finish what I started.' He used to say that a lot. He taught me lots of things: how to read a map, hide your tracks, hunt, use a gun, repair it, improve it."

Misha paused for a second. He closed his eyes.

"One night, we were hidden in a small shack in a forest. We were travelling from Moscow to Saint Petersburg. When I went to sleep, he was sitting next to me. He used to run his fingers through my hair until I fall asleep."

Tears began streaming down Misha's face. Silent tears. He breathed normally but he was crying. Ludwig realised that unlike Misha who knew most of what there is to know about him, he knew next to nothing about Misha's life and family. Until now, he only knew the existence of Misha's mother and sisters.

"Next morning, he was nowhere to find. The shack was so small that he couldn't have hidden anywhere in. I got out, looked around. He had taught me to never panic. So I looked for tracks, a piece of cloth, anything. Nothing. Now that I think about it, it's only normal that the man who taught me how to hide, knew how to hide better than me.

We had a secret call when we wanted to know where we were or in case of danger. We used to coo like doves. I cooed. Again and again and again. The weather was freezing cold and I could only hear the echo of my own coos in the cold dead forest. I gave up the whole 'act secretly' thing and I began shouting 'DADDY!'. But then again, no answer. I couldn't let myself cry, I would lose water and God knows it is precious. So I packed the few things he had left in the shack and I walked back towards Moscow, which was nearer than Saint Petersburg. A few days after, I learnt that he got caught and he died. He must have been tortured and..."

Ludwig put his glasses away and took a handkerchief out of his trousers pocket. He kneeled down, facing Misha and he wiped his tears away from his face and carressed his cheeks.

"Ich... I didn't know about zhat, I'm sorry Misha..."

His face went dark and serious.

"Misha, open your eyes and look at me. I can't say what I'm about to say without looking in your eyes."

Misha opened his eyes. They were full of tears, swollen. He looked a bit surprised. Ludwig's stare was dead serious, his usual smile and kind face had faded away.

"Mikhail, I promise to never leave you, never."

Misha smiled a bit, his face went a bit more relaxed. He got up, put his hands around Ludwig and raised him off the ground in a tight hug.

"Now, let's go have breakfast, liebe."

And off they went to join the rest of the mercs in the dining room.

--

Hey!
Thanks a lot! As always, if there are parts you liked or disliked, or if you just want to say hi, leave a comment :), I read all your stuff! :)
Chapter 16

- BLU Base, 2h before infiltration mission -

"Bien, let's go through the plan one last time. First, Soldiers and Pyros stay at base, in case the robots plan anything. Then, both Snipers in their van, 'ere."

BLU Spy was pointing on a big map on the wall with a metal pointing stick. Thanks to the small drones the Engies made, they had a complete map of the outside as well as parts of the inside of the robot vessel.

"Your mission Bushmen, is to watch out for any suspicious activity outside and cover our retreat if necessary, I will come to this point later."

He paused, took a cigarette, lit it and placed it between his lips.

"Scouts! We give you our Cloak and Daggers. You 'ave ONE shot at this so do not disappoint, boys! You go there, near the backdoor entrance and you place a teleporter. Take all the time you need, you know how the Cloak and Dagger works. The other will be deployed near both Snipers. Once you deploy it, don't play heroes. You take it and you come back where the Snipers are. Remember, try your best not to get detected. The only thing we are not sure of is 'ow often the robots patrol and which path they follow to do it.

Then, Demo takes the teleporter and places sticky traps around that door and comes back where the Snipers are. Make sure you use the new sticky bombs the Engies crafted, the one that can roll wherever you command them to."

"I'm no bloody idiot ye know?" Answered RED Demo.

BLU Spy resumed his speech, completely ignoring Demo's remark.

"After that, we take the teleporter to the robot vessel. We cloak and enter there, through the backdoor. With the scanning glasses the Engies gave us, we should be able to see robots even through a wall. We go straight to the big computer room via these air vents."

RED Spy went on for his colleague.

"Once we get there, we transfer all there is on that big machine on these small... erm... what are these called again?"

"Memory sticks, mah Spah!"

"Memory sticks. Then, we can retreat taking the exact same path back."

He paused a bit.

"Best case senario: we do not get detected at all and we all come back without them even realising we ‘ave entered.

BLU Spy continued.

"Worst case senario: we get detected. Then, you both come into the scene."

He pointed at both Medics and Heavies.
"Through the ear piece the Engies made, we'll let you know how bad things are. But in all cases, you should come with Heavies. Your priority is to secure the teleporter, at all cost. We will tell you when to make your sticky bombs explode, Demo.

Both Medic-Heavy duos nodded.

"In any case, as soon as you see a flare in the sky, whatever you do, destroy the teleporters! That will be the signal that we are all back to where the Snipers and the rest of the crew are."

He paused for a second. He put a cardboard box on the table, full of ear pieces.

"This is a box."

"Dear God." Both Sollies stood, open-mouthed.

"There's more."

"No?!"

"I will ask all the gentlemen here to take one ear piece in this box, except for you, Scouts. You already have one."

All the mercs took one and adjusted it to their head sizes.

"Now, we all are ready. Any questions?"

RED and BLU Soldier raised their hand.

Both BLU and RED Spies rolled their eyes.

"Is it to have the cardboard box?"

"YES SIR!"

"You can have it..."

Both Sollies got to the box and pulled it so hard that it tore into 2 pieces. They seemed more than happy of that unexpected outcome.

---

Hello there and thanks for reading!

As always, if you have come to this point in the story, I guess you know the song now! Please leave a rev', it really makes a difference for me!

See y'all for the infiltration mission itself...! ;)

---
- In the desert near the BLU Base, 9.00 pm -

"There we are mates."

RED and BLU Snipers parked next to each other at the designated location.

"Gentlemen..."

In RED Sniper's van, RED Spy opened the backdoor.

"... Shall we?"

All mercs except for Sollies and Pyros exited the vans.

"Deploying a teleporter!" Shouted both Engies.

"Scouts, here are our Cloak and Daggers."

Both Scouts took them in their hands and the BLU Scout began playing with it. RED Spy opened his mouth to scold him but he kept it to himself and let his BLU counterpart do it. He hoped to God nobody saw that. BLU and RED Snipers both took position but RED Sniper noticed the Spy's attitude from the corner of his eyes. He thought it was usual, didn't pay much attention to it.

"We're ready mates. All I can see is that the outside is clear, no robots there."

"Yeah, nothin' but the desert."

"Bien, Scouts, à vous de jouer!"

"Yeah, alright fancy pants!"

And on these words, both Scouts ran towards the robot vessel. BLU Spy took binoculars and watched them for far away.

"I hope they won't fail." Whispered RED Spy to himself.

RED Engie went to him and put his hand on his shoulder.

"They'll do just fine, dontcha worry, partner. They have good models." He winked.

Spy was a bit taken aback. He lowered his hand he smiled.

"Merci, mon ami."

He understood what Engie meant.

"They're deployin' your teleporter, mate... aaand, now it's done. They're takin' it back."

As soon as BLU Sniper finished his sentence, BLU Scout appreared next to him on the teleport. Then the RED one popped up.

"Oh men, that was easy!"
"Yeah, yeah! Piece o' cake!"

"Good! Snipers, is there any movement?"

"Nah, Demo can go."

RED Demo teleported to the vessel. Snipers and Spies watching them. He sprung up at the other teleporter, loaded his sticky launcher with the new stickies. He put half a dozen stickies around the door the Spies are meant to go through and some around the teleport exit. He looked right and left.

" Bloody robots, they're coming next to you Demo, quick, jump on the teleporter!" Said BLU Sniper through his ear piece.

Demo reacted very quickly despite the fact he was as drunk as sailors. He appeared at the other end of the teleporter.

"Did they spot Demo or the teleporter itself?"

"Nah, I don't think so, they look like they're patrolling casually.”

"Très bien. We will wait for them to go away and then, we will jump in. Are you ready, BLU colleague?"

"Oui, mon ami."

They waited a few minutes, just to be sure that no robots were near the teleporter exit and the door. When they judged it safe, they hopped on the teleporter.

They emerged at the other end and both straightened their ties. They cloaked immediately and opened the backdoor. RED Spy had picked its lock. They opened the door bit by bit, and equipped with their special glasses.

"No one is in sight, let us move!" Whispered the BLU Spy.

They entered a corridor with lots of doors. All they had to do was to locate a room with an air vent. They trod carefully as they feared robots had a better hearing than themselves. With their glasses, they could see through walls where the robots were. It turned out robots always walked as groups of at least three. They soon located the most needed air vent. They entered the room and closed the door behind them. They came in front of the air vent, unscrewed the front panel and entered, paying attention to make as little noise as possible. They placed it back again on the wall. They heard a noise and stiffened in the air vent. Through the front panel of the air vent, they saw three robots. A Spy, a Soldier and a Medic.

"Someone went through here."

"Affirmative, sensors indicate heat source nearby."

Both Spies looked at each other, frightened to the bone.

"Locate the heat source!"

"Locating heat source in progress... scanning the room... heat source came from the corridor..."

The robots moved back to the corridor. Both Spies took that opportunity to begin moving through the air vent.
"Partners? Are y'all alright?"

RED Engie was speaking to both Spies through the ear piece.

"Oui, but they know we're somewhere, they're sensitive to our heat!"

"Not that cold and calm you are now, fancy pants!"

RED Spy wanted to answer but he remained silent. He continued going through the air vent.

"Sssshhh!"

BLU Spy and then his RED colleague stopped walking. They were all ears. Beneath them four robots were sitted around a table. Through their special glasses, it seems they were... playing a card game?!

"Are they...?"

"Oui..."

They both rolled their eyes and went on through the air vent. A few minutes later, they arrived in front on a panel.

"Bien, I think we 'ave arrived. Give me a second, I will unscrew it."

He took his screwdriver from his inside pocket. He unscrewed the panel and removed it as silently as possible. No robots were in the room.

"Proceed!"

They both got out of the vent and while RED Spy was watching out for any robot coming through the door, BLU Spy put the memory stick in the computer.

"ALERT, INTRUDER IN THE CENTRAL ROOM! INTRUDER IN THE CENTRAL ROOM!"

"Merde! Quick, is it all copied?"

"Non! Only half of it!"

---

Hey guys!

As always, thanks for reading and please leave a review! It helps me know if you like the story and it encourages me a lot! :)

Love y'all :D
Chapter 18

- Robot vessel, Central room -

"ALERT! INTRUDER IN THE CENTRAL ROOM!"

"Cloak and follow me, quick!"

Both Spies cloaked and jumped into the air vent and hid there. They could hear all the clings and clongs of the robots marching towards the central room. Eventually, the door flung open. Demos and Soldiers entered, followed by Medics and Heavies.

"Scanning area for traces of intruders..."

The air started getting warmer and warmer in the air vent. RED Spy untied his tie and undid the first button of his shirt.

"They're surroundin' the vessel from the outside, they're everywhere!"

"Couple of them are even in front of your exit door, Spooks..."

Both Spies waited a bit in the air vent.

"Heat source coming from heaters exceeds detection limit! Scanning biased! Scanning biased!"

"Let us scan somewhere else!"

And the robots exited the room, leaving only 2 Soldier robots.

"We need to get the memory stick back! Let's stay cloaked. I'll backstab them, you get the memory stick and let us come back!"

"D'accord!"

Both were whispering in the very hot air vent. They got rid of their vests and ties and their shirts had their first button opened.

"Hey Spahs, I hacked into their computer and I turned on all their heaters at maximum level, that should impair their detection ability! And sorry for the heat, partners, that's the only way to win some time!"

When the Engies finished their sentence, RED Spy opened the panel again and approached the first Soldier carefully. Cling! He backstabbed him. The second Soldier, hearing the first one drop, turned to see his fellow robot dead, he was about to shout but RED Spy was quick enough to jump and backstab him before he got the chance to raise the alarm.

"Is it all copied now?"

"Oui, I put the other weird stick Engie told me to, now go!"

They jumped again in the air vent and went as fast as possible towards the exit. When they arrived, 4 robots were waiting for them in the small room.

They pondered for a minute. They needed a distraction. But what? Or maybe they didn't...
BLU Spy got his disguise case out and disguised as a robot Spy. RED Spy understood the strategy. He cloaked. BLU Spy got out of the vent and joined the robots, took his Eternal Reward out and backstabbed a Spy, the corpse of the robot Spy fell down but before it hit the ground, BLU Spy put a BLU Spy mask on its face. Now, it looked like him.

"SPY IDENTIFIED! INTRUDER IDENTIFIED AND ELIMINATED!" Said BLU Spy, pointing at the corpse.

The 3 other robots gathered around the corpse. Then, BLU Spy held his knife in his hand, behind his back. RED Spy came cloaked and took his colleague's weapon. He backstabbed 2 robots at the same time while BLU Spy sapped the last one. RED Spy disguised as a Scout and both got out of the room. They knew it would look suspicious if they were only 2 and not 3 as the robots always patrolled in groups of at least 3. But they couldn't afford to play around, they needed to get the hell out the vessel and back to the Snipers' vans.

"Demoman, get ready to make your stickies explode, just in case. Heavies and Medics, we won't need your help, stay at -"

BAM!

A robot Scout found them out and shot RED Spy in the arm. His disguise vanished. BLU Spy got rid of his mask too.

"RUN!"

They sprinted in what was their entrance corridor.

"INTRUDERS LOCATED NEAR DOOR 345!"

They heard lots of metallic sounds. The robots were chasing them but they could see that door, it was there, ahead of them, they just needed to slow down that Scout. RED Spy got his sapper out and threw it at the robot Scout who slowed down a bit.

"HE SAPPED ME! COME BACK HERE YOU FANCY PANTS!"

RED Spy's heart skipped a beat. When BLU Spy had told him the robots were replicas, he hadn't imagined they even mimicked their language...!

They ran and when the second they went through the door, chased by a large group of robots, they both yelled.

"DEMO, NOW THE DOOR!"

"KABOOM!"

The door and the robots exploded to pieces.

BLAM! BLAM!

"We're clearing the way for you Spooks, RUN, bloody hell, RUN!"

They ran and right before jumping in the teleporter, BLU Spy fired a flare in the sky. They sprung at the other end. RED Engie destroyed both teleporters. Both Snipers jumped up.

"They're at a loss, they didn't see you teleport so they're looking everywhere for you. We can go back home safely."
"Spook!"

RED Sniper came to RED Spy and looked at his arm. He was sweating heavily after the combined effect of the extreme heating in the air vent, the thrill of the case and his wound.

"Come in me van, let me help, the Doc will see you."

All gathered in the two vans and off they went.

- In RED Sniper's van -

Is it bad, Doc'?

"Nein, only superficial. Zhere are a few shards from the bullet but nothing serious. As soon as we arrive, we'll transfer you to the MediBay and I'll get them out. Just don't move, we don't vant them to travel through your body! What worries me is your temperature. Can I borrow one of your towels, Sniper?"

"Anythin' Doc' but ease him, please."

Mundy was driving but he was worrying for his lover. The latter was lying in the back of the van, eyes closed and heavily breathing. The pain was tormenting him. Each time he exhaled loudly, Sniper felt a needle through his heart. But they soon arrived at the BLU base. All got out of the vans.

- MediBay, BLU Base -

"Zhere you are, I got all the bits of bullet out. Now, some bandage."

In the next room, Mundy was waiting impatiently. He was pacing the room, coming and going, stood down, got up... Medic opened the door.

"You can see him, he is still sleeping. All vent vell. He should be back in zhe spying business in a few days. Oh and by zhe vay, I didn't say all zhe truzh back in zhe van."

Mundy raised an eyebrow.

"Whot's that mean?"

"He got shot all through his right arm, some parts of bullets were really tricky to get out. His right biceps might take some weeks to work like before. But don't worry, vizh time and my medigun, it should come back to what it was smoothily. And a last thing, I know he doesn't vant anyone to touch his mask. So I haven't unmasked him. But vizh his temperature, it would be better if he was vizhout it. Now, I leave you two alone."

And the Medic went away. Mundy entered in the hospital room. He came next to his lover. He looked at him. He looked so defenseless and innocent when he sleeps, very different from his overly confident and slightly superior attitude. Mundy put his hat on a nearby chair. Drops of sweat were streaming on Lucien's face. If the Doc' doesn't do it, I'll do it. He put his fingers around Lucien's neck, where he could grab the mask and slowly pulled it up. Lucien's hair was soaking wet with sweat. Mundy put the mask on the nearby chair and went to grab a towel. He wiped Lucien's face carefully and slowly. He didn't want to wake him up.

"You know I was bloody afraid for you back there, with that other Spook."

He sat on the edge of the bed, near Lucien.
"I was moving my scope in every direction, I-"

He sighed.

"I wanted to protect you, make sure you were alright. But you got shot. I should have gone there with ya. Not that heartless BLU Spook."

He stroke Lucien's hair, repeatedly. It was mostly black but the lock of hair that started at his forehead, in the middle, was grey as well as the hair on his temples. His hair was so soft, it felt like water running through Mundy's fingers when he stroked it. For Mundy, everything in Lucien's hair was like Lucien himself, irresistible.

"I wanted to talk to you but I knew the others would hear me. Not that I care if our crew hears anything, they know for us. But them BLUs..."

He sighed again.

"You would like it, eh? I mean if you were actually listenin' to me, you'd be smilingmockingly, you cheeky frog! You'd be like 'Monsieur shows he cares for me, how filet-mignon!'"

"Drop it..."

Lucien was smiling.

"Whot?!"

"It's not 'filet-mignon', that's a dish you ignorant Bushman... Drop the 'filet' and keep the 'mignon', that's the word for 'cute'..."

He was still breathing heavily but Mundy was delighted to see that he was still sarcastic. That was a sign of good health for him. He opened his eyes slowly, one after the other. Both smiled at each other and stayed silent for a couple of minutes. Lucien tried moving his right arm. It was too painful.

"No, you shouldn't move your arm. Doc' says it's gonna be hard for you to use it like before but with time, it'll come back."

Lucien frowned then moved his left hand and put it on his hair, where Mundy's hand was.

"Stop ruining my hair..."

Mundy took Lucien's hand and put it back, next to his thigh. He put his fingers in between Lucien's.

"I'm not ruinin' it, you Spook! While Sleepin' Beauty was dreamin', I was taking care of her temperature, ya see?"

"So I am beautiful now?"

Mundy smiled and sighed at the same time.

"You're healing way faster than I thought."

"That's because of you, mon amour. Wait a second..."

Lucien moved to the side of his bed. He then pulled Mundy's hand like an invite to lay down next to him.
"Alright, alright. But I see that you haven't lost weight, you're takin' all the space on this bed, how am I s'posed to fit in there?"

Lucien rolled on his side, Mundy being the big spoon.

"Ah, much better. But still, you should go easy on the croissants...!"

Lucien smiled and put Mundy's hand on his chest.

"Merci."

"Do rian. Wait, why are you thankin’ me?"

"For your little speech. I heard every word. It was mignon, indeed."

"See? I knew you'd be like that!"

"You sensitive petit Bushman..."

"I ain't small, you smurf!"

Lucien kissed Mundy's hand.

"Non it's true, you are quite tall."

He paused.

"But you're still sensitive deep down."

Mundy smiled, left a kiss on Lucien's shoulder and both took a nap.

---

Hey guys!

Thanks for reading! As always, please leave a review, I love your feedback! :D

This one is a bit long but I hope you appreciate it :)

See you around for chapter 19 (I had never thought I could write such a long story :)
Chapter 19

- Misha and Ludwig's room, BLU Base -

Misha was sitting on the bed, back on the wall, reading a book. Ah, Balzac knows how to torture one's mind. Beautiful. His mind was carried both by the story and the style. He had been reading for a solid hour when Ludwig opened the door.

"Hallo, liebe. Sorry to interrupt your reading, I'll just take some stuff and go take a shover, I'll be back soon."

Misha raised his head, smiled to the doctor and nodded. Ludwig went to a drawer, grabbed some clothes and went away. A few seconds after, Misha could hear the shower go. He kept on reading, not realising that he was still smiling. He tried understanding what he was reading but his mind was impatient for his lover to come back.

Ludwig opened the door again, hair still ruffled and wet. He closed the door behind him with his foot. Misha raised his eyes and watched Ludwig drying his hair with a towel. He put his book on his night table and got up silently. Ludwig had his whole head in the towel and was turning his back to Misha. The latter put his hands on Ludwig's waist softly. He smiled beneath the towel.

"So, you have finished with Spy? Is he alright?"

"Vell, surgery vent vell but his right arm might take some time to heal completely. It's quite a miracle zhat we have only one wounded."

He threw the towel on his bed, took a comb from his drawer and wanted to arrange his hair but Misha took his wrist.

"Was?"

He took the comb from his hand, threw it on the bed.

"Come."

Ludwig obeyed as Misha guided him to the bed. The big man sat and let Ludwig lie on his back, using Misha's lap as a pillow. Misha run his fingers through Ludwig's hair.

"I didn't know you liked hair dressing."

Ludwig was teasing his lover, looking up to him with a smile.

"And you don't know I love arranging your hair!"

"Plenty of stuff about you I still don't know, Misha!"

They both smiled. Misha continued stroking Ludwig's hair while he resumed his speech.

"You should have seen Sniper, in the waiting room. He vas restless, poor man."

"You can see people in the waiting room from the surgery room?"

"Vell, BLU Medic has a system of CCTV cameras put everywhere in his MediBay. I don't know vhy zhough... I should do zhe same, it could have prevented zhe little 'incident' of zhe other day!"
"Oh, you mean when Spy entered and we were..."

"Ja."

Both laughed.

"Anyvay, I left zhem alone in zhe room. I bet when I come back, I'll find zhem sleeping togezher!"

"You think Sniper would risk that? You know how prude he is."

"Ja, but he vas so concerned about Spy that I zhink he doesn't vant to leave him alone."

He pause for a second. He liked the way Misha was carressing his hair.

"Or at least zhat's what I would do if I vere in his place."

"You mean to tell me zhat you would sleep with Spy if he got injured badly?"

Misha was obviously joking but Ludwig didn't get it. He blushed and got confused.

"Nein, nein...! I didn't mean zhat! I meant zhat-"

"I know what you meant, moya lyubov, I was only joking."

"Ach, sorry I didn't get it, I'm a bit tired. Zhat surgery got me under pressure. I had to concentrate hard to get zhose bits of bullets out of his arm. And vizh my age..."

Misha chuckled.

"You're no old man. Look at you! You run faster than everyone on the battlefield, except for Scout! And you're carrying your backpack and you Medigun! The kid is only carrying a leettle gun. No, you are not old at all."

"I feel it, Misha."

"No, you feel happy, that's what you feel now. I'm here with you. We see each other as much as we like, we have a lovely famil-"

"Oh by zhe way!" Ludwig interrupted.

"Da?" Misha raised an eyebrow.

"Can I get zhe chance to meet your family?"

Misha's heart stopped and he stopped stroking Ludwig's hair instantly. His eyes went wide open. He blushed but didn't smile. He lowered his head and looked sad. No, he isn't sad. Thought Ludwig. He is... ashamed.

"Is somezhing wrong?"

Misha sighed.

"Nyet, it's just that..."

He sighed.

"Tell me, liebe. I can understand and help."
"I'm sure you will understand but I'm really convinced you can't help. The thing is, no one knows that I prefer you over... you know... women. My sisters would understand, maybe they already guessed it but my mother... she's always been asking me to find someone and give her grand children. Always, since I was at University. Each time I visited her during breaks, she would interrogate me about this. And each time, I felt my heart burn in my chest as I couldn't tell her the simple truth. I like men."

It was Ludwig's turn now to guide things a bit. He sat up on the bed, back on the wall and made Misha lie on his back, with his head on his lap.

"Mmh, I see."

"I told you I was in a boxing club at Uni?"

"Ja, you showed me pictures with trophies. I honestly don't understand why you stopped it, you seem so good at it...!"

"Let me tell you."

Misha closed his eyes. Ludwig put his hand on his lover's chest in an attempt to ease him... and to feel his heart.

"After a training session with other students we used to all take a shower and talk about the training. Who got hurt? Who got bullied by the trainer and did push ups for some unnecessary and invalid reason? Such stuff."

He paused.

"That day, as always, I was more listening than actually talking. I was looking around me. Not a weird look, but just... erm... you know... I've always been 'big and strong' and was curious how 'normal' people were built. So I was looking at the other students. Some were handsome, muscular. And the hot steam was half hiding their body from my eyes. And then I felt it. My body was betraying me. I tried thinking about something else but nothing helped. I turned quickly, face to the wall, pretending to wash myself but when you're as tall and big as me, you can't be stealthy...

One of the student said 'Misha, are you alright?'

I answered 'Da.'

They resumed and soon stopped the shower. All took their towels.

'Can you pass me my towel please, I got some shampoo in my eyes... it still hurts.'

They made fun of me and one of them threw me my towel. I turned to catch it and they saw it... Half of them made fun of me, humiliated me. The other half were disgusted. I put on my shirt and trousers, took my stuff and ran away..."

He opened his eyes, they were wet with tears.

"I went straight to my bedroom and cried. I was so ashamed I stopped going to the club. I didn't show up in class for a week or so."

"Nobody vas worried for you? Nobody asked around?"

"I had a few friends before that, and after, I had even fewer..."
"Misha, I promised to not leave you. I intend to keep that promise. I opened up to you, you have been closer to me than even my own wife when I had one. You met my kids and now they're also your kids. So technically, you could tell your mother she has grand children now."

Ludwig was smiling, confident. He wanted to make Misha feel proud, and not ashamed.

"I'm convinced she will understand."

Misha still looked unsure about that.

"Listen, Ludwig. You're right. If I want to truly live my life with you, you have to meet my family at some point. Plus, I've met yours."

He stopped. At that point he looked thoughtful. Then his eyes shone bright again, he sat up and took Ludwig's hands into his.

"You know what? I can't hide away from my own mother all my life. Here is what I'm going to do. Next time we have holidays, you will come with me, in Russia. You will meet my sisters and my mother."

"Really? I cannot wait!"

"But!"

"Oh?"

"Ludwig, I mean I'm going to ask you a few things. You have to understand that it's not against you, you know how I feel for you. But it's for my mother. She's an old lady and I don't her to feel... erm... uneasy or sad for me, you understand?"

"Jawöhl."

"Good. So I'm going to tell her you're my friend. She knows lots about you. When she calls me, I've often talked about you. You'll sleep in my bedroom, we'll put a second mattress, just to pretend, but you'll sleep with me in my bed, don't worry."

Ludwig looked doubtful. How was this whole theatre play going to help?

"I'll tell my sisters for us. They'll find a way to tell my mother. And then, there are 2 possible outcomes."

"Which are?"

"First, the miracle one. My mother accepts you and me, as we are."

Without realising it, Misha was smiling at the idea but his face darkened.

"Or, the most likely situation. She feels... not good."

He paused.

"Very not good."

Ludwig was lost in thoughts. He didn't want Misha to lose his mother for him, no. But the idea of the sisters was good. Maybe they will manage to convince their mother but I refuse to put him in a weird situation with his mother. Seconds of silence passed which transformed into minutes.
"Listen Misha, I don't vant to be or create a problem vizh your mozher. Forget about it."

"Nyet!" He exclaimed. "It is important that my family knows who makes me feel happy, who gave purpose to my life! I won't die and leave them thinking that I was alone, nyet!"

Ludwig blushed. Misha turned to him.

"Next break, you and me, we go to meet my family."

---

Hello guys!

Thanks as always, your reviews encourage me a lot so please, keep it up!

Next Chapter, I should come back to the adventure stuff (with the usual sweet stuff here and there).

See y'all!
"Gentlemen, we are gathered today to know what the robots are planning and how to defeat them. Engies, if you please."

BLU Spy left both Engies come at the end of the big table.

"Much obliged, Spah. Alrighty then, let's show you what's this all about."

He pressed a button on the remote control and turned on a big screen.

"Here's what them damn robots have in mind, hold on to your hats."

He took a deep breath.

"You remember when BLU Spy came to you and told ya about the disappearin' of Miss Paulin' and the Admin as well as the robots? Well both problems are linked! Turns out, them robots kidnapped both ladies!"

He pressed another button and a few pictures of both ladies in a prison-like cell popped up on the screen.

"Why kidnap Miss Pauling and the Administrator?" Asked RED Heavy.

"Well, apparently they want to take Mann Co, all their guns and above all, their research department! As y'all have noticed they copied all of Mann Co's guns already but they wanna have more than that."

He paused and pressed another button.

"Mein Gott..."

"Mon Dieu..."

"Mmh mmmh..."

A picture appeared on screen. An old man, small and thin, all dressed in grey, arms crossed, was standing over a tiny planet Earth. He looked dead serious in his grey tuxedo. He had grey hair and he looked like he was a thousand years old.

"Yeah, the man behind all that, he wants to take over the world with his army of robots and super guns! His name is Gray Mann."

All jaws dropped.

"Mann as in...?"

"Yeah, as in 'Mann' Co!"

"What about Monsieur Saxton Hale? Where is he in all this business?"

"Good question Spah! Apparently, he got caught as well, that's why we can't count on Mann Co but
only on black market and ourselves."

He showed a picture of Saxton Hale, in another dark prison-like cell, hands and feet tied.

"He must have fought hard, look at all his bruises!"

"Ja, Scout, das ist true..."

Saxton Hale looked bad indeed. He had a black eye and several bruises on his skin. The skilled BLU and RED Medics both spotted injuries on his knuckles hinting at the fights he must have been into before getting captured.

"If Saxton Hale got caught..."

"Oui, Sniper, it will be difficult to defeat them."

Silence fell on to the room.

"But...!" Exclaimed BLU Engie. "Here's how we gonna beat them."

He pressed on a button and a plan of the whole vessel appeared on the big screen.

"He's the thing. That's the map of the whole vessel. And that room there is the room where the fabrication of the robots is controlled. If we can get there, disable it and send the vessel back where it came from, we're winnin'!"

"But it's at the farthest from the entrance! We have to go across the whole vessel!"

"Yeah, Scout, I know. But if we manage that, then we can have access to the control room and we can hack their navigation system in order to send them back to wherever they come from!"

"Oui, but that is only if we manage."

The room became silent again. RED Engie and his BLU colleague where looking right and left, searching for any slight light in one of the mercs' eyes. Unfortunately, no mercenary had this flame of combat and hope of victory in his eyes apart from...both Scouts and RED Spy.

The latter got up, his light blue, almost grey eyes shining fiercely.

"Gentlemen, our next mission will be complex, oui. We have to defeat all the robots, we have to save Mademoiselle Pauling and the Administrator as well as Monsieur Hale. Mais mon Dieu, wake up!"

He raised both his hands and slammed them on the table.

"We have 3 people to save from deadly robots controlled by a crazy old man, hungry for world domination! For most men, it is an impossible mission. We are not most men! We are mercenaries! We have the ressources. The will! To save those people!"

"To save Miss Paulin'!" Shouted both Scouts.

"Heck yeah! That's the spirit, Spah!"

"Herr Spy is right."

The mercs were cheered up by the RED Frenchman who did not see that the RED Sniper's cheek were turning red. Woah, Lu', I'm so lucky that you like me the way I do; RED Sniper thought.
"What is the plan, Engies?"

"Well, here's what we gon' do, partners."

RED Engie was enthusiastic again.

"We're gonna ask y'all to give us all the weapons you intend to take with ya, we're gonna adapt a few things cause he've had a few new ideas. It should take us only a day or so. Then, we'll go and defeat them. Through the front door this time. Demo, you'll blow up that door, Heavies and Doc at the front. Sollies, you'll have a clip of 8 rockets so you'll use 1 to rocket jump far up front, 6 to damage and kill and one to come back for heals. Scouts, you'll go as far as you can in front of us to keep us informed of what's incomin'. Pyros, your job is to protect us from Spahs, especially both Docs. Snipes, you'll stay next to our new sentries."

"No subtle, ninja-like approach?"

"Nah Spah. Since the last time we've been there, they've reinforced their security. It's impossible to sneak in."

"What about respawn?"

"Good question Doc, we thought of buildin' a small respawn chamber that we'll deploy next to us Engies. The only thing is, it's only one person at a time in this. With both Engies buildin' one, that makes 2 respawn chambers. So technically it's 2 people at a time. If more people than that die, you'll have to wait your turn!"

"What about us Spies?"

"You'll be in charge of the savin' part. You'll go both of you, and get Saxton Hale first. He's a fierce fighter, he'll help you to get Miss Paulin' and the Admin out. Then, we'll put both ladies in the teleporter to send them to our base. At that point the vessel should be more or less clear and it should only takes us a few minutes to hack the navigation system."

"Zhat seems like a long fight ahead of us."

"Yeah it is, Doc. Oh and by the way, Docs, don't take your Mediguns with you but your Kritzkriegs."

"Vhat about zhe übercharge?"

"Don't worry, we have somethin' in mind."

"Alright zhen."

"C'mon guys, let's save Miss Paulin'!"

"Très bien gentlemen! Let's call this day a day off and we'll fight tomorrow, what about that, hmm?"

All mercs nodded and got up from their seats. Then all took different paths, Engies to the garage, Snipers to their vans, etc.

"Scout?"

BLU Scout turned his back to see that RED Spy was calling him.

"Yeah?"
"You have a minute? I have to talk to you."

"Yeah, alright. Whatcha want?"

"Not here in the middle of the corridor, follow me."

"Okay."

Both men walked and got out of the building. RED Spy kept walking in direction of the sun until their were out of hearing from anyone near the base. Both were now in the middle of the desert, in the shade of a couple of cacti and far from the base.

"Erm... why are we here?"

"I have to show you something."

RED Spy put his hand in his inside pocket and got a paper out. It was a photograph. He placed it on his hand but upside down.

"I fear that it will be the last time we cooperate, Jeremy. And I want to take advantage of this occasion to tell you something. Take that picture in your hand and look at it."

The young man did as the old one told him. He looked at the picture and lowered is head. Spy couldn't see Scout's face but the young boy's hands were shaking, the picture itself was shaking.

"Jeremy?"

"You know what? I knew it! Yeah, I knew it. And that's why I joined BLU and not RED."

"Quoi?"

"Yeah, you heard me alright. You abandoned Ma' when she was pregnant! T'was very hard for her to raise me alone! I grew up beiig alone, with no friends, no family, no nothing!"

He raised his head. Mon Dieu, I was right, he was crying.

"Jeremy, I

No, you let me finish, I ain't done with you!"

He paused. His voice was trembling.

"The only thing I've been good at is baseball and running away fast!"

He smiled.

"At least I got the runnin' away from you..."

"I didn't abandon you."

"Yeah you did! Ma' got pregnant and you fled!"

He wiped his tears with his arm.

"You fled... It took me years to find you, I wanted to mend the whole family back again... When I got to Miss Pauling's office, she asked me to choose between both teams. And then... Then I realised how much I didn't want to find you because I missed you. I realised I wanted to beat the crap outta

"I DID NOT LEAVE YOUR MOTHER, POUR L'AMOUR DE DIEU! I HAD TO AND I DID TELL HER WHY!"

Spy had roared in the middle of nowhere. Silence fell on the desert again.

"What?" Asked Scout calmly.

"Listen, when I was with your mother, life started to make sense for me. I already was a spy at that time but she was nice enough to not care about the potential danger I put her in. I taught her a few things to do if she felt the need to defend herself or leave without leaving any trace."

Lucien sighed.

"I was happy with your mother, believe me, Jeremy, I truly was. But I always felt something weird deep inside. Something that prevented me from feeling heureux as we say in French. Do you know what that means?"

"No."

"In French we have 2 words that translate into 'happy' but they mean 2 completely different kinds of 'happy'. The first one is 'content' which means happy as in 'I am happy to see you.' You just feel happy at that instant and you express it. That's it."

He paused.

"The other word is 'heureux' which means that you are living a happy life that fulfills you. All that you could dream of is here, with you may it be familywise or jobwise or anything. Your life is complete."

"I get it."

"So with your mother I felt content but not heureux. Something was missing. I talked to her about that. She told me that what was missing in my life in stability, that I needed to settle, have a wife and kids. I didn't believe her. I told her that I did not want to get married, let alone have kids!"

He took a deep breath.

"So you didn't want me?" Asked Jeremy.

"That's not what I said, let me finish. One day I came back home after a mission in Algeria and she was nowhere to be seen. She left a note on the bed saying 'We can't bear your absence anymore, I'm sorry and so is your future child. Don't look for us, please.'." He paused. That memory was difficult for him to talk about. Scout could see that.

"Why didn't you look for us anyway?"

"Believe me, Jeremy, I did. And I did find you. You remember your baseball final at school? I was there. You remember that policeman that arrested the kid who gave you a bad beating because he was speaking badly of your mother when you were 17? That was me. When I drove you back home after that, your mother recognised me and while she sent you to take a shower, we had a quarrel. She didn't want to see me again. And that is why I disappeared. It is not my fault."

Jeremy opened his eyes wide.
"I... I remember that cop... He had a weird accent, not american at all..."

"I had a much stronger accent at that time, oui, and it was hard for me to hide it."

"Can I ask you somethin'?"

"Quoi?"

"What about now? Have you found what was lackin' in your life?"

"Oui."

"Is it that RED Sniper?"

Lucien's jaw dropped. He was completely taken aback. Well at least his son got his gift for observation from him.

"I'm not that stupid y'know?"

"Oui, it's him."

Jeremy sat down on the dried sand. Lucien wiped the ground off with his feet a bit and sat next to him. Seconds of silence passed which transformed into minutes.

"How can I believe you? How can I believe you were there at the baseball final? And that cop."

"You can ask your mother or I can show you these as well."

Lucien got a thin envelope from his vest and gave it to Jeremy. He opened it and got lots of old black and white pictures out of it.

"Woah... That was during the baseball final and that picture... I remember the cop did take a few pictures of me and that kid when he arrested him. You even asked your colleague to take a picture of you and both of us. You had told him it was for the newspapers. I remember he answered that you wouldn't appear on the news for just a kid fight..."

"And indeed I did not. I just wanted to have a souvenir of that moment. You, defending your mother, even when the kid in front of you was twice your height."

"You wanna what's funny about that?"

"Dis-moi."

"After that, I wanted to become a cop, make Ma' proud and help kids in the neighborhood."

Lucien smiled.

"Now, do you understand?"

"Yeah, I think I do. I'm sorry."

"What for?"

"For yellin' at ya and... and... havin' hated you so much and so hard."

"I should be the one apologising. I did want you even if, to be honest, I was not ready to be a father. But before she left that note I did not know that I was to be a father."
"Y'know what?"

"Mmh?"

"I'd give all mah Tom Jones discs to change teams now."

Lucien smiled.

"No need to do that, I have a better idead, you let me arrange things and by tonight you should be in our team, alright?"

Jeremy looked doubtful. How's he gonna arrange anythin'? But for once, he wanted to trust his father, give him a chance.

"Oh by the way, did you tell your Sniper?"

"Non, he doesn't know anything."

"You gonna tell him?"

"Oui."

"Ok, thanks Dad."

Jeremy moved next to his father and put his head on his shoulder. Lucien put his arm around him.

"De rien, mon fils."

From his van, Mundy got his eye out of his scope. His jaw dropped and his eyes were wide open in shock.

"What the bloody hell...?" He whispered to himself.

---

Hey guys!

Thanks a lot! Please leave reviews so that I know if you like how things are going! :)

By the way, for those of you who are interested, I have a smol tumblr page with a few drawings. It's called "Some Game Stuff" and my username is le-doktor :) 

Feel free to chat or ask questions, I always read and answer :)
Chapter 21

- BLU Base, RED Sniper's van -

RED Spy arrived in front of his lover's van, whistling as he felt his conscience itself lightened. He had been to the kitchen to take some croissants as he knew Sniper loved them as much as he did. Aaah, that feels good. I've been seeing my son all his life but he never looked at me like his father. And now...

He knocked on the van's backdoor.

"Bushman? I have brought some croiss-

He didn't have time to end his sentence. Mundy slammed the door open, took Lucien by his collar and pulled him in the van. He threw him on the van's floor and slammed the door shut. The croissants flew across the van.

"I should have known! How can you change? You're still the same old champion of seducing! Going from someone to someone else!"

Mundy was enraged, furious. He was yelling out of his lungs at the Frenchman who was on the floor, trying to stand up again. Mundy didn't leave him time to move, he took him from his collar again and Lucien felt his feet were not touching the floor anymore.

"WHY DID I TRUST YOU?" Mundy roared.

He put Lucien's back again a wall violently, the van shook a bit and Mundy put his face a few millimeters away from Lucien's face. The latter was afraid. Scared to the bone. Looking at Mundy, he saw an overly angry stare, fierce eyes, eyebrows frowned, and the Australian's white teeth. He's been loving his smile but unfortunately for him, that time, he was not smiling at all. He was as frightening as a lion about to bite on a prey's neck to kill it. Lucien wanted to defend himself. He thanked God that his legs were not asked to carry him as he felt they would have failed him.

"What are you talking about?!

"Whot?! You serious?! Let me tell you whot's the matter you utterly selfish monster! I heard a distant roar, I thought there was some kind of beast in the desert. I took my rifle, looked through the scope and whot did I see? I SAW YOU WITH THAT BLOODY BLU SCOUT! I saw you... I saw you... AAH! I can't even say it!"

He dropped Lucien to the floor and turned to sit down on his bed/couch. Lucien fell, sinking against the wall of the van. His legs still couldn't carry him. Mundy took his hat and covered his face with it. He calmed down.

"You can take your stuff. Go away."

"Mundy, let me-"

"Go. Away."

It was Lucien's turn now to feel furious. He got up on his feet, walked to Mundy, took his hat from his hand and threw it away.
"NON! Not again! I'm not getting thrown off your van again! How can you think I went to see Scout for the same reasons I come and see you! You stupid Bushman! Do you not trust me? At all?"

"Oi! You calm down! Don't twist the situation! I saw you'n'im getting pretty close! I saw you with my eyes, don't try to lie, I did see you! And you're not messing with my mind, Spy!"

Lucien hated that. He hated the fact that Mundy called him 'Spy' and not 'Lucien' or 'Lu'. It gave fuel to the fire.

"LISTEN TO ME, PUTAIN DE MERDE! I went to see Jeremy for an important reason and I was coming to your van to announce it to you!"

"You gettin' engaged now or some'in'?" Replied Mundy sarcastically.

Lucien was infuriated and fed up.

"MERDE BUSHMAN! 'E IS MY SON! I NEEDED TO TELL 'IM ONCE IN MY LIFE THAT I CARED FOR 'IM!"

Silence fell in the van. Mundy's jaw dropped. Lucien let some seconds of silence. His angry voice resonated in Mundy's head.

"Now, if you want me to leave, I will do so. Non, in fact, I'm leaving anyway."

"Whot?"

"I said, 'If you-"

"Your son? You have a... son?!"

Mundy was completely taken aback.

"Yes and he is outside, waiting to meet you but after all this shouting, it would be a miracle if he still stood there."

Mundy felt confused.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, I-"

Lucien raised his hand.

"I am not forgiving you for not trusting me, Mundy. What I feel for you and what I've shared with you, I did with no one else. Now I need to go, see you later."

On these words, Lucien opened the van's backdoor, jumped out, lit a cigarette and walked away.

"Wait, Lu'!"

Lucien didn't turn back, he didn't even look back. Jeremy, who had been waiting next to the van, was now going after his father.

"Hey, I heard some shoutin' inside, wha' happened?"

"Leave me alone, Jeremy please."

Lucien continued walking but Jeremy stopped here and there. He turned back and walked towards
the van. He knocked.

"Hey! Snipes! Hello?! I know you're there! Open up, we need to talk!"

Mundy opened.

"Alright, we need to talk man."

Mundy waved him to the couch and closed the van's backdoor. He dropped himself on the couch, next to Scout.

"I understand I'm kinda big deal. Like, you didn't know who I was and all but erm..."

Mundy got a bottle of whiskey and a glass from under his couch. He filled the glass and gulped it all down.

"Erm... are ya even listenin' to me?"

"Listen mate, I'm sorry for ya. And me actually. Your dad left me. I'd have loved to get to know ya but there's nothing tying you to me now."

"Are ya tellin' me to go away?"

Mundy poured another glass and didn't answer.

"Hey?! I'm talkin' to ya!"

"Do as you like, mate. I'm no one for you. Or your father."

Jeremy took his cap off and put it next to him.

"Yo, listen'a'me. You do matter for Dad, alright? Yeah you do!"

"Kid, I ain't nothing for him. And I'll understand if you want to follow him. Take his stuff there, on that shelf and you can go."

"I'm not going 'cause he's not going. What language d'you understand, man? You're all he's been lookin' for in 'is whole life!"

Mundy drank a bit more. His mind was away. He remembered last christmas in Paris. He remembered the first time Lucien came to him. He remembered Lucien moved to a bigger flat to welcome him in Paris. He remembered he had managed to make his old friends come to Paris to see him. A tear streamed down Mundy, on his right cheek. He remembered the first time Lucien kissed him, the warm nights. He realised one major thing. God, I've never felt safe or comfy with anyone apart from him. Now I'm going to spend my nights alone. Well, I guess I was never meant to have a happy life. I'd better go back to hunting and livin' in the outback. Once I'm done and we get the Admin back, I'll quit this job and go back to Australia.

Hey! I can't believe you're still not listenin'..."

Jeremy snapped his fingers in front of Mundy's face. The latter growled as the young man broke the train of his thoughts.

"You still there?"

"Yeah and I'm stayin' until you go'n'talk to Spy. I mean, Dad."
Mundy sighed.

"You saw me. I tried to go after him. He didn't listen. I guess I'm alone now."

"For Tom Jones' sake, listen! Alright let's try some'in else."

Jeremy took the glass from Mundy's hand.

"Oi! What the bloody hell are you doin'?"

He then took the bottle and put it out of Mundy's reach, next to his left foot, on the floor. Jeremy's tone of voice changed completely.

"Man, listen now. Dad told me some'in earlier and... well... I don't think I'm supposed to tell ya but if that's what you need..."

He sighed. Mundy was starting to feel the effect of the alcohol. He nonetheless paid attention to what the BLU Scout was saying.

"Y'know, he told me that when he was with Ma', he felt happy but also, not happy. He was happy 'cause someone was carin' for him. But deep down, he still felt somethin' was missin'. He's had lots'a ladies in his life. All beautiful and the kind that smells good and stuff like that. But still, there was something that made him feel he was never truly satisfied in 'is life. He kept on goin' from one contract to the other, until he met ya. Then, he told me, his life made sense."

He looked at Mundy.

"And apparently you're not doin' that good without 'im as well..."

"Listen here mate. I have never felt good with anyone except for your Dad so yeah, I'm not gonna lie, right now, I'd sell my van to have him next to me. But as always, I've ruined everything. Now, if you have nothing else to do here, g'day."

Jeremy was exasperated. He sighed.

"Alright. But y'know what? You're as stubborn as 'im and miserable. You both need one another, you can't go on like dis! Imma talk to Sp- Dad and you better be together again by the end o' the day, Scopeman!"

Jeremy got up and turned his back to exit the van. Meanwhile, Mundy had reached the bottle and glass and poured another glass.

"See ya man."

"Mmh."

Jeremy jumped out of the van and shut the door behind him.

"You're right, mate. I need 'im." Whispered Mundy to himself.

- Terrasse, back of the BLU Base -

On their terrasse, the BLU team had a table and some chairs. They would sometimes have dinner outside when the heat of the desert was less violent. Lucien was sitting on a chair he had turned towards the desert. One could see the robot vessel in the distance.
Jeremy took a chair and sat next to his father.

"Uhm... Dad?"

Lucien was looking at the distance, his eyes were red and his mask under his eyes was wet. *Jeez, he must'a been cryin'.*

"I talked to Snipey. He... uhm..."

"Jeremy, I'm sorry to disappoint you, again. You can leave me if you like and as soon as the Administrator comes back, I'll quit this job and disappear. You won't hear from me again, no tricks or disguises."

"Why d'ya say that?"

"I'm putting you through trouble and you certainly have had enough in your life."

Jeremy was becoming too impatient for Lucien and his lover to come back together.

"What's all that crap?! Listen'a me, ya both need one another, it's gettin' ridiculous! He's drinking alcohol and you're smokin' cigarettes 'cause you want both the same thing!"

He paused.

"Y'know what he told me? He told me you're the one person he feels good with, he was litterally cryin' in his freakin' van! Oh talkin' about the van, he said he was ready even to sell his van for you to come back!"

Lucien put his gloved fingers on his eyes. He stayed like this for a second. He frowned.

"What an I supposed to do then, Jeremy? I've ruined evrything. Again! I should 'ave told 'im about you and then I should 'ave come to you to talk. But there it is, I 'ave ruined the one thing in my life that made me *heurheux*."

"Y'know what? You're comin' with me, I'm tired of hearing the exact same thing twice..!"

Jeremy grabbed his father by the arm and dragged him to the van. He knocked and ran away.

"*Mais qu'est-ce que*-Jeremy?!!"

Lucien did not expect to be dropped like this. But inside the van, Mundy heard that voice, he sprang out of his couch, kicking the bottle of alcohol and rushed to the door. He opened it.

"You- I- Sorry, Lu', I'm so sorry, I thought you- and then I..."

"Non, *mon amour*. I am sorry. Of course I have always been deceitful, that's precisely my job in fact. So it's only natural for you to worry."

Mundy held his hand out as an invitation for Lucien to come in the van. Lucien looked up. He got rid of his gloves and his mask. He took Mundy's hand and climbed in. Both hugged each other tightly.

"You know it's all quite ridiculous, Bushman?"

"Yeah, but that's cause we care. Maybe too much."
They parted from each other's arms.

"You didn't find my croissants back, now did you?"

"Nah."

"Oh you stink of alcohol!"

"Oi! You're the one smokin' all the time and I'm not complainin'!"

"That's because you like that smell, Mundy."

"Mmmh... Anyway, I guess you're right. I need a shower. I'll go take one. Meanwhile, go and get some croissants and your son. All this mess got me hungry..."

"You are going to eat my son? You Bushman have no morals..."

Mundy smiled, took some fresh clothes.

"Nah, it's not your son I'm going to have for dinner...!"

He winked. Lucien blushed and smiled.

"Go and take your shower, you filthy man."

- Half an hour later, Mundy's van -

"Gentlemen, let us start from the beginning. Mundy, this is Jeremy, my son. Jeremy, this is Mundy, my..."

Lucien was looking for the best word. The word that Mundy will remember. He felt a lot of pressure as he knew Mundy could be disappointed in case he didn't find the right word. Lover? Non, that's not what I want to say... Partner? Non, we're not making deals and business! My reason to breathe? Non, that's too much, I can't say that to Jeremy... My second half? Non, that doesn't sound good... Oh, I know.

my soulmate."

Mundy blushed. Jeremy held his hand out to shake Mundy's but the latter took it and hugged him instead.

"Nice to properly meet you, mate."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Now, take a seat. Your father stole those croissants from the kitchen, help ye'self. I made some tea, you can add sugar if you like. No, Lu', not you, you're fat enough with all these croissants!"

"I'm stealing them for you, Mundy! You are the one getting fat!"

Jeremy laughed.

"You're always like dis?"

"Like what?"

"Tom'n'Jerry."
"Yeah, that's because of your Dad. He drives me crazy."

"Quoi? I'm not the one who used to live alone in a van!"

They all laughed.

"So, uhm, how did you get Jeremy?"

"Oh, they don't teach you how to have kids in koala-land?"

Lucien loved to tease Mundy.

"Nah you baguette! That's not what I meant, I-"

"Well, when a lady finds a gentleman-"

"Lu'..."

"And they both like each other veeeery very much..."

"Lu"...

Jeremy was amused by the whole scene. Mundy was half tired, half entertained by that. He loved Lucien's sarcasm and sense of humour.

"They give each other lots of kisses and poof! They end up having a baby!"

"Lu', I was asking about the circumstances, you snail eater!"

Lucien laughed.

"I know, I know. Now, here's the story."

He told how he met Jeremy's mother in a mission and fell in love with her.

"It was in Boston. I was sent there for a mission. I had to collect some intelligence from someone. She was his secretary and I got in touch with her multiple times. I had a fake identity of course, I had to be a businessman, trying to make an appointment with her employer to make a deal. It was all by phone. I met her one day and I found her beautiful. Her blue eyes, her hair. Everything."

Mundy growled.

"You have incredible blue eyes and hair as well, mon cher, don't be jealous!"

Mundy smiled and rolled his eyes.

"I have brown eyes, thanks for noticin'..."

Lucien smiled and resumed his speech.

"What I particularly appreciated with her is the trust we shared. I could tell her I was a spy, she would not betray me. And so I did. She understood I had to travel a lot. On average I would spend only a couple of months with her each year. And of course she thought that was not sufficient. She finally broke up because of that. When she did, she left with all her belongings and she left a note at home saying that I had a son."

"In Paris, you told me that it was only a rumour...?"
"I wanted to tell you the truth but I was afraid of what your reaction could be. You have always lived alone so it's a miracle that you accept to live with me. I was not going to impose anyone else at that point. But your reaction was interesting."

"Whot did I do?"

"Nothing. You didn't panic, you didn't make any weird face, nothing. Anyway she left me and had Jeremy with her. He was not yet born at that time. So I kept a distant eye on them both. And here we are today. I took the opportunity of this collaboration with the BLU team and the fact that the Administrator is obviously not watching us now to tell him that I was his father. I thought that you didn't even know."

"The Admin and Miss Paulin' told me and I had a choice between both teams. I thought Dad left us so I was angry and wanted revenge. I chose BLU but now I regret..."

"I told you, patience. You should change teams this evening. I prepared everything."

Jeremy smiled.

"Must be disturbin' for you, isn't it?" Asked Mundy.

"Wha'?"

"Well, the fact that your Dad is with me... I mean... not a lady..."

"At first I thought you were only friends. From the window of my bedroom, I can see your van. But Dad seemed to spend his night with ya, so I understood it was more than dat. Then I saw how he talked about ya and how bad he felt earlier, without ya. So, it's alright, I understand."

He paused.

"But yeah it's a bit weird, Ma' always told me you were very good with the ladies, that you had many many of them before gettin' t'know Ma'."

"Well, I had my little success, oui."

"Oi, I'm glad you put that in the past form, no need to go back to that!"

Lucien laughed.

"Don't worry."

"Yeah, I'm keepin' an eye on ya!"

Mundy was obviously joking but part of what he was saying was sincere.

"Hey, Dad, now that you found 'im, dontcha make mistakes!"

Lucien raised an eyebrow.

"By the way, can you teach me?"

"Teach you what?"

"How to seduce a lady!"
"Oh, you really like Miss Pauling..."

"Uhm... hahaha.. uhm... she... uhm..."

"Mate, you're blushing..."

"D'accord. I will teach you, stand up."

Both Lucien and Jeremy stood up. Lucien spoke first.

"Seduce me."

- Author's note -

Hey guys!

Thanks for reading! As usual, please tell me what you think of this chapter in the reviews :) 

Love y'all :D
"FREEEDOOOM!" Demo made his grenades explode and blew off the vessel's front doors.

"Give them hell boys!"

The seventeen mercs entered and each one knew what he had to do. Surprise was on their side so at the beginning, they didn't find lots of robots to kill.

"INTRUDER ALERT - INTRUDER ALERT!"

A loud bell started ringing and the mercs could all hear the metallic clings and clongs of the robots running to them.

"Yo let's go!"

Engies got busy quickly and deployed a respawn chamber each as well as a sentry and dispenser. Next to the sentries stood both Snipers. Pyros were busy running around to check on possible spies. Heavies were mowing the lawn in front of them, with both Medics charging their Kritzkriegs and their shields. Demo was helping Sollies and Scouts were trying to be the farthest up possible.

The battle was fierce. Both Medics had improved the healing rate of their kritzkrieg to the level of the quick-fix's but it didn't seem to be sufficient.

"Herr Doctor, I leave my Heavy vizh you, I vill heal zhe kamarades at zhe front!" Shouted RED Medic.

"Jawöhl! I vill heal him, now go!"

RED Medic equipped with his crossbow on one hand and his übersaw on the other. He sliced through robots to run to the front. Machine oil was springing from everywhere along with the explosions and bullets swarming from both Heavies with their improved Mini-guns. Misha watched as Ludwig deployed his shield and charged the BLU Solly. The rockets dug holes into the ground and robots sprung in every direction. He admired his companion as he was flying from right to left, his labcoat seeming like wings. He is as light and agile as a bird... for his age! His train of thought was boken back the BLU Medic who decided to charge both of them. The firing rate and the clip size of their miniguns was doubled and the Engies added some push back so that they can keep the enemies at a fair distance from them. It did the trick, the flow of robots seems to slow down during the Kritskrieg's charge.

"Scheisse!" RED Medic was wounded. He took an arrow in his left arm.

"Herr Doctor, bitte!"

The BLU Medic heard his colleague but the robots were just too numerous.

"Sorry mein freund, I can't!"

"Doc! C'mon man! I'm dyin' here!"

"Ach!"
Disappointed and in pain, the RED Medic closed one eye and aimed with his crossbow. He shot a syringe. *Hallelujah!* Thought Scout.

"Yeah, yeah, thanks!"

Engies packed up their stuff and moved their gear up. The mercs were advancing, good. But they needed to keep the robots busy so that both spied could free Saxton Hale.

"Do you have all the equipment?"

"Oui, allons-y!"

Both Spies cloacked. They went through the air vent again. They walked and walked and finally arrived in the corridor just before the prison cells. They opened a panel.

Some robots were there but didn't hear the noise. Both Spies were freezing as their outfit consisted of a refrigerated suit. It had seemed one of the Engie's best ideas until now... The robots nevertheless did not detect them. They came out of the vent and put the panel back again. They both disguised, one as an Engie, the other as a Soldier. A group of robots were gathered around a table, playing a card game. Obviously they seemed to have got bored by the guarding duty. Both Spies came close to the table. BLU Spy spotted the key to the cell, next to a robot Heavy.

"Who's winnin' partners?"

"Heavy as always."

"May I join y'all?"

"Sure."

The fake Engie took a seat next to the robot Heavy. The fake Soldier was standing behind him. The Spy made sure to not draw too much attention to him while playing and slipped his hand under the table. He took the keys and grasped them firmly as he didn't want them to clink against each other. He passed them behind his back and the other Spy took them. Neither the robot Heavy nor the rest of the group noticed.

"Heavy, you are very lucky, you have all aces!" Said a robot Scout.

"Heck yeah!" The fake Engie put his hand on the robot Heavy's back. A buzzing sound could be heard and robot Heavy's head and whole torso bended on the table.

"SPY!"

The robots were taken by surprise. Both spies got their masks off. BLU Spy, who was the Engie, got his butterfly knife out and jumping from his seat to avoid the Scout's baseball bat, stuck his knife in his back. RED Spy got his ambassador out of his vest and shot 2 other robots in the head. In a couple of seconds, both spies got rid of the whole group of robots.

"Bien joué mon ami!" [Well played my friend!]

"Vous n'êtes pas mal non plus!" [You're not bad either!]

After the brief exchange of compliments, both Spies went to the first prison cell, where Saxton Hale was kept.

"Thank ye both! It was about time!"
"Here, take this."

"Whot's that?"

"It's a bandage with some Medigun fluid, it should ease the pain. Both Medics prepared it."

"Aye, thanks."

Saxton Hale took the bandage, cut it in small pieces and put all the small bits where he felt pain. His arms, his wrists and his cheeks, right under his eyes.

"Alright, let give'em a good beating!"

The three men went to the ladies' cell. The Administrator was sitting on the bed, smoking a cigarette while Miss Pauling was holding onto the bars of the cell's door, trying to break them.

"Here is the key, let me open."

RED Spy put the key in the lock. Clink. The door opened.

"Thanks guys, now what's all this noise about?"

"Oh, the rest of both teams are keeping the robots busy."

"Let's go and help'em!"

"No." The Administrator was speaking in a confident tone of voice.

"I need to get to the control room. I will send Gray Mann a message and I'll make sure those robots won't come again."

"Can we not just give'im a good fight?"

"Mister Hale, as much as I think you very capable in the inventing-and-selling weapons business, I would like you to let me handle these sort of things."

She paused.

"I know Mister Mann... quite well."

The conversation was interrupted by the Engies and Pyros coming from the corridor.

"Heck yeah! You freed them all! That's very good job, partners! Now, we gotta act quick, follow me!"

The whole group followed the Engies who were rushing to the control room. But, before they could enter, robots arrived from left, right and behind. They were all surrounded by robots.

"Mmmh-mmmh-mmmh!"

"Alright, let's do this Texas Style."

Both Engies took out their shotguns and Pyros readied their flamethrowers. Spies adjusted their ties and shirt sleeves in a very elegant way and reloaded their ambassador revolvers.

"Do you know how to use this?"
Said RED Spy to Miss Pauling while giving her his black revolver. It was the first weapon Mann Co had given him.

"Of course, yeah!"

"Good, your life depends on it."

"Now, quit the speakin' and let's kick their metal arses!"

Saxton Hale was enthusiastic about the fight, he threw fists in every direction, sending metal bits flying in the corridor. Pyros switched between their flare guns and flamethrowers in order to air blast the enemies.

"Oh, dang it!"

RED Engie received an arrow from a robot Sniper in the shoulder. RED Pyro gasped under his mask and jumped to the said Sniper. He got his axe out and crushed the robot to pieces. His axe swung fiercely through the metal sea of robots. RED Engie was keeping on fighting but he was clearly in pain. Unfortunately, no medics had followed them as they were busy with Heavies, Sollies and the rest of the crew.

"Merde!"

BLU Spy got shot by a robot Scout. And soon after...

"Salaud!"

Both Spies were now injured.

"Go inside, we'll keep them busy!"

Both Engies nodded and went in the control room with the Administrator and Miss Pauling.

Ah, we should'a brought a Doc with us... How stupid... They're gonna go through hell just cause I've been stupid... And Pyro... He fought like the devil when he saw me gettin' injured... Damn, we'd better be quick and get the hell outta here.

"Alright Ma'am, here's the control computer, lemme see..."

"I got the buildin' chain control... There, I stopped the production of new robots..."

"Good, now, make a call to Gray Mann and leave the room. Pauling, you stay with me."

"But Ma'am-"

"Do as I say!"

"Alrighty then..."

Both Engies were pressing on keyboard keys furiously and fast. Finally, after a minute or so, they managed to make the call.

"He should appear on that screen. Now, we're leavin' ya. We'll try and hold the robots but please, with all due respect, be as quick as possible, Ma'am."

She didn't even nod. Both Engies looked at each other, took their shotguns again. They opened the
door and exited the control room.

In the corridor, Medics, Sollies and the rest of the crew had joined Pyros and Spies.

"Scheisse! Vhy have you not disabled them?!!"

"It's the Admin! She told us to make a call to Gray Mann and leave it to her!"

"She'd better do what she wanna do fast cause we ain't holdin' it here for very long!"

"Dontcha worry Scout, she'll be quick."

And RED Engie added, under his breath "or so I hope...".

"Zhe Kritzkriegs are beginning to vork veirdly!"

"Whaddya mean Doc?"

"Vell zhey are scorching hot and zhey stop healing sometimes!"

"They're overheating... we didn't think about anything to prevent that, we didn't think it would take us so long! Turn them off for a while!"

"But how are ve going to heal you?!"

"I'm alright Doc, do it!"

"I feel très bien."

Both RED and BLU Medics turned off their Kritzkriegs and looked around. All the mercs were giving their best at combat. Robot oil was springing and spilling everywhere. They readied their crossbows. Zhat vould do zhe job and heal... oh but...

"Zhe dispenser goes here!"

"I'm out of ammunition as well, better go with my shovel, GET READY ROBOTS, AMERICA WINS!"

"I ain't got no metal son, I can't build one!"

"Whaddya mean?! We're surrounded by robot parts!" Shouted Scout.

"Yeah, but it's all soaking wet with oil. We can't do nothin' with it, boy!"

"So zhere is no healing, be careful about you all!"

Medics threw their crossbows away and took out their syringe guns. The battle went on. Scouts got injured first. Then came BLU Sniper and RED Demo. Little by little, all the mercs took blows but kept going. At that point their clothes were sliced through and blood began flowing.

"You schweinhund!"

Misha turned his head around and saw a robot Sniper slice through Ludwig's left arm. Unfortunately he did not cut his arm off but the wound was pretty bad and the cut was pretty deep. Ludwig dropped his needle gun and took his bonesaw.

"Zhere you go, you dummkopf!"
He cut the robot neatly into two halves.

Misha nonetheless went to his lover's rescue and helped him. BLU Heavy interrupted everyone's fighting.

"What is this new machine?"

The big Russian guy was pointing at a gigantic machine. Certainly not a robot, no. It was rolling like a... tank. It's a tank. It's a tank!

"Holy Mother of Joseph... TAAAANK!"

Shouted BLU Soldier.

"Alright, we gonna take care of robot Snipes, meanwhile-Aah!"

"JEREMY!"

The BLU Scout took a Sniper's shot on his hip. He bent down on all four.

"Doc, c'mon man!"

"I'm sorry Scout, I've only got some bandages, the Kritzkriegs are out of order for now and I don't have any more healing syringes..."

"Wha'?!"

Both Meds got up and carried the wounded boy back.

"Good luck pally, I'm sorry!"

"No problem!"

Both Scouts exchanged a nod and the RED one went on. The tank still kept approaching.

"Doktor, can you charge me?"

"Nein, sorry mein freund."

BLU Heavy looked sad for a moment. He knew that without some crits, they would not stand a chance. His eyes flashed angrily.

"YAAAAAA!

Both Heavies went side by side with their miniguns and kept damaging the tank as much as they could.

"Mmmh-mmmh!"

"Aaah!"

A robot Spy nearly backstabbed the Engie. Fortunately enough, the knife went into his shoulder.

Bit by bit, ammunition went low for everyone and the tank kept pushing forward. Next to the Medics, blocking the door to the control room were now a dozen mercs. Most of them conscious but unable to hold and handle weapons.
Among the mercenaries still in combat, Misha was sweating heavily. *I must destroy the tank before it gets to Ludwig and the others. Destroy the tank. Destroy the tank. Destroy the-*

All of a sudden, all the robots stopped. Even the heavy and lousy tank stopped.

"What happened?"

The Administrator opened the door, Miss Pauling behind her.

"I think you put a teleporter somewhere, Mr Conaugher?"

"Yes Ma'am, it's in the corner of the corridor. But wait, what happened?"

"I suggest you take it at once, the vessel is about to blow into pieces. Pauling, follow me."

Both ladies went to the teleporter and vanished. The mercs hepled each other and went to the teleporter too. They all reappeared near the BLU Base. The Administrator had lit a cigarette and was waiting for them.

The vessel blew off in the distance, like a wrathful volcano.

Looking at the Administrator, Ludwig, labcoat torn to pieces, glasses broken and shirt soaking wet and black with robot oil, saw that she was smiling. The kind of triumphant smile. Satisfied and proud. He wondered what she had told Gray Mann to make him change his plans to that end. Anyways, in the end, it didn't matter. What mattered was the health of the seventeen mercs.

"You will now tend to your wounds. I will speak to you all in the BLU base in seven days."

A black car stopped on the road. She went in with Miss Pauling and the car disappeared in the distance.

"Heavies, ve vill heal you first and zhen you vill carry zhe mercs inside zhe MediBay. Come on! Ve have vork to do!".

- *Author's note -*

As always thanks for reading and please leave a review to let me know if you liked it or nah!
Chapter 23

- MediBay, BLU Base -

"How is your arm, Ludwig?"

"It's recovering well. But you're the patient and I'm the doctor, how is your arm, Misha?"

The big Russian man smiled.

"It is taken care of by the best doctor I know."

Ludwig smiled and blushed slightly.

"Oh, you flatter me."

Misha had come to see his lover right after breakfast. It has become usual now for him to help Ludwig at the MediBay. BLU Medic, whose name they knew was Rudolf, did not see any problem with that. With all the patients to take care of, an extra pair of hands was more than welcome.

"Ah, Rudolf, how are both Engies?"

"Johnnie is alright but Dell... Pyro is with him."

"He slept there?! He's been there since he himself recovered!"

"Ja, I know."

"Mmh."

Ludwig wanted to check on him. He went to the door which had a window in it. He peeped quickly and saw Pyro's sitting on a chair, sleeping with his head on Dell's bed, the RED Engie, right next to him. Ludwig smiled. He thought he did not want to wake them up. He would come back later.

Now to check on Lucien. He had been in a pretty bad state. Jeremy and Mundy would have been dead had it not been for Lucien's devotion and courage. He had carried them back, right behind him and took the shots and blows for them both. As a result, Mundy and Jeremy recovered quickly but poor Lucien's case was way worse. It was worrying both Medics. He was still unconscious and somewhere between life and death. And it had been so for seven days now. Mundy never left his side. Jeremy came and went to bring Mundy some food or anything he wanted.

Ludwig opened the room's door.

"G'day Doc."

"Hallo mein freund. Any change you noticed? Has he opened his eyes? At least for a few minutes?"

"No, he still has nightmares I think 'cause I see him shake violently in his sleep sometimes."

Ludwig checked Lucien's vital signs. He was not optimistic at all. But he had always kept a hopeful face in front of Mundy and Jeremy. It was now high time he told them. Jeremy was out but Mundy was there.

"Mundy, can I see you in the office, bitte?"
"Yeah, o'course."

Mundy rose to his feet and followed Ludwig. In the said office, Ludwig waved Mundy to a chair and closed the door behind him.

"I need to talk to you. About Lucien."

"Yeah?"

"Vell, it's been seven days now and we have managed to keep him alive and vell but..."

Ludwig looked sorry. He stared at Mundy in the eyes and saw the other man go as white as a sheet.

"No... no... are ya telling me that...? No... Doc, there must be a way... you can't just..."

"I'm sorry Mundy but if he doesn't wake up today, there is very little hope he will later."

Tears streamed on the Sniper's face.

"C'mon Doc, there... surely there's a way..."

"To be honest, I used to know a Swiss colleague... but she disappeared about a year ago. No, Mundy, there really is no other way."

He paused. Mundy put his face in his hands and cried heavily. He cried. And cried. And cried.

"Tell me Ludwig, why? Why is that... everytime things get messed up... everytime I find something good, it rots in my very hands... why? Why Lucien?!"

Ludwig was feeling his friend's pain. He was thinking that if he was in his shoes, he would be crying his eyes out too. Mundy's usual shyness completely vanished and he didn't seem able to stop crying and talking. Ludwig made him stand up and hugged him.

"I mean, God could take anything. My rifles, my job, my van, my family, my home, everything... BUT WHY HIM?!"

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Lucien is a dear friend to all of us. I-"

Ludwig broke into tears too. Both of them kept crying until someone knocked on the door.

"Who's this?"

"It's me, Ludwig, Jeremy is with me, he's been looking for Mundy."

Ludwig led Mundy to sit back on the chair and opened the door. Both Misha and Jeremy opened wide eyes. Ludwig raised his head up again with both his eyes red and a bit swollen.

"Jeremy, Lucien..."

He didn't even manage to end his sentence. He burst out crying, took his glasses in one hand and threw them on the desk.

"Wha'?!"

Jeremy looked behind Ludwig and saw Mundy on a chair, his head in his hands. He fell on his knees and cried. Misha helped him up but the poor boy's legs couldn't carry him. He was in deep shock.
The Russian man hugged him while Ludwig cried with Mundy.

They remained like that for a while not knowing that next door, Dell, the RED Engie, had woken up.

"Mmh-mmmnh!"

"Ah, mah lil' Py'... Good ta see ya, son..."

Dell was smiling. Breathing seemed a bit difficult but his face regained colors little by little. Pyro was obviously overjoyed.

"So tell me, what did I miss? Have I been out for a long time?"

Pyro answered with his hands. He showed him seven fingers.

"Seven hours, that's not that bad."

Pyro shook his head.

"Mmh-mmmnh! Mmmmmnh!"

"What?! Seven days?! Good Lord! I've been sleepin' like a bear!"

He laughed and Pyro cheered.

"You know what lil' Py'? It's good to wake up and see ya. It reminds me of mah life back in Texas. Mah kids, ya know..."

He paused and looked up at Pyro who bent his head on one side, wanting to know more.

"Well, we had a lovely ranch. Mah wife, me and mah 2 lovely kids. A boy and a girl. Tom and Julia. We adopted them both 'cause my wife couldn't get kids of her own. They were beautiful, both had green eyes which contrasted beautifully with the color of their skin. "Mah favourite brownies" I used to call them. Originally they had come from Africa after a civil war and with Gina, my wife, and the help of an organisation, we managed to get the papers right in order to adopt them. They were lovely and at first, the kids in the neighbourhood loved them but little by little, they stopped playing with them. I eventually understood that it was because they were not fair skinned."

His face darkened.

"We used to live very happily nonetheless until... well... this thing."

He paused again. He looked in front of at a wall. He could not stand to look at Pyro right in the eyes.

"I had a garage and I used to build things up. I made every toy my kids ever had, from dolls to little cars. I remember for Tom's birthday, he wanted one of those cars you can control with a remote. I built him a little green one, like his eyes, and offered him the toy. Oh, you should 'a seen his face..."

Dell was smiling but his eyes were full of tears.

"Mmmh mmh-mmnh?"

"What happened? Well, what happened indeed...? Until today I still have no idea why it happened but here is what I remember. We use to have a few horses. The kids loved them. Anyway one night I heard them neighing an awful lot. I decided to go and have a look. I took mah shotgun and went
downstairs. When I went out, I realised the stables were on fire and a group of scoundrels was having fun mistreating mah horses. I fired in the air once, to scare them away and it did work. I went to the stables and freed the horses. The stables were connected to a wide field so the horses escaped there. That's when I hear a loud explosion and when I turned back, I saw the windows of the low story of my house shatter with fire. Those damn people had gotten in and had messed up with the kitchen gas... I called for help, I tried coming back into the house to save them all...

Pyro removed his gloves and took Dell's hands into his. They were very dark with burn marks on them.

"When the firefighters arrived, there was no one to be saved. They found Gina and Julia but they never found Tom..."

Pyro let go of Dell's hands and got up. His attitude changed completely. He took a bed sheet, went to the door and covered the little window. He put the blinds down behind the window and left them open just enough to not be in complete darkness. He came back to Dell's side.

"What's that all about?"

He put his hands on the mask and began pulling.

"Py', I don't need you to-"

He removed the mask and Dell took a moment before realising. In front of him stood a black young man with a deep burn on his left cheek. His eyes were big and green and with long eyelashes. Pyro then put his hand in his pocket and got a small object out, that he put in Dell's hand. Looking closely, he recognised the green remote control car.

"You-?! Tom?! My Tommy?! How the-"

Dell's heart was beating very fast. Tom didn't let his dad the time to end his sentence and hugged him. Both cried happy tears.

"That's why you fought so furiously when I got injured, that's why you learnt the name of the tools so easily, you already knew them!"

"Yes, Dad."

"But how old are you now, let me think, a little under 20, ain't it right?"

"Yes, I will turn 19 in a few weeks."

"And you kept the car!"

Dell burst into laughter.

"Ah, son, how did you escape that night?"

And both went on chatting again when Rudolf blew the door open, holding some syringes and looking frightened to the bone.

"His heart! The monitor in my secondary office showed that it was beating too fast! You- vhat?! Who are you?!"

Dell and Tom laughed again and explained to Rudolf the whole situation.
"At least, you're awake, which is good."

"How's the rest of the team, Doc'?"

"Vell, ve are all good... except for your Spy, Lucien."

"Oh, what about him?"

Rudolf went into detail and explained how he didn't have much hope for the Frenchman.

"Good Lord... you sure about that, doc?"

"Vell, ve have been discussing it for a long time vizh Ludwig and ja, if he doesn't wake up today..."

The atmosphere had brutally changed from cheerful to grave.

"And does Mundy know?"

"Ludwig is telling him and I've heard cries and shouts so I guess he did..."

The three men remained silent for quite a long time. It was Rudolf who broke the silence.

"Since I'm here, let me check your heart and blood pressure..."

- A few doors further, Lucien's room -

Mundy had come back to his lover's room with Jeremy.

"Yo, uhm, can I have a moment with'im?"

"O'course, I'll be in the corridor."

Mundy got up and left Jeremy and his father alone. The young boy went to his dad, granbed him by the shoulders and dived in the bed to hug him. He cried again.

"Dad, I'm so sorry, please wake up, c'mon! Please tell me that I'm only hugging a dummy and not you, please tell me you're right there with your invisibility watch, please, please, please."

The only answer he got was the beeps of the heart monitoring machine.

"Please tell me you're disguised as a lamp, or as a chair, please tell me that you're disguised somewhere and that you're alive for real, please dad, please..."

Again, beep, beep, beep.

The young man let go of his father sat up and looked at his father.

"Y'know what? You been a good example, yeah, a good one. I seen ya with Mundy, I seen ya with me, I see ya with everyone."

He sniffed. He raised his right index.

"I swear Imma be a good person. I'm never forgetting what you did to me. You've always been there. Even if I didn't know. So it's mah turn now. Imma stay with you, even if you don't know it. You hear me? Imma stay with ya. Not like you stay with a friend or some'in', hehe, not like that. Imma stay with ya until the very end. And y'know why?"
"Y'know? Mmh?"

"Cause that's what you would've done with me. We stickin' together now. There's no other way."

Almost forgetting that his father couldn't answer, Jeremy was expecting him to say thanks. Instead, the answer he got put him in rage.

He turned his heels, flung the door of the room open and went away. He felt as if he had steam coming out of his very skin. Mundy who was sitting on a nearby chair in the corridor got startled by the door opening so furiously.

"What the bloody hell just happened?!"

Jeremy ran away in the corridor. He needed to run. Fast and in open fields.

Mundy got in the room and closing the door gently behind him.

"Sorry love. I guess that's how frustrating it is for 'im."

He sat on a chair.

"So, Ludwig told me. He told me that if you didn't wake up today, there's no future for us."

Tears came to his eyes.

"Nah, I'm not going to cry again. That's not how you behave like a gentleman... like you. Nah, if you were at my place, here's what you would have done."

He got up and walked to the window.

"You'd have got your hand in your inner pocket. You'd have gotten one of your damned cigarettes. You'd have lit it and smoked it silently, watching I don't know what through the window."

Maybe unconsciously, Mundy was mimicking all those move.

"You'd finish your cigarette and come and sit next to the bed. Silent, now saying a word. Just listening to the beeps."


"You'd have lit another one. And another one and another one... Until your eyes got so red, that you'd look like an addicted-to-drugs punk..."


He sighed.

"My addicted-to-drugs punk... my drug..."

He gulped.
"Please, make it like last time... wake up and correct my french... who's going to teach me baguette language if you're..."

He hesitated.

"...not there."

He sat silently and kept his eyes on Lucien. He wanted to capture all the details of his face. He looked at him with concentration and focus. *I have to get the album.* He got up and went to his van.

- Afternoon, Meeting Room -

"Hello? Ma'am? You hearin' us alright?"

"Good afternoon to you all. I see you are not all here..?"

The Administrator raised an eyebrow.

"Vell, some of our colleagues are still unable to leave their beds."

"Any deaths?"

"Nein."

He paused.

"Not for the moment."

"Is it the RED Spy?"

"Ja..."

All the mercs, RED and BLU, looked sad now that the subject was brought forth. The BLU Spy, Jean, took a cigarette and lit it while lowering his head. He was trying to hide his tears.

"This is not a problem. Actually, it makes it easier for me-"

Mundy sprang up his chair.

"Whot did you just say?!"

"I said, it's not a problem if the teams get a few deaths, that's the price of war."

"You BLOODY woman! It's a human life, show some bloody respect!"

The Administrator laughed.

"You should be the one showing respect, *I pay you.*"

"Well you can keep the money, but don't you dare talk about him like that, you hear me?"

"Or what? You will leave? You will hunt me as if I were some wild beast?"

The door flung open.

"No, I will find you because you would have left me for dead. Plus, you would have made my dearest friends here go through some trouble."
Lucien was standing painfully in the door frame, wearing nothing but a hospital gown and holding a cigarette between his lips. Everyone stood up from their chair with joyful faces.

"Lu’!"

Mundy ran to him and helped him stand. Lucien rested his arm and weight on Mundy's shoulder. Ludwig got up from his seat silently and went to them.

"Ach! You vere dying and now zhat you wake up, you smoke?! What kind of dummkopf are you?!

Ludwig took the cigarette, crushed it in his gloved hands and threw it away.

"He's our favourite doom-cough, Doc!" Answered Mundy.

The moment of happiness was cut sharp by the Administrator.

"Anyway, I'm calling you today because I am firing you all."

The mercs were a bit surprised but none of them took it as an offense.

"After this adventure, you are all now... erm... what's the word again, Pauling?"

Miss Pauling's head peeped behind the Administrator's shoulder.

"Friends, Ma'am."

"Ah yes, friends. And according to the contract you all signed at the beginning of the job, friendship is not tolerated."

She paused.

"Also, know that I have watched the footage from the CCTVs while I was away. I am disappointed by your service. We hired you because you were all the very best killers and you became friends... What a shame."

She now clearly looked disgusted on the big screen.

"Oi, we saved you and your lot in the vessel!" Exclaimed Patrick, the BLU Sniper.

"Yeah, yeah, we saved your skinny ass back there!" Added RED Scout.

The Administrator resumed her talk as if she had not been interrupted.

"As a result, I will ask you to pack your things. You can keep the equipment Mann Co. gave you. On sunday, a bus will drive you to the nearest city, it's only a few hundred kilometers away. Good day."

The screen went black.

"Well, it seems we have things to do now." Said Jean, the BLU Spy.

"Come on, Pat' chéri, let's pack everything in your van."

Jean was way less modest about his relationship with Patrick than Lucien.

"I hope you vill all be able to travel on Sunday. Some of your vounds still need to be taken care of...!" Said Ludwig.
"We'd better start preparing some medicine to use on that way." Answered Rudolf.

"Good idea, but first, let's check on the patients and you, Lucien, go back to your room! Schnell!"

"But I have just come out!"

"You oughta go back, mate, you can't even stand up on your own!"

"Fine, fine, but you have to accompany me, walking is really painful..."

The meeting room empty and all the mercs, who were delighted to know that their colleagues were well, went all in their quarters to pack their stuff. Sunday was just the day after.

- Author's note -

Hello, beautiful people! Thanks for reading and as always, don't feel shy and leave a comment! I'm more than happy to read your feedback and it encourages me to keep going! :)

By the way, did you get the reference to Mercy from Overwatch? ;)

Stay tuned for chapter 24 ;D!

And now I've imported all the story so far (from fanfiction.net to AO3). From now on, the updates on the story will be as regular on AO3 as they are on Fanfiction.net. I usually post a new chapter every few days or every week.

Sorry for the avalanche of new chapters but at least now I've imported it all! ^^
Chapter 24

Ludwig and Misha's room, BLU Base, departure day -

Both were packing their things when Misha stopped and sat on the bed. He looked thoughtful.

"Ludwig, we have to talk seriously."

"Ja?"

"What are we going to do?"

"Was?!"

Ludwig put the bag he was holding on the floor and sat next to Misha.

"I mean, once we come back to normal life, out of combat...?"

"Vell, vizh zhe fortune Mann Co. paid us, I zhought ve could uhm... invest in somezhing togezher?"

"Mnh?"

"Zhere is zhis house in Teufort. It's not very expensive and zhere's lots of zhings to do to make it a home. Perhaps you could like to... uhm.."

Ludwig was twisting his gloves in his hands. He knew that such an invitation would mark a milestone in their relationship. If Misha accepted it, it would be perfect. But if he decided to refuse... That's why Ludwig thought that choosing the right words was delicate.

"...give me a hand?"

"You are asking me to help you repair a house?"

"Uhm... zhat's... uhm... I mean zhat vas not what I had in mind but erm..."

Misha was obviously teasing him on purpose but as usual, Ludwig was missing the trick.

"What do you have in mind then?"

Misha turned to Ludwig and put his fingers on the doctor's chin and drew it close to his face. Their nose were touching. Instantly, Ludwig blushed and his eyes closed for a second. His ears got hot and he felt shivers in his back. The Russian man saw him melt in his hand and smiled.

"Mnh? Tell me what you're thinking about..."

Ludwig opened his eyes.

"You know I can't focus when you hold me... zhat's cheating...!"

"Ah, and you don't like cheating, do you?"

"I did not say zhat I don't like zhe way you cheat, Herr Misha..."

"Back to the subject, funny man, what is it you want?"
Ludwig backed off a bit and put his lover's hand aside. He cleared his throat.

"I have to ask you this but I have to be focused."

He paused.

"Misha, would you like to live with me?"

Misha bent his head on one side. He found the way Ludwig asked him that very cute, to say the least. How adorable he is when he gets serious with me.

"Are we not already?"

"Ja but I mean, buy a house together...?"

"I understood you long ago, I'm just fooling around. I will gladly live with you and settle with you on one condition."

"Ja?"

"You go with me to Russia first."

Ludwig's face brightened.

"Really? You're not joking this time?"

"Nyet, I will book the flights and make a surprise to my family, they don't know we're coming!"

Ludwig jumped on his lover and hugged him.

"Danke, danke schöne mein liebe!"

Misha laughed.

"Hahaha, thank you."

He patted Ludwig's back gently.

"Come on, the rest of the guys must be waiting, let's join them in the bus."

"Ja."

- Mundy's van -

"You got all your suits fancy pants?"

"That's no way to speak to your father, Jeremy." Answered Lucien while putting his luggage in Mundy's van. He smiled at his son. Jeremy reciprocated but his smile was particularly radiant. Lucien saw the young man's face illuminate. It softened him.

"Viens ici." [Come here]

Jeremy got off the couch and hugged his father.

"Now, be quiet and don't mess up with Mundy's things, he hates when someone touches his belongings."
"Oui Papa."

Lucien's eyebrows raised and his eyes opened wide. He didn't expect his son to answer him in French. With a nice pronunciation too! With a last tap on the shoulder, Lucien climbed off by the rear of the vehicle, climbed back in at the front and took the passenger's seat next to Mundy who was obviously the one who was going to drive.

"Ready, love?"

"Oui."

Mundy turned to Lucien completely.

"Before we go, I have to ask you some'in'."

Lucien raised an eyebrow.

"Oui?"

"Well, I kinda liked Paris and I thought that, if you're okay with that and if Jeremy agrees, we could rent a beautiful flat there. What do you think?"

"Is my current flat not enough for Monsieur Mundy?"

Mundy smiled. And here we go again, this talk is going to be longer than expected...

"That's not what I meant, I meant-"

"Is it too small?"

"Lu'..."

"Too modern?"

"Lucien?"

"Is the decoration not in your taste?"

"Well, now that you mention it..."

"You're so disrespectful, Bushman! I welcomed you in my home and you dare tell me I have bad taste!"

Mundy did not answer but smiled again and rolled up his eyes.

"Seriously, Lu'..."

"Seriously? Of course I'd love us to live together and in Paris! But, you won't miss your beloved Outback?"

"I s'ppose I will... But we could still go there on holidays if you like."

"Oui, I'd like to see it. It's hard for me to imagine someone can live hunting wild and dangerous beasts...!"

"We have a deal then. We just have to ask Jeremy. But I bet he's not goin' to refuse."
"Merci."

"Doo rian."

They exchanged a quick kiss and Mundy started the van.

- In the bus, on the way to Teufort. -

"Well Tommy, you got any family of your own?"

"No, not exactly. After the accident, I thought everyone had passed away. So I ran away. I got rescued by a family. They fed me for a week or so and then, they called an orphanage and they agreed to take me in. I had nothing with me apart from the toy and some clothes the rescue family had given me. I stayed in the orphanage for some years. But with my scars and my burns, no one wanted to adopt me. When I got eleven or twelve, some bad kids got me into smoking. I hated it but I was fascinated by the lighters. And then I understood it was not lighters but fire itself that I found interesting. A lady at the orphanage told me I could become a firefighter. I laughed at the idea. 'Yeah and not save people from fires and have them lose their family, nope, not for me!' I told her."

He paused to take his breath a bit. He took a lighter out of his pocket and started playing with it while resuming his speech.

"When I got old enough, I got out of the orphanage and worked in a circus. 'Fireman' I was called. I loved the people there. They didn't care that I was black or that I had scars and burns. And with the make up, no one in the audience knew I had suffered from a fire when I was young. I had a red and yellow outfit and my I loved my little performance. I loved seeing how people cheered and could be happy around me. I have some pictures somewhere among my things. I'll show them to you if I have the chance."

Dell cut him.

"O'course you'll have the time, you're comin' with me, son. We have lots to talk about and lots to live that we haven't already."

Tom's beautiful green eyes widened.

"What, you mean we're gonna leave together?"

"O'course! No way I'm losin' you again!"

Tom was overwhelmed by the joy he was feeling. Of course he wanted to live with his father but didn't dare ask him to. He hugged his father.

"Thanks, Dad."

"No problem."

"So anyway, I heard that a company wanted to recruit an expert in the manipulation of fire. The guys at the circus found an article in the local newspaper and they encouraged me to apply."

He paused and smiled.

"I guess you know the rest, more or less."

As for the rest of the mercs, Tavish (RED Demoman) opened a bar in Teufort and employed Joe and Jack (both Soldiers) as waiters. Of course, the tavern was called "BLURED" as a play on words and
as a tribute to the time spent working for Mann Co..
Jean and Patrick (BLU Spy and Sniper) decided to move toghether in Australia. Pat' couldn't leave
elsewhere and Jean was eager to discover a new way of life. Together they want to open an animal
sanctuary.
Johnnie and Blake (BLU Engie and Pyro) founded the 'JohnnieBlake Co.', a company that develops
fine fireworks in all colors and all shapes. Unlike Tom, Blake was a real expert in fire and with
Johnnie's expertise in designing and building machines, it could only work.
Rudolf went back to Germany to try and get his medical license back. Vlad (BLU Heavy) followed
him. Apparently he wanted to discover the cournty and know more its people...
RED Scout returned to his Ma' in Boston and wanted to apply in a professionnal baseball team. His
colleagues at RED always told him he had talent and he beleived it was time for him to live of his
first passion (after his Ma', of course).
Author's note Hey guys! Thanks for reading and as always, tell me what you think!
You might wonder if the story ends there, the answer is... of course not! More is to come! (I still have
to find the ideas though !) But it sure as hell isn't finished. I realised I love writing this so I don't think
I'm going to stop just now !
Thanks again and see you around for chapter 25! ;)


Chapter 25

- Paris, spring -

"Bonjour mon amoore, wake up...!"

"Mmmh..."

"Oh c'mon I've been up since 5am and you're still snoring in your sleep!"

"Mmh..."

Mundy sighed but smiled at the same time. He was sitting on the bed next to Lucien. He looked down at him. He looks so peaceful when he sleeps.

"I got some croissant from Michelle's bakery..."

Lucien opened one eye.

"It's a 'boulangerie', not a 'bakery'."

"And what's the difference?"

Lucien sighed. He opened his other eye and blinked a few times. He turned to face Mundy, still laying in bed.

"A bakery is an English invention created to compensate the fact that everywhere else in the world, people don't know how to make proper bread."

"And a boulangerie?"

"That's heaven on Earth. The mere smell of the hot flour goes throughout the street and when you open the door of the boulangerie..."

Lucien smiled, his eyes were dreamy.

"The smell of the fresh baguettes, their golden crunchy crust... and the croissants... mmmh...!"

Mundy smiled and sighed again.

"Anyway, when Sleepin' Beauty is ready, I'm in the livin' room for breakfast..."

Lucien got up and put a dressing gown on and went to the kitchen. Mundy was sitting and putting butter on his toast when Lucien arrived like a cat and sat on Mundy's lap.

"You haven't found any other chair to sit on?"

Lucien bit on the croissant still in Mundy's hand.

"Oi! That was meant for me!"

"Not anymore...!" Answered Lucien while chewing on the delicious pastry.

Mundy put his right hand around Lucien's waist and ate the rest of the croissant.
"So, what will you be doin' today?"

"Not much... I have an appointment with Marcel, remember the waiter from that restaurant I took you to during last Christmas?"

"Oh yeah, yeah. How is he?"

"Not that good actually, his wife has some health problems."

"Oh I see."

Lucien was lying to his lover. Marcel's wife was in excellent health but Lucien needed to see his ex-colleague for something else. Mundy would soon find out.

"Oh and Jeremy has his first date with his colleague, Mélanie, remember?"

"Ah yeah, I do. She's very good lookin', she's also a waitress, isn't she?"

Lucien helped himself to some black coffee and took a sip.

"Oui, she's a waitress working in the same bistro as Jeremy. She lost her dad about 10 years ago and her mother works as a fleuriste."

"A what?"

"A fleuriste, she sells flowers."

"Aah, poetic job..."

"Mmmh, little Mélanie has been practising classical dancing since her youngest age and she is of a very romantic nature."

Mundy put the new toast he had in his hand on the table.

"Wait, how d'you know all that?"

Lucien sipped some more coffee and smirked.

"Ahem... let's say old habits are hard to ignore and forget..."

"You been spyin' on your son's would-be girlfriend?!!"

"Well, that's a way of putting it... Nevertheless, I found some very interesting elements."

At that point, Mundy was confused. He wanted Lu' to stop prying into people's lives and at the same time he wanted to know more about that young girl. But curiosity was stronger...

"Yeah?"

"Oh, now you're interested in the matter? Let me warn you, you are both encouraging me and spying with me if you-!"

Lucien was interrupted by Mundy's sweet lips. He closed his eyes for an instant.

"What was that for?"

"To shut you up on the lecture and go straight to the point, d'you think it's going to work between
"Let me first tell you that you have to shut me up more often."

Mundy blushed and smiled shyly. He knew Lucien was a very romantic person and each kiss made the world change for him.

"Then, yes I think she is a very good match for our dear Jeremy, if not the perfect match."

"Oh, is it?"

"Yes, her previous boyfriend was clearly mistreating her. He cheated on her! Mon Dieu! I could never understand that..."

"Says the number one womanizer..."

Lucien blushed.

"Yes, I had my little success with the ladies but I have strong moral principles. I like to have a flirt here and there but I never go beyond that if I'm already with someone."

"Oh you like to flirt?"

Mundy raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"Ern.. I should say I liked it, in the past form."

"Better."

Lucien put his hand around Mundy's neck.

"How can I go on flirting people when there's literally a crosshair between my two eyes all the time?"

"True."

"Anyway, he cheated on poor Mélanie and since then, they broke up. She's looking for a good young man and I bet my reputation that she will fall for Jeremy's slight awkwardness. Oh and rumour has it that she intends to buy a small bistrot of her own."

"That's ambitious. I mean, it's good. Jeremy and her could both be the bosses there and they could have their own little restaurant, that's cute in a way."

"Cute indeed."

They soon finished their breakfast. Mundy wanted to get up and clean the table but his lover was still sitting on his lap.

"Want to go somewhere?"

"Well, if his Majesty would be so nice, I'd like to get up and clean the table."

"Ah-ah-ah! Nothing's free in this world! You have to pay!"

"And what is it that his Majesty wants?"

"Oh, you know it."
Mundy put both his hands on Lucien's cheeks and kissed him a long and deep kiss. Lucien's ears got hot and he blushed instantly. He closed his eyes and put his hands around Mundy's waist. They clung to each other for a while even after breaking the kiss. Lucien put his head on Mundy's shoulder.

"Je t'aime."

"Me too, love."

"Non."

"What?"

"You don't understand. I don't mean the usual 'I love you' like you tell one of your friends. I mean I'd give my life and soul for you. I mean I'm..."

Mundy felt Lucien's fingers clench harder around his waist, in his back.

"Take your time, luv'."

Lucien sighed.

"Each day that passes, each minute that passes... I feel older and older each day and I'm afraid... I'm afraid that, someday, I'll leave you alone."

Mundy's jaw dropped. He opened big round eyes. He tightened his hug to Lucien.

"You know, I never thought of that. On the contrary, I appreciate every instant I'm with you. I don't think about the future. Well, yeah o'course I do but all I see there is you, me and Jeremy. That's it."

"It never bothers you that I'm older?"

"Nah, I like you as you are..."

He smiled and took Lucien's face between his big thin hands. He took it close to his face until their noses touched. Lucien looked up to Mundy and all the Australian could see was those light blue, almost grey eyes he couldn't resist.

"I..."

Mundy was bewildered once again by the beauty of those eyes. He was at a loss for words. Lucien was looking at him with his feline look and saw Mundy's pupils dilate. *He still can not resist my eyes...*

*Oh those eyes... the colour... those eyelashes... oh God, now he's half closing his eyes... oh...*

And this time, Lucien got off his lover's lap with his face still a few millimeters away from his lover's. He took Mundy's hands and pulled him up. Mundy still looked as if it was Christmas and his younger self was seeing a ton of presents under the christmas tree.

"Mundy?"

He was still swimming in Lucien's eyes.

"Muundy?"
"Eh? What?"

Lucien smiled.

"You were lost again."

"Oh, sorry."

"Don't be..."

He went to his lover's ear.

"... J'adore ça!" [I love it!] He whispered.

Mundy blushed.

"So, anyway, better clean this table and get going."

Lucien went to his room to get ready for the day.

"Jeremy went to work already?"

"Yeah, he did."

"Oh, then I guess I'll see him this evening, just before his date."

"You wanted to tell him something?"

"Some advice."

"Let him have it his own way! You can't always be right behind him. The boy's a grown up now."

"You are certainly right."

After Mundy finished cleaning everything, Lucien came back from their room, freshly dressed and his hair impeccably done.

"You look gorgeous today."

"Only today?"

Mundy answered with a smile, wiped his hands and went to kiss Lucien. He held him tight and Lucien felt his feet lift from the ground. Mundy carried him to the room and closed the door with his foot.

Lucien would have to dress up again and this time, he would try to look less... erm... attractive...

- Author's note -

Thanks for reading and as always, feel free to tell me what you think!

Stay tuned for Chapter 26! (Time flies...!)
- Moscow airport -

"Welcome to Russia!"

Ludwig got out of the plane and took a deep breath. He was wearing a whoolen scarf, a big coat and... a big smile.

"I'm delighted, Misha!"

The sky was clear blue despite the cold weather. They entered the airport, got their few luggage and went to take a taxi to the train station.

In the taxi, Misha started warning Ludwig.

"It is better if I present you as a friend and colleague first."

"I know, you already told me. I will play the game, don't worry."

"Also, people here are not very accustomed with idea of... you know... us being very good friends."

The taxi driver raised his eyes and looked at them with the mirror. Ludwig and Misha saw it.

"I get it. Don't worry."

Misha smiled shyly and a bit uncomfortably. He did not want to impose anything on his lover but the rules in that country are different and the mentality is different. They had to go by those new rules.

Once they arrived at the train station, they embarked on a journey that would last a couple of hours.

"You live very far from Moscow."

Misha laughed.

"Da, in fact I live far from everything. You'll see it for yourself. When we arrive we'll take a bus and then there's a 40 minute long walk. It's in the mountains, it's very peaceful."

"So we really haven't arrived yet."

"No, I'm sorry. You can sleep in the train if you like. I'll wake you up when we arrive."

"Danke, I vill."

On these words, Ludwig got up and sat on the bench in front of Misha. The train was quite empty so that they had a cabin for them alone. The train started with a loud noise and a few minutes later, when the starting acceleration stopped, Ludwig fell asleep.

- During the walk to Misha's mother's house -

Ludwig stopped walking.

"Is it still far?"

"No, not at all, you see those trees there?"
Misha pointed in the direction where a couple of trees gathered as a mini forest.

"Ja?"

"It is right behind them."

Both resumed their walk. Ludwig was a bit surprised by the environment Misha's mother lived in. It was indeed in the middle of nowhere and there was no other house in sight. Besides, the walk had not been a very pleasant one as each step they made got their feet in the snow up to the knees. Fortunately enough, it was sunny. Ludwig thanked God for that, how could they have walked if it was a rainy or snowy weather?

Anyway, Ludwig dismissed the thought mentally and started to imagine how the first contact with Misha's mother would be. *Oh, but I don't even know her name!*

Misha?

"Da?"

"What's your mother's name?"

Misha, who was leading the way, turned to face Ludwig.

"She'll tell you. And if she says 'you can call me Mama', then, consider you're family."

Ludwig was taken aback by the answer.

"But what if she tells me something else?"

"Ah, you don't know Mama, she knows if people are good or bad instantly, and she never gets it wrong."

Misha turned again and walked. Ludwig began to feel apprehension. *What if she doesn't like me? What if she feels I'm not a good friend for Misha, what if I-*

His train of thought broke as Misha knocked at the big wooden door. The house was a humble one, not very big and all made of wood. *Understandable for people who originally wanted to escape and hide from political persecution...*

The door opened and a young lady opened big round eyes.

"MISHA!"

She hugged the Heavy weapons guy tightly. The latter laughed and reciprocated the hug. She was young and of a strong build, she had long dark hair that were in a braid.

"Ah, dear Zhanna...!"

Misha broke the hug and presented Ludwig.

"This is Ludwig, he is my friend."

"He is so tiny, so cute!" Exclaimed Zhanna.

Ludwig blushed and held his hand out for Zhanna to shake. They shook hands and Ludwig realised that strength does run in the family...
"Come on, don't stay outside, it's cold, come in."

"Where is Mama?"

"She is in front of the fire, she will be delighted to see you've come back!"

They entered and Ludwig could feel his fingertips heat up in the warmth of the wooden house. Both removed their boots, gloves, scarves and coats.

"Come to the living room, I'll make some herbal tea to warm you up."

"Spasibo, Zhanna." [Thanks, Zhanna].

Misha lead the way and went to his mother.

"Mama, it's me, I'm back."

"Ooh! My Misha! My strong and beautiful Mikhail!"

Mama put her knitting stuff aside and got up. She was a short, old lady and wore a light pink headscarf. They hugged tightly for a while. When they broke the hug, Misha turned to Ludwig.

"Mama, this is Ludwig, he was my colleague and now we have become friends."

Ludwig felt his heart racing in his chest.

Mama slowly turned and approached him. Ludwig bowed slightly, blushing, and offered his hand for Mama to shake. During a second, which seemed like a year to Ludwig, Mama just looked at him from his half wet socks up to the cowlick in his hair. Ludwig began sweating when Mama's face cleared and a smile began to draw on her old, wrinkled face. She made another step forward to come closer to Ludwig and hugged him.

"Welcome here Ludwig, you can call me..."

Ludwig was half relieved but half concerned. What if she says something else than 'Mama'?"...

Mama. You are welcome in our house."

Ludwig could not but sigh deeply. Thank God! She said it! She said Mama!

"I guess you want to take a shower and change those socks."

Ludwig looked down and indeed, his socks were half soaked with the snow.

"Go, Misha will show you your room and the bathroom."

She turned to Misha.

"Misha, put your friend in your bedroom on your bed and you'll take the spare mattress, is that alright?"

"Da, Mama. Follow me Ludwig."

They went upstairs and while going up, Ludwig saw pictures of Misha's family on the wall. A big man, with a beard and moustache on a black and white picture then a family picture, then a couple more of young babies who, Ludwig guessed, had grown up well.
Once they arrived upstairs, Ludwig and Misha walked along a corridor. Rooms were on the right and on the left. At the end of the corridor was Mama's room and just before, on the right, was Misha's with his own bathroom.

Half an hour later, both men were ready for dinner. They went downstairs and sat on the sofa. A delicious smell was everywhere in the kitchen and the living room. Mama was sitting on an armchair and knitting. Misha and Ludwig sat on the sofa next to the armchair. They were all facing the dancing flames of the fire.

"So, Misha, tell me more about you and your friend."

"Well, as I told you in the letters, I was the Heavy weapons guy and, as for Ludwig, he was the Medic. He took care of all of us, wounded or not. On the battlefield, he was healing us and outside, he had to do check ups on everyone regularly. But he'll tell you better himself..."

Ludwig cleared his throat.

"Ja, that is more or less what I do. I take care of all zhe mercenaries and make sure zhey are in zhe best healzh."

"He is too humble. He invented a machine that can make us invincible, Mama!"

Ludwig blushed.

"Ja, uhm... As a man of science, I like to carry on some experiments, here and zhere. And zhat one was a huge success for me. By zhe vay, Misha vas very courageous. I asked him to be zhe first one to undergo zhe procedure to have zhat invicibility - I called it zhe übercharge - and he kindly accepted."

"Oh, how was it Misha?"

"Uhm... at the beginning I was a bit afraid but I thought I could trust Ludwig. And in the end, it turns out I was right."

"Ah, and how is the rest of your colleagues?"

A long discussion followed about the rest of the crew, which was interrupted by Zhanna.

"Dinner is ready, come around the table!"

They all shared a delicious dinner and they all discussed about life on the RED base. Zhanna was particularly interested in Joe, the Solly, which seemed to slightly annoy her brother. When they all emptied their plates, they went back to the sofa and Zhanna brought some herbal tea.

"Misha, please take our guest to visit the house."

He nodded, though he felt something was wrong and Ludwig rose to his feet. *We have a small house and I already showed Ludwig the first floor...* He nonetheless obeyed his mother.

He lead the way. Meanwhile, Zhanna and Mama stayed in the living room. A few minutes later, both men came back.

"Zhanna, can you leave us please?"

"Da, of course."

She left to her room.
"Misha, why have you come back?" Asked Mama.

"My contract - our contracts - ended so I thought I would come back and I wanted to show you my friend."

"Misha, don't lie to me. I know you well, I carried you for nine months. You have something to tell me?"

Misha sighed. His eyebrows frowned and Ludwig could feel his whole body tense. He began fiddling with his fingers. He obviously started to feel uncomfortable.

"No, not particularly..."

"Is he really your friend?"

Misha's eyes open wide and he began sweating. He knew that his mother had guessed for Ludwig and him. Now was a crucial moment. It's all in or all out. Either she takes it, or she throws it all away...

"Uh...y-yes, he is... I mean... he is a very good friend... I told you he was keeping me alive all the time and..."

"Misha, I'm your mother. I know you. You haven't brought anyone home ever. No one. And in your letters, you only talk of you and this medical man. And your sister has been telling me what you told her in your last letter."

At that point, Misha, the strong, big man lowered his head. He was uncomfortable, almost ashamed that his mother discovered he was hiding things from her.

"I did not want to hide anything from you Mama, I just thought I had to talk to Zhanna about a few things and I didn't want to bother you."

Silence fell back in the room. The fire was slowly and quietly crackling and Ludwig was wishing he had been a tiny little insect, unseen from everyone. He felt immensely sorry for his lover who had to face his mother for him. For them.

"Now, be honest with me, Misha."

He took a deep breath and still without raising his head to look at his mother in the eyes, he said:

"I'm... He is... We are..."

"Misha?"

All in a single breath, he said:

"He is my companion, I love him, he is the best person I've ever met and I've brought him here to present him to you."

Misha raised his head this time and Ludwig, as by reflex, put his hand on Misha's. The big man was crying.

"I'm sorry Mama, I won't give you grandchildren of my own, I'm sorry I won't lead the life you had wanted me to live... I know you won't understand but... I've never felt as comfortable as when I'm with him... he understands me... he doesn't laugh because I'm big and strong, he doesn't make fun of me... he likes me for what I am, for what I do... I"
"Enough." Said Mama.

Misha hid his face in his hands. *That's it. That's the day I get kicked out of my house by my own mother. Today is the last day she sees me like her son. Now she sees me like a failure, a mistake.*

"Ludwig?"

The German doctor turned to the old lady.

"Ja?"

"Tell me what you think of my son."

Ludwig was completely taken aback.

"Well... uhm... I'd say that he is a good person. Before him, I had troubles with my ex-wife and the situation I was in with my kids. I had turned to work to drown my sorrows. I had become a mad man. A mad doctor. A crazy scientist who would have done anything for his research. But with Misha... I found what I had lost when I lost my family... faith, empathy, hope and humanity. He made me a human being again. He opened my eyes. I had never seen such a truly good-natured person. Misha is exceptional, you can be proud of him. He is the most human person I know. He brought me so much... of course all I'm saying is purely personal and of course I... like him a lot and what probably makes my whole point biased, but... He genuinely transformed me into a good human being, which I never had been, even when my marriage was going on smoothly. I realised that I had never laughed when having lunch or dinner... I had never had snowball fights before... I had never been at ease with anyone. Not my family, not my wife. The only person who opened my eyes, my heart and my soul with unconditional kindness and generosity, is Mikhail, your son."

He paused.

"If you want, I can leave, I don't want to create problems or bother anyone. If you just say it, I will apologise and disappear from your lives immediately."

"Then please do so."

Misha raised his head from his hands, eyes red and swollen, a horrified look on his face. She is throwing him out.

Without a word, Ludwig got up, went upstairs, took his bag. When he came back downstairs, he took his coat and boots, wore them while tears were silently streaming down his face. When he was ready, he turned to Misha and his mother.

"Goodbye, Misha. I will never forget you or what you did to me."

He turned to Mama.

"Thank you for being honest with me. You have a son made of gold to me. Please, sometimes, when he feels depressed, remind him that he saved my life and that I'm forever in his debt for that."

He turned his back, opened the door and got out of the house. After he closed the door, silence fell in the house for long, infinite minutes.

Mama had resumed her knitting. Misha was still pale, his mouth open and tears going down his face silently. It was as if he had got petrified. He came back to life, looked at his mother.
"Why did you do this? Wh-what have you done to me...? What have I done to you?"

She put her knitting aside.

"Say it."

"What?"

"Say what you really feel."

"But Mama, I told you, I'm crying, I feel as if you just buried me alive, I-"

"Say what you feel about him."

Misha was breathing heavily.

"I love him, Mama, from the bottom of my heart and all the fibres of my body, I LOVE HIM, I can't live without him!"

Meanwhile, Ludwig had sat underneath a nearby tree and was crying heavily. He started talking alone.

"Why...? Why...? WARUM? For God's sakes... That's all my fault, I shouldn't have insisted to come here... he had warned me and I underestimated what he had told me, I did not listen..."

In the wooden house, Mama got up and went to her son.

"Stand up."

He tried but with the shock of losing Ludwig, he couldn't. His legs were failing him.

"I can't, I-"

She hit him on the back of his head with a little slap.

"I'm sorry Mama, I know I disappointed you..."

"Da, you did and you are."

"I will go to my room..."

She gave him a little slap on the back of the head again.

"What was that for?"

"Misha, you are an idiot! That's what it is for. You should be outside right now going after him! Look at you, you are literally sick without him! What are you waiting for? To die and by eaten out by regrets?"

Misha raised his eyebrows.

"Son, you both are lovely people. No one had ever talked about you like that and you had never talked about anyone like you did about him. You have spent all your life in the fear of others, trying to defend yourself and us from any and everything. After your father's death, you took the role of the man in charge, you sacrificed everything for us. Now it is time to think of you. You love him? It is fine. I like him too, he is a good person. He nearly cried when talking about you. Now go, run and
bring him back here!"

Misha got up his feet instantly and rushed out with only his boots as equipment. He called and called again when he saw a little man sat down under a pine tree and crying his eyes out. He ran to him and raised him off the ground with his powerful arms.

"I LOVE YOU LUDWIG, I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU!" Misha was roaring in the mountains and the echo multiplied his declaration of love.

He kissed him passionately. Ludwig didn't have time to process what was going on but the second Misha's lips touched his, he closed his eyes and reciprocated it. He put his hands around Misha's neck and went on crying. When they got back home, Mama was waiting for them in the living room. Ludwig went to her directly.

"I don't understand, what's-"

"Welcome to the family, Ludwig."

She rose to her feet and hugged him tightly. Due to her small size, Ludwig had to bend a bit down to hug her.

"I am sorry to have got you both through such trouble but now I know."

She sat back in her armchair and Ludwig and Misha sat on the sofa.

"Now I know that Misha will finally be happy. That's all that counts. Zhanna?! Remove the mattress in your brother's room!"

"What?!" Zhanna shouted from upstairs.

"Remove the mattress from Misha's room!" The old lady shouted back.

She looked at both men.

"Unfortunately, whatever you do, I'm not having grandchildren..."

"Speaking of which, Ludwig has two sons Mama, they're adorable, wait, ZHANNA?! Bring me the book you'll find in my bag!"

"Alright!"

Misha put his hand around Ludwig's waist. His mother came to sit on the sofa next to him and Zhanna joined them with photo album.

After a good hour of laughter and stories about Ludwig's sons and the RED and BLU colleagues, both ex-mercenaries found themselves in Misha's bed. Misha was laying on his back and Ludwig put his head on Misha's chest.

"You know what Misha?"

"Nyet?"

"I love you too."

And both slept happily that night. Misha felt a weight on his conscience disappear and Ludwig wouldn't have wished to be anywhere else than in Misha's arms.
- Author's notes -

Thanks for reading and please tell me what you think with a review or a PM!

Thanks again and see y'all :) !
"Hey guys, I'm home! Not gonna long though, gotta prepare for the date with Mélanie t'night."

Jeremy shut the door behind him with his foot and threw his vest on the sofa while running to his room. Mundy who was sitting on the sofa caught the vest without even looking at it with his right arm. His left arm was around Lucien's shoulder. They were watching TV under a blanket.

"Bonsoir, Jeremy. Before you do anything, show me what you are going to wear for tonight and tell me exactly what you are planning!"

Mundy turned to Lucien and whispered.

"Whot did we say...? Do not interfere with his plans..."

"Je sais, je sais... [I know, I know]. But I can't help it..."

Mundy smiled. They heard the shower go on and a few minutes afterwards, Jeremy got out of his room. Lucien turned to look at him and Mundy looked at both Lucien and Jeremy. The young man was wearing a white shirt with a long dark blue tie. His vest and trousers were also dark blue and his shoes were shining with black polish. He had also put some gel in his hair and as always, he was clean shaven. Looking at Lucien, Mundy saw the face of a proud father. His eyes were opened wide and his mouth was half open.

"Whaddya think o'that? Not bad, hey?"

"Where did you get this su-"

Mundy hit Lucien with his elbow.

"You look very good mate, that's splendid!"

"Oui, indeed, you look very fine, Jeremy. Are you going to take her or is she going by her own means?"

"I'm gonna go get her. It's a few minutes walk."

"Take the umbrella with ya, it's rainin', Jay."

Mundy and Jeremy got along so well that Jeremy told him to call him 'Jay'.

"Oh yeah, you're right, I nearly forgot!"

He grabbed his dad's umbrella, black and with a golden carved MANCHE.

"And where exactly do you think you're going with my umbrella?"

"Uhm, can I borrow it? It's just for t'night, I'll bring it back after everything."

"Tonight, after your date?"

Jeremy blushed. He mumbled under his breath.
"Or... tomorrow mornin' if it goes well..."

"What? Speak clearly, Jeremy."

"Uhm... is it a problem if I give it back to you... uhm... not tonight but uhm... tomorrow mornin'?"

Lucien raised an eyebrow and smirked. Jeremy was standing behind the sofa and Lucien was facing the TV so that he was turning his back to his son. Mundy looked at Lucien from the corner of his eye.

"Well, well... What can I say?"

He put his hand in the pocket of the gown he was wearing, got his cigarette case out, took one and lit it. He puffed the smoke in front of him.

"Of course there is no problem with the umbrella itself."

He then quickly added:

"Although if anything happened to it, I'll make you repair it, even if you have to sell your very soul to do it."

He paused and throwing the blanket aside, he rose to his feet and walked around the sofa to face his son.

"I have something to tell you before you go."

Mundy, hearing the change in the tone of Lucien's voice, was curious. He turned down the volume of the TV and turned around. Lucien put his thin fingers on Jeremy's tie and arranged it while speaking.

"This girl, Mélanie. She is a good lady. One that can make you happy. So don't waste your chance. Do you love her?"

"Yeah, yeah I do, she's amazin' and very good lookin'."

"Jeremy, that's no way of describing the lady you want to be with. Tell me what you feel for her."

Jeremy took a deep breath.

"When she's around me, I constantly want to protect her. I want her to trust me, I want us to be like... like... you and Mundy. Trusting each other and respectin' each other's differences. I know we are very different. I'm American, she's French. I used to be paid to kill people. She's the most gracious creature God put on this Earth. When I'm not with her, I can't stop thinkin' about her. What is she doing? Is she alright? Is she happy? In those moments I sometimes feel really bad like I'm very nervous and I'm imaginin' the worst... And without her I feel lost, Dad. I feel like a dead, brown leaf that the wind blows around, tiny, powerless... I only want to be with her..."

He paused. He was staring into emptiness and speaking now.

"When I see her... oh, when I see her... her short blond hair, those big green eyes...that silhouette... she is beautiful, Dad. Not like the usual beauty of women. She has an extra lil' somethin' that makes all the difference to me. When her eyes meet mine and she talks to me, I feel weird, like real weird. I blush, I can't find my words, my ears get hot and my stomach is feelin' weird... It never happened before... For me, she's the lady I've been dreamin' of. But..."
His eyebrows frowned.

"For her... I don't know what she thinks about me... Maybe I'm just another date..."

Lucien snapped his fingers in front of Jeremy's face.

"Look at me in the eye, mon fils [my son]. I know you're going to not like this but I've looked into Mélanie's case."

"What-?!"

"Don't interrupt me! What I am going to say is very important."

He sighed and lowered his head. Jeremy's heart started racing in his chest.

"She is in love with you. I saw her. Remember that client that you thought was trying to seduce her? The old man with a moustache and white hair? Well, that was me. I did not try to seduce her, I lead her into telling me what is in her heart. 'An poor old man like me, I know that you already have someone in your heart, am I wrong?' And her eyes directly pointed to you!"

Lucien put his index on Jeremy's shoulder.

"Now go. And don't disappoint."

"You're asking to not disappoint you?"

"No, not me, her! Now go, don't make her wait!"

"Oui Papa."

Jeremy turned on his heels and went to the door.

"Good luck, mate, but you won't need it."

"Thanks, Mundy."

He closed the door and went off.

It sounds like we have the appartment for us alone tonight, Mundy..."

Lucien joined his lover on the sofa and got under the blanket. He put his head back on Mundy's shoulder. The latter put his finger through Lucien's hair and Lucien closed his hair.

"I love it when you do that."

"Do what?"

"When you put your hand in my hair. It feels like you're massaging my head... Ah... so relaxing..."

And Lucien moved his head slightly more to the right and then slightly more to the left, like a cat who likes being stroked.

"Well I like it too, your hair is softer than silk when you touch it."

The sun had now set and the only source of light was the lamp on the small table next to the sofa. Lucien raised his head and watched his lover watch TV. I must look ridiculous looking at Mundy from under his chin like that but... his thin chin, his thin lips... his slightly pointy nose and those very
dark, almost black eyes... Such poetry in those eyes. We usually say that the eyes are the window to the soul but with very dark eyes, the only thing there is to see is mystery... exciting... and his skin. Usually, I'd have said that it's clearly not taken care of, it needs moisturising, and lots of it but...

He bit his lip.

He is a hunter. He lived in the Australian desert for months, no, years! That's the effect of staying too much in the sun. It's like his face slowly developed a harder layer of skin to protect itself from the sun...

Mundy smiled. Lucien snapped back to reality and realised he was stroking Mundy's cheek.

"You're enjoying watching TV a bit too much, Lu'." Said Mundy playfully.

"Non, I'm just watching my favourite channel..."

"Ah, and what program is there on your favourite channel?"

"I see lots of sun, the Australian desert and oh, a hunter."

"How does he look?"

"Not too bad..." Lucien smirked.

"Whot?! He looks bloody irresistible, mate!"

Lucien laughed and snorted.

"I guess you have a point, he looks fine, very fine actually."

"Ah, better. What is he doing?"

"He is lazily watching TV."

"In the middle of the desert?!"

"Oui."

"Have you ever been in the Outback?! Mate, there's no such thing as TV! You only got Mother Nature to watch."

"Ah yes, I see it now. He is watching a somewhat uhm... beautiful lady."

"Oh, gorgeous mate, she's gorgeous."

"Is she?" Mundy felt jealousy in Lucien's tone of voice. He smiled.

"Well you gotta admit nothing compares to her!" Mundy wanted to tease Lucien some more.

"Oh then I'm changing the channel! Such bad programs they have on TV nowadays, not decent! Ah and they flirt so... so openly, it is not decent!"

Mundy laughed. With his free hand he turned the volume lower.

"Now let me tell you what I'm watching."

"Mnh?"
"I'm seeing the Eiffel Tower -"

"What did I tell you about that name?"

"Ah yes, sorry, it's *Tour Eiffel* because 'Eiffel Tower' is another British invention, isn't it?"

"Exactly. I see you're beginning to learn how the French think. But don't let me interrupt you."

"So I see the *Tour Eiffel*, during a summer night and I'm walkin' there cause the scenery is striking. That night, the Eiffel-Tour Eiffel, is shining with lights and I'm feeling a light wind, just enough for me to smell a perfume. That of a man who was sitting on the bench on the right side of the road, under a street light. He was wearing a white tuxedo, with a dark red tie. In his vest pocket, he was wearing a red rose."

"I didn't know you could be that romantic...!"

"There's lots of things you don't know about me love."

Mundy smirked.

"But that man on the bench, oh, he is handsome. A handsome French little devil. I look up at his face. Dark hair with a white lock of hair starting from the middle of his forehead and going back with only a thin white curl standing up. He looks back at me and I see, under the street lamp, his eyes. Two crystal rain drops. So fair, so shiny... I sit down on the bench next to him. I mentally thank God to have put him on my way. But I'd love to have more of him. Much more. I'd love to have him by my side, daily and nightly. I wait next to him patiently and he- wait! Oi! Where are you goin'?"

Lucien got up from the sofa and disappeared in their room. He got out a second later.

"Where have you been?! Why did you-?"

"Go on Mundy, what did the handsome man do? Oh but let me guess. He turned to you and..."

Lucien got a rose out of his hands like a magic trick and offered it to Mundy.

"...handed you the rose he was wearing on the pocket of his vest?"

Mundy opened his mouth, looking astonished. *He reads my mind...* Before he could say anything, Lucien put the flower on his lover's ears.

"I- how did you-?"

Lucien came to Mundy's ear and whispered.

"Because, *mon amour*, we are made for each other."

Mundy blushed and smiled. He turned his head to look at Lucien and they exchanged a passionate kiss. Lucien put his hand on Mundy's cheek and stroked it with his long, thin, and delicate fingers. Mundy put his hand in his lover's hair, at the back of his head. He turned and let himself lay on the sofa, his lips never leaving Lucien's.

Jeremy did not come home that night, *fortunately for them.*

*Author's note -*

Thanks again and always! Tell me what you think of this one! :)
I decided to create a Discord server. You are all very welcome to come! The idea is to chat about stories/headcanons about the Mercs and post some art things (drawings, paintings, digital art...) :) The link is the usual Discord beginning and ends with /BPbVqct.

See y'all! :)

Chapter 28

- Paris, 7pm, in front of Mélanie's house door -

Jeremy arrived sharp on time. It was raining but his father's umbrella was protecting him. He also held it firmly in his hand and it gave him courage. Okay, let's knock.

He waited for a few seconds, eyes mocked on the door knob when it suddenly started moving. He raised his eyes to meet Mélanie's.

"Hey, Mélanie, I've come to take you to our uhm... date... you ready?"

And obviously she was. She was wearing a dark red dress with black tights. She wore a bit more make up than usual. Her eyelashes seemed longer which emphasized the fair color of her beautiful eyes. She wore a light pink lipstick, which was shyly shining.

"Yes I am, let's go!"

Jeremy put the umbrella between the both of them. She took his arm and he blushed.

"So, where are you taking me?"

"Uhm, there's a typical French restaurant right at the corner of the next street, on the right. I know the chef there, Jean-Paul, he makes delicious typical French stuff, the best I've ever eaten, you'll see."

"Okay, sounds good for me!"

What Jeremy was hiding was that it was his father who had told him about that restaurant. In a few minutes, they arrived at their destination. Jeremy opened the door and let her go in first.

"Merci, Jérémy."

He got in and closed the restaurant's door. He closed his father's umbrella and a waiter quickly came to them.

"Have you reserved a table?"

"Yes."

Jeremy gave his name and they were installed in a table at the back of the restaurant. The place was beautiful indeed. Lucien had been right, but Jeremy didn't doubt it. He knew his father was a very romantic person. The walls were wooden and the whole atmosphere was dark with only candles and chandeliers lighting the room.

"Here are the menus, I will be a minute."

And the waiter went away and left the lovebirds alone.

"So, uhm... I'm not seein' any chicken on the menu..."

"You like chicken?"

"Yeah, chicken's the best. Deep fried. Mmh...!"
Mélanie laughed.

"That's so American of you! Deep fried chicken... Mon Dieu... Let me introduce you to the French way of eating chicken."

"Uhm... ok?"

"I recommend you take a 'coq-au-vin'."

"A cock of what?!"

Mélanie smiled.

"Literally, a 'cockrel and wine', you'll see, it's delicious."

"Ok, I'll trust you on this, Mél' but if it ain't good, you're gonna owe me a date!"

Jeremy was impressed by himself. How quick he managed to turn that into a potential second date! If his Dad were here, he surely would have been proud.

On her side of the story, Mélanie blushed and laughed shyly.

"D'accord, Jérémy. That's a deal!"

He smiled. God, she's even more beautiful when she smiles...

"Have you chosen what you're gonna have?"

"Uhm... I think I'm going to go for the blanquette de veau."

"Ah a classic."

"You have no idea what it is, right?"

"No idea whatsoever!"

They both laughed.

The rest of the dinner went smoothly. Jeremy paid a great attention to not behave too awkwardly or say things that might hurt Mélanie. Gentlemanly, he paid for both of them, secretly thanking his Dad for having given him that advice.

"Oh, the meal was delicious! Though I guess you discovered more than I did."

"Yeah, yeah, that's true. I wanted you as a guide..."

Their eyes met in the cold night, in front of the restaurant. The rain had stopped.

"...through the world of the French cuisine."

"Oh, I see. And uhm... did you enjoy it?"

"What? Dinner?"

"Yes?"

"Oh yeah, yeah I did. What else would you ask me that for...?"
"I-"

Mélanie was about to answer but she quickly stopped and blushed. Jeremy looked at her. I don't know what I was hoping for, asking that. Anyway, now, time to accompany her back home.

"I guess it's time for me to head back home."

"I'll walk with you and accompany you if you like."

"Yes please."

They walked and the rain started again. Jeremy opened his father's umbrella again and put it between the two of them. Mélanie thanked him and grabbed his arm. He blushed again and turned his face away so that she doesn't see it. He didn't want to scare her or go as the creepy guy who blushes at anything. They quickly arrived at her door.

"You'd like to take some coffee? The coldness got to my bone and I sure need a coffee or something hot."

"I- I don't want to bother you, Mél'.""

"I'm asking you, you're not bothering me." She said with a big smile.

And while Jeremy was still hesitating, she pulled him gently by his arm and both got inside her flat.

"Oh, you're flat is beautiful."

"It's a bit small but once I get my own restaurant started, I shall buy a more spacious one. At least I hope so!"

Jeremy looked around him while Mélanie went to the kitchen.

"Sit down on the couch, I'll be a minute."

Jeremy sat down and looked around. The living room was quite small and it worked as a dining room as well. The walls were painted in light blue with posters of famous singers or films. Mélanie had lots of little curiosities that she loved to collect. Old stamps, old books, mugs...

She soon came out of the kitchen, holding a tray, and sat down next to Jeremy.

"There you go. Help yourself to some sugar if you like, I like my coffee as sweet as caramel."

"Me too."

They both put sugar in their mugs and sipped a bit of their hot beverage.

"Ah, the warmth touches my very soul. You know the last time I had coffee with a friend was when I-"

She unexpectedly stopped mid-sentence and looked sad, all of a sudden. Her eyes filled with tears. Jeremy took her hand in his instinctively.

"What's wrong? Who was that you had coffee with?"

She lowered her head.
"You don't need to be bothered by those stories."

She raised her head again and sniffed.

"You can have some cookies, I made them yesterday, after work."

Jeremy raised his eyebrows. He took a cookie from the plate Mélanie was holding under his nose, as politeness. But he wanted to know more.

"Mél', I don't wanna sound rude or anythin' but... please, I- uhm... I don't like to see you sad like that. Tell me more about that last time you had coffee with someone... please."

She looked at him with her big, green eyes.

"It was with my ex boyfriend... My fiancé to be exact."

"You are engaged?"

"I was, oui."

"What happened?"

She sighed.

"At the beginning I fell for his self-confidence. I felt safe with him, completely safe. Like all the bad things in life couldn't get to me."

She paused and sipped a bit more coffee.

"It turned out the worst thing that could happen to me was precisely him. He lied to me, he used me. He told me he was an employee at the nearby bank, Le Crédit Lyonnais. So one day, I wanted to surprise him and take him to lunch. I went to the bank and asked for him. No one of that name worked there. I was surprised and at first I thought I had misunderstood the name of the bank. So when he got back from work that evening, I told him about my little adventure and asked him again for the name of his workplace. He looked terrified when I told him that I had been trying to look for him. That was weird, but when you're in love, you blind yourself from certain things..."

"So where was he?"

"I didn't know. He didn't answer me. He just asked me to never try to find him, that if I wanted to have lunch with him, I had to tell him beforehand and he would come to me. I agreed but I was curious. Or rather suspicious. So the next day, I pretended to go to work but I secretly followed him. And then I saw... I followed him until an abandoned hangar near the Seine. It was dark but he wasn't alone. A few other men were with him and... even very young children. They were unloading the content of a boat on the Seine, just a few meters away from hangar. They would go to the boat and carry big black bags to the hangar. At first I didn't understand... Only when one of the men took one bag, opened it and... snorted the white powder... that was when I understood. He was in a drug dealing network and used poor orphan kids. When the kids dared stopping for a moment because they were tired, he would..."

Mélanie stopped talking mid-sentence. Her eyes filled with tears. Jeremy gently got closer to her and put his hand on her shoulder.

"If you wanna stop it there, it's ok."
She sniffed. Tears were streaming down her face.

"No, Jérémy. It's-it's the first time I talk about it to someone. It's important that I tell the whole thing, until the very end."

She sobbed again, got closer to Jeremy and hugged him. He returned the hug and carressed her back gently.

"I understand. Take you time."

She sniffed and resumed her story.

"He was using kids as cheap labour. I went back home, I don't even remember how I got back, and I thought. What should I do? Should I got to the police? But we had recently got engaged! Should I just stay silent about all that and marry a drug dealer. But those poor kids. Life hadn't been kind to them and he was using them, he was exploiting them. I went to the church and prayed. I prayed that he would stop and come back to reason. I remained like that for a week or so. Knowing that the man I was engaged to, the man who would surely have had kids with me, was a drug dealer and a used kids as labour force. Mon Dieu, but what would happen to our children? Would he use them? At least those would have their parents but the orphans?"

Jeremy was astonished by the whole story. His jaw had dropped a long time ago and his mouth was still half open in shock.

"Those kids made me take the decision. I woke up the next day and once again, I pretended to go to work but instead I went to the police station with a picture of his face. And then, more surprise came as the police themselves knew about his drug dealing but never managed to catch him red handed. And they didn't have any proof. I told them I'd help them. Not particularly because he'd been lying to me, no. That could have been forgiven. But because he was exploiting those poor, unfortunate children who had no choice but obey. A couple days after that, he got arrested by the police. I tried to resume my own life but I couldn't. I quitted my job and stayed home for some months without seeing anyone."

She stopped talking. Jeremy didn't know what to do or say.

"I'm-I'm... I don't know what to say but I think I have to tell you something."

She dried her tears and sat up again, out of Jeremy's arms.

"Before working in a restaurant, I worked for another company..."

And he went on explaining his job at BLU. He told her that he was mainly paid to test weapons on real people that would not die, thanks to the respawn system. He always had a picture of all the mercs and him on him, and one with just his dad, Mundy and him.

"But..."

"I've never told anyone about anything. You're the first friend I make after that time."

He paused and continued explaining how he had found his dad and the dream he was living with Mundy.

When he finished, he sighed. He got up from the sofa and turned his back to Mélanie, walking to the door.
"Now I guess you don't wanna spend time with a guy who was paid to kill. That's even worse than your ex-fiancé."

He felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to face Mélanie and she hugged him. She was crying.

Jeremy was at a loss for words. *Why is she cryin'?*

"I- I- ..."

"Take your time." Said Jeremy while putting his arms around her waist.

"I didn't finish my story. Please come back on the sofa with me."

Jeremy nodded and took her back to the sofa.

"He is getting out of prison next week. I think he knows I'm the one who told the police."

She put her head on Jeremy's shoulder.

"I'm scared. I'm so scared... Please Jeremy, stay with me. Just a few days, just to..."

"To protect you?"

"Oui, please."

"Aren't you afraid of me? After what I told ya?"

She dried her tears. And sat with her back upright on the sofa. She took Jeremy's hands in hers. He blushed.

"Look, you've been very honest with me and I can only imagine what you have been through, in your life. Growing up without your dad and meeting him back, as a person you were paid to kill and he was paid to kill you too."

She paused and looked straight into Jeremy's eyes.

"Since the first day I saw you, I first noticed your awkwardness. You were funny being around with and yes, that clumsiness of yours made me..."

Jeremy cut her sentence.

"I know I'm not a very self confident person even if I try to act like one. I'm... uhm... well... when I saw you I was like... woah but then I was like 'Let's not get excited too much.' So I tried to act normal but I wanted to see you always... like even when I was home, I would think of you and... oh, sorry that sounded really creep-"

Mélanie's lips interrupted his sentence and for once, Scout liked being cut mid-sentence.

- *Author's note -*

Hey! Thanks for reading! As usual, please leave a review so that I know if you liked it or not :)!

Sorry for the delay, I had to move to a different country and things took some time to be properly settled!

Thanks to all the reviewers who take their time to tell me what they think! Please do continue, I
appreciate your kind words a lot! :D

See you for the next chapter and I'm sorry but it will take quite a while as work is asking lots from me!

Cheers,
Paris -

« Ah! Bonjour Lucien! »

Lucien had just arrived at the restaurant he used to work in. Marcel was waiting for him.

« The boss is out for the day, follow me to his office. »

« D'accord. »

Lucien followed his friend across the restaurant and in the said boss office. Marcel closed the door behind him.

« Now, take a seat and tell me more about what you want to do. »

Lucien sat down and cleared his throat.

« Well, I want to surprise Mundy with a marriage proposal. »

Marcel's eyebrows jumped up.

« Don't look at me like that, I know it's illegal and no mayor would do that. I just want to do it all, as closely as we can to a real wedding proposal. »

« I see. »

« I want the romance, I want rings, I want the magic of the moment. »

« And what do you plan exactly. »

« Well, here's the thing, I have no idea how to do that! »

Marcel frowned and put a hand under his chin.

« Hmm... »

« How did you do it with your wife, if I may ask? »

« Classically, I invited her here and kneeled down just before dessert. »

« Ah, I see. »

« But I guess in your case, you want something different. Well, I mean, I don't see you and Mundy like that. »

He paused for a second.

"What passions does he have in general?"

"Animals, he loves them all. He used to hunt, but never for leisure, always because he had to."

"Hm..."
Marcel pondered for a second.

"Then, maybe what you better have to do is to take him to some place with animals?"

"You mean a zoo?"

"I guess that could do, no?"

Lucien shook his head.

"Non, he hates to see animals in cage, 'it's torture' he says."

"Then I guess the closest you can get to an actual jungle or something like this, is a forest. You should go on a week end out camping!"

"Ah, that sounds good, oui..."

"You go out for the week end, settle a camp in in a forest. You wait for the sunset and, voilà!"

Lucien eyes were shining now.

"I guess I'll do that, merci Marcel. Can I ask you something else?"

"But of course."

"About the rings, what should they be like? and well, I know a jeweller that could help me with that but I have no idea how... I mean what style, what...?"

Marcel smiled and laughed. He tapped Lucien's shoulder.

"Pardon my laugh, my friend, I have never seen you that un-selfconfident...!"

Lucien blushed and smiled shyly.

"Well it's equally uncommon for me to talk about organising a proposal with someone!"

Lucien chuckled a bit.

"Anyway Lucien, for the ring, I cannot help you. It is a very personal choice. You will have to see with the jeweller. If I help you in this, in the end you will end up offering not your ring but a ring made with the help of a friend."

"But of course, you are right Marcel. Thank you for the advice, I will go and arrange everything."

Lucien got up from his chair and shook Marcel's hand.

"Oh and let me know how it all went, I am quite curious."

"I will, my friend. Au revoir."

- A few weeks later -

"Here we are!"

Mundy turned off the van's motor and got out. Lucien got out as well, as softly and elegantly as a cat would get down some steps.
"So, what do you think, mon amour?"

Mundy closed his eyes and took a deep breath. His eyebrows then frowned and he out his head up, smelling the air a few times.

"Mmh, pinetrees, oaks... oh, a river nearby... crows, sparrows, bees, robins... European forest..."

Lucien opened wide eyes.

"How do you know all that?"

Mundy opened his eyes and smiled.

"Close your eyes and take a deep breath. What do you smell?"

"It smells like a forest."

"What you call forest, is a European one. Nothing to do with a jungle or an American forest. Now, listen..."

He waited for a few seconds.

"You hear them?"

"What? The birds?"

"Yeah, the birds. The high pitched one is the robins, they're beautiful and very cute with their red necks. Then you have the sparrows, a bit less high pitched and more discontinuous. The crows, well you can recognise them pretty easily."

"And the bees?"

"Open your eyes, here is their hive."

Mundy pointed up in an oak tree.

"I spotted it as soon as I parked the van."

"Cheater!"

Mundy laughed.

"Well, you've gotta use your nose and your beautiful eyes, monsieur!"

Lucien smiled.

"Enough of your flattering, Bushman, let us explore!"

Mundy nodded. The couple started walking through the forest, following the paths that previous visitors had set for them. Along the way, Lucien learnt lots of things about the plants and the animals living there. He was surprised how much his partner knew about all that.

Nature is truly a passion for him. He thought.

At some point, Mundy got a map out of his pocket.

"Maybe we should head to the river? That has to be beautiful! What d'you say, Lu?"
"Well, I'm following the guide."

And off they went. They soon arrived near the river. Mundy sat on the edge of the stream of water.

"Ah, that's beautiful."

Lucien sat down next to Mundy.

"Oui, that's true. The scenery is fine."

"Whot? It's not just 'fine'! It's beautiful, peaceful, that's how Nature should be. Untouched. We shouldn't take more from her than she's able to regenerate. At least, that's-oh!"

"Get away from me, you stupid bird!"

An owl crash landed on Lucien's shoulder. Mundy jumped on his feet and took it in his hand.

"Oh, he's injured..."

"Well, he'd better not have stained my suit!"

"Come on, let's go back to the van, I think I can do something for him.."

Mundy was walking very fast. His long legs allowed him to be walking when his partner was more or less running behind him. They soon arrived in the van. Mundy flung the back door open and jumped in.

"Alright, there's a table cloth in my drawer, put it on the coffee table!"

Lucien raised an eyebrow but quickly obeyed as he saw Mundy very nervous.

"Right, there, there, young fellow, we're goin' to help you, just relax mate..."

Mundy put his arm under the couch and got a box of bandages and first aid.

"Alright, let us have a precise look, it might hurt a little, just bear with me ok?"

Lucien was fascinated how Mundy talked to the owl as he would a human being. Mundy removed his glasses, got closer to the bird which was now on the table and looked thoroughly.

"Mmmh... it's your wing, eh? Let me see... oh, that looks like a nasty bite... you're still young, you'll get over it quickly... anything else? Let me turn you over..."

Lucien saw how delicate Mundy was. His long fingers went under the bird and flipped him slowly and gently.

"Ok, I guess it's only your wing. Let me arrange that. First, we have to clean the wound..."

Mundy got a bottle of disinfectant and some cotton out of his box. He put some disinfectant of the cotton and put the cotton on the wound.

"There, there, it should hurt. It's one of those disinfectant for kids, they don't hurt. Ah, see? It already feels better, eh? Now, some bandage. I'm afraid you won't be able to fly for some time but you can stay here with us. We'll take care of you. I'll go hunt for you... And there we are! Bandage is done. Ah, how do you feel?"
The small owl stood up, tried flapping its wings but could do it only on one side.

"Go easy, mate, it must still hurt and the badage makes your wing way heavier. Oh, where are my manners, I should have given you a bowl of water earlier! Lu', please...?"

Lucien took the smallest bowl he could find and grabbed a bottle of water. He filled the bottle and held it out to Mundy.

"Ah, what do we say to the elegant Frenchman? Merci! There you go. Drink slowly eh, don't drown yourself."

Mundy turned to Lucien.

"Thanks Lu', for your help."

"I did nothing but what you told me to do. By the way, I didn't know you could take care of animals!"

"Well, don't forget I've been living in the Outback with no other human soul with me. So I got to know animals pretty well."

The van went silent as Mundy was watching the little owl sitting next to the bowl of water. Lucien was looking at Mundy.

Mon Dieu, he looks so adorably at the bird. He is not realising it, but he is smiling.

Lucien sat on the couch and lit a cigarette.

"You should give him a name."

Mundy's eyebrows jumped. Lucien's voice had interrupted his daydreaming looking at the owl.

"Oh, sure, yeah. Well, it's a male. And he is quite young. Old enough to fly on his own, so, no parents to care for him. Anyway, that doesn't help finding him a name. You got any ideas?"

"Non, I've never had any birds."

"Hm... Let me think..."

Mundy sat next to Lucien on the couch. He bent his back so that his head was next to the bird.

"What shall we call you mate? A French name? Nah, you don't like them either eh? They're weird..."

Lucien raised an eyebrow.

"Weird?"

Mundy went on, ignoring Lucien's comment.

"An English name then? Yeah, sounds better."

The bird walked closer to Mundy's face.

"Harry?"

The bird took a step back.
"Nah, too classic, you don't like it..."

"Do you intend to keep it as a pet?"

"Well, I don't know, if he likes it here, he can stay. Would you like that?"

The owl jumped forward a little. Mundy put his hand on the table and the bird sat next to it, closing its eyes.

"He thinks you're his mother now?" Asked Lucien.

"Then you're Daddy Lu'!"

Lucien rolled his eyeballs.

"Mon Dieu, I already have a son and he's hard enough to raise!"

"D'you like Lu', mister? Give him your hand, Lu'."

"What?"

"Oh, c'mon, just give him your hand."

Mundy took Lucien's hand and put it on the table.

"There we go Mister, this is Lucien, he is your Dad. He's a bit grumpy because he is French and old. He has grey hair, see?"

Lucien was about to talk back but Mundy didn't let him the chance to. The young bird jumped shyly towards the Frenchman's hand.

"Don't be shy, he is just grumpy, yes, but, I wouldn't change him for anyone else. Now, let's go back to finding you a name."

"Mister Owl?"

"Hoo!" Answered the bird.

"Does that mean yes?"

"Hoo!"

"Well, that's not very clear, mate, I don't know if you're sayin' yes or no!"

"Hoo-hoo!"

"Mon Dieu, this bird Hoo-ts a lot!"

"Oh! That's it! Let's call you Sir Hootsalot! Now, what d'you say?"

"Hoo-hoooo!" The bird answered, jumping excitedly on the table.

"Thanks Lu'! Now, you stay here in the van. Dad and I are going hunting for you, you stay safe here ok?"

Mundy and Lucien got up and jumped off of the van. Before closing the door, Mundy looked at his new friend.
"You stay quiet okay? We shouldn't be long, see you!"

"Hoo-hoo!"

-Author's note-

Hey guys! Sorry for the long silence, work is taking me lots of my time!

Anyway, thanks for reading and as always, feel free to tell me what you think of this chapter in the reviews or PM!

By the way, for those of you who missed the info, I've opened a Discord server to discuss ideas that we have/headcannons about our favourite mercs! Feel free to join: BPbVqct
"Alright, let's wait for the sun to begin setting. Some rats and mouses come out of their dens. I can catch them easily. I imagine you have a knife with you?"

"Yes, but please don't ask me to kill wild beasts with it. I don't want it dirty with some wild creature's blood!"

"Ok, I'll try to catch them without but if it's too difficult, I'll ask you your knife, cause I didn't take my kukri with me."

"Alright."

The couple walked a bit more until they found a clearing. Mundy sat down on a log. Lucien cleared a place next to him with his foot and sat down. And the couple waited. As the time passed, Lucien grew more and more anxious.

"Should I ask him today? Or maybe I can wait for tomorrow. Ah, but tomorrow, we'll be heading back to Paris... No I have to do it when the sun sets, today..."

He put his hand in his inner pocket, in his jacket and felt the small box... that small, dark blue, velvet box.

The sun began setting. Mundy had been playing with some branches and made a stickman out of them. He raised his head and looked at the horizon.

"Oh, look Lu', the sun is setting! Ah, I've seen is hundreds of times but it always gets me..."

"Erm.. Mundy can I ask you to stand up, please?"

"Sure, but why? You want us to go? We have to catch at least a small mouse, I mean."

Lucien cleared his throat and lowered his head. Mundy looked surprised, all of a sudden.

"I have thought about this for a while now. And now is the moment."

He paused.

"Mundy, tu es l'homme de ma vie. Je ne me suis jamais senti aussi à l'aise qu'avec toi. Je n'ai jamais ressenti ça, pour personne, que toi."

Mundy's jaw dropped. He didn't understand anything but the tone of Lucien's voice and the look Lucien was giving him with his grey, piercing eyes made him grasp the meaning of the French words.

Lucien kneeled down, this time, without clearing the ground before putting his knee down. He got the small velvet box out of his inner pocket. He opened it and raised his eyes to meet Mundy's.

"Mundy, veux-tu m'épouser?"

Mundy dropped the stickman he had in his hand. Tears came to his eyes. He felt hot. His ears turned red.
"Yes."

Lucien stood up and at the same time, Mundy's legs gave off. Lucien managed to catch his lover and sit him down gently. Both kneeling down, they exchanged a long and passionate kiss. Mundy was crying and Lucien hugged him tightly. Then, taking a step back, but still on his knees, Lucien put a ring around Mundy's finger.

"Thank you Lu’, it's so beautiful, so that's why you insisted for this week end out?"

Mundy dried his eyes with his sleeve.

"Oui, I wanted to make our relationship stronger. I am getting older everyday and I don't intend to stay alone for my remaining days. I have Jérémy, oui, but I need you as well. I am delighted that you accept my proposal, there are truly no words to express that. Thank you, Mundy."

Mundy looked at the ring around his finger. It was a silver ring, quite thin. Lucien added:

"I know you wouldn't have liked a big ring with lots of ornaments. But take a look inside the ring."

Mundy removed the ring from his finger, delicately, and looked inside.

À Mon Mundy [For my Mundy]

Mundy smiled.

"I guess it's written the same in yours?"

"Yes, but it is written in English."

"Why not both in the same language?"

"Because, remember the first time I said I loved you? I couldn't possibly get the words out of my mouth. And you told me one simple thing. You told me 'Say it in French if it's easier for you.' Not only is it easier but, as it is my mother tongue, I feel more what I am saying, if I say it in French. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Yeah, yeah, I do. Woah..."

Mundy took a deep breath.

"That is a shock."

"Are you alright?"

"Yeah, yeah, it's fine."

Mundy finally found and gathered his strength to stand up. Lucien stood up as well. Mundy looked down at Lucien's trousers and smiled.

"Quoi?" [What?]

"Your trousers, they're dirty now..."

Two mud stains were on Lucien's trousers, on his knees.

"Ah, merde... That's all because of you, Bushman!"
"Whot?!

"Oui! If you didn't fall down like a fragile leaf, then I wouldn't have stained both my knees but only one!"

"Oi! You're the one putting me in shock, you old baguette- shhhh!"

Mundy now whispered.

"Don't move!"

"What?"

"I said shush! Don't move...!"

Mundy walked, almost crouching, behind Lucien. He was as silent as a leopard approaching a gazelle. Then, all of a sudden, he dived to the ground. Lucien didn't move but just turned slowly around. He saw Mundy laying flat on the ground with his right arm underneath the ground.

"What the hell...?"

Mundy looked at his companion and his face was focused. Then, he smiled.

"Gotcha!"

Mundy got up on his feet again and in his right hand, he held a small mouse.

"Oh, well played, Mundy."

"Ah, Sir Hootsalot will be happy."

Lucien burst into laughter.

"What the hell is wrong with you now?!"

"Look at you, Bushman. Dirty from head to toe!"

"Yeah, well, I'm not the one wearing an expensive and dirty suit...!" Answered Mundy with a wink.

"But that's because of you!"

"How can it be because of me? You were the one proposing to me!"

And the couple went on playfully mocking one another on their way to the van. When they finally arrived, they found their new friend waiting for them. He got excited to see his saviours back.

"Hey, we got some nice dinner for you, sir Hootsalot! There you go."

Mundy put the mouse on the table and the owl jumped on it.

"Well, he seems very hungry."

"He's still young, needs lots of food to grow up. Ain't that right?"

The bird was too busy devouring his dinner.

"I need to change my suit."
"And then we have dinner?"

Lucien turned around to face his now fiancé.

"Well, I must get rid on this dirty suit first, but then, you're right, I can do something else before dinner..."

He began untieing his tie.

Fortunately enough, the young owl had its back to Mundy and Lucien. It was no sight for children...

---

- **Author's note** -

Hey guys! Thanks again for reading :D

New people are following the story and I'm delighted!

As always, please give me feedback on the chapter, tell me if you like it or not, what your impressions are :) 

Thanks again!
Chapter 31

-Lucien and Mundy's flat, Paris-

As always, Mundy was up way before Lucien. It was now a habit for him to go to the nearest boulangerie [bakery] and buy some croissants for Jeremy, Lucien and himself.

He came back home and to his great surprise, Lucien was up. He was enjoying a cup of coffee while reading the morning newspaper. He was giving his back to Mundy and did not turn right away which gave the Australian a couple of seconds to look at his man.

Lucien was in his dark purple gown. His hair was ruffled and untidy. It had been some time since he had cut his hair so he had some curls at the back. Mundy loved this rather new hairstyle. He just wanted to run his fingers through Lucien's slightly grey locks of silky hair... Looking down a bit, Mundy's eyes could not but outline the gracious and slim silhouette of his lover. Slim, yet one could guess he was muscular.

Lucien turned on his heels.

"You have been rather long, Mundy."

"Well I usually take my time as Sleepin' Beaty here wakes up late...!"

Lucien put his cup on the table and sat down, a smile on his lips.

"Well, what can I say? You are right...!"

Mundy sat on the chair in front of Lucien. He raised one of his eyebrows.

"So tell me..."

"Oui?"

"Why are you up so early?"

Lucien frowned.

"I'm worried."

"Why?"

"Jérémy."

"What about him?"

"Don't you think he has been acting weirdly lately?"

"Erm... not particularly, what makes you say that?"

Lucien pushed his cup of coffee and newspaper aside, on the table. That way, he had some space on the table to put his arms comfortably. He put his hand in his gown inner pocket and took a cigarette out. He lit it and put it between his lips.

He sighed and the cigarette smoke flew up in front of his face.
"He is nervous. I know that much but I don't know why. It's been going on since the first date he had with Mélanie."

"Surely you're just a worried dad, Lu..."

"His hand gun is nowhere to be found in the flat!"

Mundy opened big round eyes. Lucien got up and opened the newspaper. His eyes were scanning every last page of it.

"I will follow him like his shadow today."

"Has the gun been missing only today?"

"Yes. I don't know why he took it but if he thinks he needs a gun to face it, he might also need his father."

"Fathers" Insisted Mundy.

"I'm coming with you, you might need a sniper. But do you have any idea what's goin' on?"

"Unfortunately, non. No idea whatsoever... I thought I might find something in the local newspaper maybe but apart from the new plans to open parks in the neighbourhood, the trial of a young teenager who attempted to kill someone, an ex-dealer who used children as labour coming out of prison and the usual births, marriages and deaths, well... not much."

Lucien closed the paper and threw it on the table.

"I will get ready. Take at least your kuhkri with you."

"Don't worry, I know what I'm takin' with me. I s'ppose you know where Mélanie lives?"

"But of course! Do you think I'm some kind of amateur?"

"Nah, o'course not... Alright then, get ready, I'll wait for you on the couch."

Lucien nodded and went to the bedroom. A couple of minutes later, he came out, looking sharp as always, in a dark blue suit. He was tying his tie while talking to Mundy.

"Are you familiar with this sort of work?"

"You mean Spook work?"

"Oui."

"Absolutely not. I can only watch for far away and cover you, Lu'."

"Très bien. So here is the plan. We will go together until we arrive in the street Mélanie lives in. Then I will continue walking but you will stay and find somewhere you can keep an eye on me and on the windows to Mélanie's apartment. Are you following me so far?"

Mundy nodded.

"I will check to see if Mélanie and Jérémy are both in the flat. If they are not, then that's my chance and find clues as to what is happening."
"What if they are there?"

"I doubt that they will. If Jérémy took a gun with him today, it's not to be cornered and hide in his girlfriend's flat. But they are indeed in the flat, I will listen to their conversations."

"How will you be able to do that from outside?"

"Ah, but this is a secret that I won't share just now."

Mundy rolled his eyes.

_Spooks will be spooks..._

"Oh, before we go, let me just give some food and water to Hootsy."

"Ah, no problem I can do that, go and I will join you shortly."

"Okay, luv'. I'll be waiting."

Mundy left the flat. Lucien waited to hear the sound of his lover's footsteps die with the distance and went to Sir Hootsalot.

"Now, you will be key my dear friend, yes, yes, here is some food and water. I'm letting the window open. _Suis-nous depuis le ciel! [Follow us from the sky!]_

Lucien watched as the bird flapped his wings and flew threw the window.

_Good that I secretly taught him some French... Now, to find Mundy._

He checked is inner pocket and felt the blade of his knife. Moving to his holster, he felt his faithful revolver. Looking at his wrist, the Mann Co. Cloak and Dagger was shining.

_Perfect._

He closed the door and joined Mundy who was waiting on the sidewalk.

"Proceed." Said Lucien, while walking.

He led the way across the streets in the City of lights. As the sun began setting, Paris flashed bright and confirmed her reputation. Mundy was delighted by the poetry of the scenery. But he remembered why he was there, walking next to Lucien, Sydney Sleeper on his back. He looked at Lucien's face. The Frenchman looked serious, his stare was intense. Lucien's grey eyes flashed on and off as they walked under the city light posts in the streets.

"There."

Lucien stopped walking and pointed at a house in the next street.

"The ground floor is Mélanie's flat. See, the lights are out. Perfect. I will go and see what I can find. You, find a spot where you can cover me."

"What if I see someone approachin'?"

"In that case, like Hootsy, just hoot a lot. I will pay attention and I'll make my way out."

"Okay. Good luck, Lu."
"Merci mon chéri."

Lucien walked towards the flat. Mundy crossed the road and walked forward. He soon arrived where a narrow alley cut its way through. He looked around and saw a ladder to the roof. The building was not very tall so he could have a comfortable view of Mélanie's flat and through the windows.

He climbed up and took his rifle off his back.

Now, let's settle properly.

He sat down a few steps away from the edge of the building and looked through the scope.

The game begins.

- Author's note -

Hi people! Thanks for reading this chapter! And as always, tell me what you think of it in the reviews and/or comments!

Sorry I had to disappear for a while but I'll be slowly back in business!

Stay tuned for Chapter 32 (I haven't even started writing it but I can't leave you guus on that suspens!) ;)

Cheers!
Chapter 32

Paris, Mélanie's flat

Lucien approached Mélanie’s flat. The streets were empty. He stopped walking a few houses before hers and put on his dark blue balaclava.

He approached carefully. All the lights were off but he nonetheless decided to be careful. He looked at the main door's lock.

Old model, a classic, very easy to lock pick.

He put his hand in one of his pockets and lock-picked the front door in a few seconds. He entered the flat quickly and silently, and closed the door behind him.

Now, let's see if anyone is inside waiting to ambush me.

Lucien silently walked through the flat, always having an ear out in case Mundy hooted. Having been in all the rooms now, he knew nobody was waiting to ambush him. It was now safe to look around. He lit up his watch which now served as a torch and started his search in the kitchen.

Notes stuck on the fridge are always good to start with.

One note was about an appointment to the hairdresser, another about a doctor's appointment and some sales in the nearby supermarket...

Well that is a disappointment but let's go on.

He quickly searched the drawers and moved to the living room. Where does she hide her mail...? Ah! This table next to the sofa, classic again.

He quickly went through Mélanie's letters, flipping each piece of paper quickly between his gloved fingers.

Bills, bills, bills, advertisement... Mmmh, nothing suspicious there... Let's have a look at the bedroom. Hopefully I'll be luckier there.

Lucien went through the corridor and finally in the bedroom. He looked around.

The bed looks comfortable despite being not of the best quality.

He opened the dressing room and he could not but smile.

Ah. So it is serious after all.

He smiled as if he doubted that Jérémy and Mélanie's adventure could be anything but serious. He was the one telling Mundy that Mélanie would be Jeremy's dream lady! Looking again at the clothes, he saw some of Jérémy's jackets hanging, a couple of his trousers folded next to Mélanie's dresses, and one of Jérémy's caps.

His eyes were dreamy, his face relaxed as he felt proud of his son but with that pride came a sense of guilt. Guilt, because that he was not always there to raise him as a kid. But one cannot rewind time...

He closed the dressing room door and turned around.
This desk might hide some clues.

He searched the first two drawers, to no avail. The third drawer was locked with a padlock.

_Ah, finally something of interest. Let's have a look... It's a small padlock so I could break it easily but I prefer that my "visit" stays a secret. So, let's do this th "Spook" way as Mundy would say...

Lucien got the lock picks out of his pocket again but he knew this lock would be harder than that of a door.

_Come on, come on... A little effort there... And a last one here... Aha! Je te tiens! [Gotcha!]

Lucien gently removed the padlock and opened the drawer.

_Un journal intime! [A secret diary]

Lucien put it aside and...

_Oh mon Dieu, she was...

He got a small velvet box out of the drawer and sat on the bed. He opened it and there stood and engagement ring, golden with a diamond in the middle.

_The diary! I must understand now!

He quickly put the box in its place and took the diary.

_No dust on it, she still uses it regularly.

He sat on the bed and started reading it. It was written in French to Lucien's luck as he could read faster in his mother tongue than in Shakespeare's language. He knew he had little time as he did not know when the couple would come home, _if_ they came home. His eyes scanned the small book and saving all the information precisely.

He finally learnt about her ex-fiancé, his drug dealing, Mélanie's discovery of his secret life and...

"_Jérémy a promis de me protéger. C'est aujourd'hui qu'André sort de prison et j'ai très peur de ce qu'il pourrait me faire."

So Jérémy promised to protect her. Today is the day André, who I suppose is her ex-fiancé, gets out of prison and she fears what he could do to her. Alright. I have learnt enough.

Lucien put the diary back, closed the drawer and put the padlock back. But a thought came to his mind.

_Maybe André got over it? Maybe he doesn't want his revenge. How could she be sure that - oops!

While turning around to exit the bedroom, Lucien kicked a distbin. A crumpled piece of paper rolled out.

_Ooh, what do we have here.

Lucien knelt down and picked it up. He unfolded it and read: "$Rendez-vous sur les quais de Seine, là où je travaillais. Si tu ne viens pas, j'arrive pour te trouver, pour toi. Signé A."

_[Let's meet on the quay of the Seine, where I used to work. If you don't come to me, I will come to}
find you, for you. Signed A.]

Lucien opened wide eyes.

"Merde!" He shouted.

So that's how Jérémy knew André would really be after Mélanie and that's why he had taken his gun.

I need to go back to Mundy and tell him! We need to go to the quay of the Seine! Non, that will take too much time, I'll send him this paper vie Hootsy and... where did I see a pen again? Ah yes! There, I wrote down the translation.

Lucien opened the bedroom window and whispered: "Hootsy! Hootsy?!"

The bird came and landed on the Frenchman's shoulder.

"Now, do your father a favour and take this to Mama Mundy. Then, you stay with him and follow him, right?"

Lucien took a piece of food out of his pocket.

"Now take this and go!"

The bird flapped his wings and went in direction of the rooftop where Mundy was on watch. The latter moved his scope a bit and watched as Hootsy came right in his direction. Through the scope, the view of the bird flying right in Mundy's direction zoomed in until the bird arrived on his Mama's shoulder.

"What the bloody hell are you doing here Hootsy? Oh, what is it you're carrying in your beak, let me see... Oh my..."

Mundy jumped up, throwing his rifle on his back and his hat on his head.

No time to lose!

- Author's note -

Thanks again for reading this chapter! The suspens is still high in this one, right? :)

This will be solved soon (I just need time to write ^^).

Just a quick reminder that I opened a Discord server to discuss our headcanons. Also, that's where we post some art as well so come and join! Link : the usual followed by /BPbVqct

See you around guys!
Chapter 33

- Quay of the Seine -

Mundy arrived, out of breath. He looked around and saw what seemed to be an endless line of hangars.

_How the hell am I supposed to know which one it is I'll find them in!?_ Then suddenly an idea came popped in his mind.

"Hootsy! C'mere! Yeah, good boy! Now listen, I need you to find your _Papa_. He's in one of these" He said, pointing at the hangars.

"You'll be way quicker than I am, now go! Find him and come back to me!"

The bird took off and Mundy hoped that he had understood what he had told him. Meanwhile, and as time was precious, Mundy started looking around the first hangar in front of him.

The sun had long set and it was only thanks to the pale moonlight, piercing through the dilapidated sheet-metalled ceiling, that Mundy could see. Clearly he had stepped into an abandoned hangar. He looked around, saw some very rusty machines, pulleys and wooden crates only covered with a greyish cloth. He came closer to the crates. His steps resonated and echoed in the spacious hangar. He removed the cloth.

_Attention : contient des armes"What's that mean? Some'in like 'Attention : content is arms?! "

He tried to open the lid but of course the crate was carefully sealed. He took his rifle off his back and with a couple of powerful knocks, he managed to damage the metal seals enough to pry it open.

"Oh my God... It's... WW2 style weapons... And German ones!" And then he remembered. _Of course, Paris had indeed fallen into German hands during WW2..._ A familiar hooting sound broke the train of his thought. Mundy turned his back.

"Ah! Hootsy! Thank God you came back! So, have you found _Papa_? Where is he? Go!"

The bird was hooting furiously and flying out of the hangar. Mundy put his rifle on his back again and followed his winged companion. While running, he hoped he would not arrive, he hoped Lucien and Jeremy were doing fine.

A few minutes later and out of breath, Mundy arrived in front of the hangar where Jeremy and surely his father were. Mundy did not take time to find his breath back. He entered the place and...

_Oh my God! Lucien! Jeremy!_

Lucien was sitting down on his knees, back to Mundy, but the latter could see that something was not going on right. When Mundy arrived next to Lucien, he saw Jeremy's body lying down, covered in bruises.

"What the bloody hell happened? Where is Mélanie? Where are the bad guys?!" Asked Mundy.

Lucien's head was bent down. He pointed in the direction of the Seine while tears were streaming down his face.

"They're gone. We are too late Mundy... too late..."
Mundy knelt down next to Jeremy's body and put his ear next to the young man's mouth.

"He is still breathing. Let's get him to the nearest hospital."

"Non, I will take care of him."

Lucien stood up and put his unconscious son on his shoulder. He silently walked back home, Mundy right behind him, at a loss for words.

- Lucien and Mundy's flat -

"Is Jay alright?"

Lucien was closing the door to Jeremy's bedroom. His sleeves were rolled up and his hair was messed.

"Aucune idée. I tended to his wounds." [No idea.]

Mundy sighed. He was sitting on the couch, tapping his foot rapidly and nervously on the floor.

"Why don't you want to take him to the hospital?"

"I don't want anybody to take him from me and to take care of him in my place. He is my son and I have failed him. Again."

Lucien lowered his head and sat down at the dining table. He hit the table with his clenched fist.

"He needed me! And AGAIN, I failed him!"

"Stop shouting, he'll wake up!"

"I'm lucky if he does! And I'll shout as I'm not able to punch myself and beat myself up!"

"Why would you do that?!"

"Because I said it and I will repeat myself..."

He got up and turned to face Mundy. His face was red with anger and he was trembling.

"I FAILED HIM AGAIN!"

As soon as he finished his sentence, he dropped to his knees and cried heavily. Mundy jumped out of the couch and took him in his arms.

"Don't say that Lu', you've always been there for him."

"But who was there when he was bullied in Brooklyn, eh? Who was that cop that wanted a picture with him?"

"Me."

"Even during your days in Mann Co., how many times have you shot him?"

"None."

"How many times have you backstabbed him?"
"Zero."

"Who dragged him and me out of that bloody robot vessel?"

"Me."

"Who nearly died because of that?"

"Me."

"Who went as far as to go and pass himself as an old man to see if Mélanie was in love with him?"

"Me."

"See? Since you got back in his everyday life and he got back in yours, not a single day passed with you worrying about him, even more that you would admit!"

"Yes but now..."

"What?"

"I should have kept an eye on him. I should have-"

"Shush! Now that's some stupid ideas! You can't watch over his shoulder everything that he does! You gotta give him his space and his freedom, he is not a young kid anymore and he knows you'd do anything for him!"

Lucien continued crying heavily for some minutes. Both Mundy and him were sitting on the floor. Mundy was slowly massaging Lucien's hair and rocking him from right to left slowly. He understood Lucien needed to let his rage and helplessness out. After a few minutes which seemed to Mundy like ages, Lucien pushed his lover's arms away gently. Still sitting, he wiped his tears with his sleeves.

"The truth is I don't trust anyone to touch a hair of my Jérémy."

"Well you did trust Ludwig back in the days..."

Lucien raised his head and opened his red, slightly swollen eyes. He gave Mundy a look that was a question mark, a look that Mundy instantly understood.

"You want me to...? Oh well, I guess I have his phone number somewhere. And Berlin is not that far away by plane, wait a sec! But before anything, you're taking a steaming hot shower, your beautiful mascara is not waterproof eh!"

He winked. Lucien threw his arms around him.

"Merci mon amour, merci beaucoup."

Mundy smiled and got up on his feet. Lucien got up as well, his hands in Mundy's.

"Come on, chop, chop! In the shower you go!"

Lucien sniffed and looked up at Mundy.

"Oh Lord, don't give me this look..."

Mundy bit his lower lip. Lucien now was more relaxed, his eyelids were half closed. His long
eyelashes were flapping like a butterfly's wings. He pushed his weight on the tip of his toes and his lips brushed past Mundy's. Mundy could not resist anymore. He closed his eyes and, putting his arms around Lucien lifted him slightly...

Lucien then went to take a shower and Mundy grabbed the phone.

"Now, where did I put Ludwig's phone number again...?"

---

- Author's note -

Thanks again for reading and again, let me know what you think of this one!

All your comments and remarks push me to continue so if you want this story to go on, just leave a comment! :)

I'm repeating it but we have a discord server to discuss our ideas on the Mercs and that's also where I keep you guys updated on the release of new chapters, so come join! The link is the usual ending with: /BPbVqct

See you around for the next chapter! :D
"Hallo mein freund, so where is Jeremy?"

Ludwig and Misha were quick to react when they got Mundy's phonecall. They took the early morning train and were in Paris as soon as they could.

Lucien was delighted to see the Medic again and showed him Jérémy's bedroom without even saying hi to his ex fellow mercenaries.

On arriving in the room, Ludwig opened his bag and started checking on Jeremy's vital signs. Misha stayed in the living room and talked to Mundy.

"I didn't imagine Lucien would be that devastated."

"Oh you have no idea mate..."

Misha opened wide eyes but soon, the sadness took over.

"Can you explain to me what happened?"

"Sure."

Mundy moved to the sofa and both mercs sat there. He took a deep breath.

"So, here's what happened as far as I know."

Mundy then proceeded to tell the whole story of Mélanie, how much Jeremy loved her, how Lucien thought she was the match for Jeremy and the whole story with André, her ex fiancé. How he got in prison because Mélanie wanted to free the poor orphan kids he was exploiting and now he wants revenge.

Misha sat his back on the sofa.

"Wow, this is serious business."

"Wait, you still don't know how Jay got injured and why Lu' thinks it's all his fault..."

Mundy resumed the story and when he finished, looked at Misha.

"There you go mate, that's the complete story. Now I guess we have to heal Jay and go find Mélanie."

"But Paris is so big! She could be anywhere! She could even be out of Paris, or out of France..."

"One thing is sure, she's nowhere near here..."

"How do you know?"

"A couple times in the day I go somewhere in Paris and release Hootsy. I wait for him for half an hour or so and when he comes back, he never finds any trace of her..."

"Who is this Hootsy?"
"Oh, o'course, just you see... Hootsy, c'mere mister!"

Hootsy came from Mundy's bedroom, flapping his wings excitedly. He landed on Mundy's shoulder. He has now grown up to become a full adult hooting machine.

Seeing his winged companion, Mundy smiled a bit.

"Oh, beautiful bird you have."

"Thanks, mate. We got it the day..."

Suddenly Mundy blushed to his ears.

"Erm... I mean, the day I... No, Lu'... Well, Lu' and I..."

Mundy showed his ring to Misha who understood instantly.

"Oh! I see."

The big Russian bear smiled.

"Congratulations then!"

"Hehe, thanks, I'm just not used to... I mean I've never told anyone before you..."

"Ah, but there is no shame in that. Well, it is illegal but not shameful that you love each other!"

Mundy blushed slightly and pulled the hat down on his face to hide it.

While Mundy was feeling butterflies in his stomach again, the atmosphere next room was tense.

"So, is it serious mon ami? Will it take long before he comes back to his feet?"

Ludwig had put some bandages on Jeremy's face and arms. He was now looking at his knuckles.

"Vell, I see nozhing serious but I'm wondering if zhere is some kind of trauma, a concussion maybe..."

Ludwig was now pressing his fingers delicately on Jeremy's skull.

"Ach... Hard to say... Oh, wait, there, I got it... Oh mein Gott..."

Lucien was sucking on his hundredth cigarette. His eyes were red and a bit swollen and he had huge bags under his eyes. He hadn't slept since he had found Jérémy.

"The good news is, I found the problem... Your son was given a hell of a beating... Apart from all the superficial bruises, the skull was damaged here..."

"Mon Dieu... So I guess I have to take him at the hospital... I HATE THAT!"

Lucien banged his fist on Jérémy's night table.

"I don't vant to make zhings sound worse but..."

Lucien raised his light blue, piercing eyes to the medical mal, like two shining metal daggers.

"...Ja, you should have taken him to a hospital as soon as you found him. Why didn't you do zhat?"
Lucien put his gloved hand on his eyes and sighed.

"I hate hospitals. I don't trust them."

Ludwig dove his hands in his big black bag.

"Vhy? You live in France, not in zhe middle of I don't know what desert in Africa. Your hospitals here are very good quality."

"Ah, are they...?"

Lucien smiled maliciously.

"Vell... yes... or so I'm told."

Ludwig was confused.

"Ach, vhere is it?! It's trying my patience...!"

"It's my mother. She died in a hospital in this very city."

Ludwig dropped his bag and his jaw. The content of his bag was now all over the floor. He slowly turned to face his masked friend. Lucien was still smoking, with his gloved hand holding his forehead.

"What did you just say?"

"You were wondering why I didn't want to take Jérémy to the hospital. There you go, that's the reason."

Ludwig knelt down next to Lucien who was still sitting next to his son's bed.

"I had no idea..."

The German doctor looked down. His cowlick bent down as well. He was at a loss for words.

"So now there is nothing you can do for him, hm? I should have taken him to the hospital and watch him die there?"

"Nein, I never said..."

Lucien sprang to his feet.

"Well, I prefer to watch him die here with me rather than in those hospitals of yours. The people working there, not worth much than you, the blood-thirsty people, studying countless years and all share a common passion: SEEING OTHERS SUFFER!"

Ludwig was about to answer but Misha and Mundy opened the door, startled by the shouts. Lucien nonetheless continued shouting.

"Now, if you think about it, the only reason you all have a job here is because WE ARE DYING, isn't that convenient for you eh?"

"Lu', whot the hell are you sayin'?"

"Oh don't you start, you Bush-"
"Lu' you have got to stop, NOW!"

"NON! You...! He...! Oooh..."

Lucien collapsed on the floor. He burst into tears.

Mundy and Misha held him up and carried him to the sofa in the living room. Ludwig closed the door behind them.

"Poor thing... Anyvay, zhe patient won't wait much more."

He looked at the floor, at all his equipment.

"Ah, zhare you are! a couple syringes of medigun fluid."

He took the syringe, shook it a bit and injected it in Jeremy's arm.

"Now, question is: will zhat be sufficient? Vell i guess only time will tell..."

There was a knock at the door.

"Ja?"

"It's me Ludwig, it's Misha, may I?"

"Of course."

Misha opened the door and slowly closed it behind him.

"I'm sorry about what Lucien said. Mundy is sorry as well."

"Ah, kein problem. He is exhausted and he has good reasons for hating us doctors..."

"What do you mean?"

"He told me his mozher died in a hospital."

"Oh, wow. That's a shock."

"Ja, zhat's why he didn't vant to take Jeremy to zhe hospital."

"Ah, da. It makes sense now. Did he give you more details?"

"Nein, nozhing."

Ludwig put his stethoscope back in his ears and listened to jeremy's heart for a moment.

"Oh, zhings are happening here, gut, gut. But it's quite slow to kick in..."

 Silence fell again in the small room. Next door, Lucien was laying on the couch, his head on Mundy's lap.

"Je suis désolé, Mundy."

"I guess that means you're sorry."

Lucien nodded.
"Well you'd better be, you were very aggressive with him. It's not his fault for Jay. It's nobody's fault. Well, maybe his own... He should have told us, I mean we're his parents and we're professionnal killers! Bloody hell..."

Lucien raised his head a bit and put his hands around his neck. He took off his balaclava and threw it away. He then took his gloves off, finger by finger, slowly and threw them away as well. He then turned on his side to face Mundy, his head still on the Australian's laps.

"You should sleep for a while."

"Should I have taken him to the hospital?"

"In my opinion, yeah. Though I still don't get why you didn't want to..."

Lucien sighed.

"I told the mad doctor, I should tell you as well."

He took a deep breath. Mundy put his fingers in Lucien's hair and stroked his silky black and slightly grey hair softly.

"It's my mother. She died in a hospital. She was giving birth to a second child but... Both of them died in the hospital. You should have seen my father... so excited to get a second child and me...! Oh I couldn't wait for this to happen. But apparently the doctors had not detected that he had the umbilical cord around his neck so the child died. My mom stayed in the hospital room crying for more than a day and the only thing the doctors would do is say to push... She litterally pushed the life out of her..."

Mundy was left speechless.

"They told the news to my father and it was the only time when I saw him cry. The only time in his life he cried in front of me. He swore he'd never let thos bastards at the hospitals lay their hand on his family, ever again."

"I... I understand better now. Oh my God, that was strong... C'mere..."

Mundy made Lucien sit next to him and put his arms around him. He put Lucien's head on his shoulder and patted his back silently.

"Don't worry, Jay will be all-"

The bedroom door flung open.

"Hey, hey...! I'm back! Ouch, ouch, my head... Oh.. it hurts..."

Jeremy was standing at his bedroom door, with a head on his forehead.

_Oh he looks just like his dad when he recovered after the attack on those bloody robots..._

Lucien jumped out of the sof, slipped on the carpet and nearly fell on his face had it not been thanks to Mundy's reflexes.

"Oh mon fils...! Oh mon Dieu! Oh merci, merci!"

Behind Jeremy, Ludwid looked very proud and Misha delighted though he was helping the young man stand. Lucien hugged him tightly and looked at Ludwig over Jérémy's shoulder.
"I am very sorry for what I said, I shouldn't have, I thought it would be the end for him, I- But wait a second, how did you cure him? I thought his skull was broken and you couldn't do anything?"

Ludwig laughed.

"Ah, mein freund, you're telling zhe man who invented zhe übercharge zhat he cannot cure a small skull injury, really?"

"You have a point Doctor, you do have a point indeed..."

"Vell, you should still rest Jeremy. See zhose syringes? I'll inject you one every 4 hours for a few days and you should be back on your feet in no time."

"Meanwhile, doctor, would that be possible to precribe this stinky frenchman a good shower and some sleep? Even the animals in the Outback smell better!"

"Quoi? You are the Bushman! You are the one who stinks of animals and whatnot!"

Ludwig nodded and Misha laughed while Mundy pushed his companion in the shower.

---

-Author's note -

Hey guys! Sorry for the long ass waited and thanks for reading this chapter :D

As always, please leave a comment to let me know what you think of this one :)

And if ou want to join our Discord server (to talk about our headcannons and just have a chit-chat), feel free to do so! :D

The link is the usual and ends with :/fBDhY

See y'all :D
Chapter 35

- Paris -

Mundy opened the door to Lucien's flat like a canonball wrecking a fortress's wall.

"WE'VE FOUND HER!"

Ludwig, who was changing the bandage on Jeremy's hand, got startled by Mundy's entrance. Jeremy's face brightened instantly. On the armchair, reading a newspaper, Misha jumped on his feet.

"Where? Where's Mél'?!"

"She's on a boat on the Seine! Hootsy found her!"

Mundy looked around but realised Lucien was missing.

"Where's Lu'?"

"He said he had zhings to do... But how can you be sure zhat it is her?"

"Well, here's the story..."

Mundy sat on the sofa, Hootsy on his lap. Jeremy, who was dragging Ludwig with the bandage, sat on the sofa next to Mundy. The doctor followed.

"Well I simply returned where we found you, Jay. I walked along the Seine and at some point, Hootsy landed on a boat. I asked him to come back but he simply didn't move from there. At the beginning I thought he was tired and needed a rest but he really didn't want to move! I got pissed off at some point so I took my Sleeping Sydney rifle - don't look at me like this eh, I use it with actual sleeping drugs!"

Ludwig and Misha looked relieved.

"I was not gonna cover Hootsy with my own piss, who do you think I am? A bloody respectless piss-monster?"

Ludwig and Misha looked at each other as if they had answered "yes"...

"Anyway, I was about to put him to sleep and find a way to get him back. It would have been easy enough as the boat was at bay. So I looked through the scope and just before my crosshair arrived on Hootsy as I moved it, I saw a young lady through the window of the boat and I recognised her!"

"Wait, how could you have recognised her, you've never met her!"

"Uhm well... Uhm... Let's say your dad showed her to me..."

"What?"

Mundy looked slightly uncomfortable now. He didn't want to admit that Lucien had been spying on her.

"D'you mean Pa' has been spying on her?!"
"Well... I would not say it like that but, erm..."

Mundy took his hat from his head and was touching it nervously.

"Jeez..."

"But we found her, eh!"

"Did you take a picture at least, so that we're sure it's her?"

"With what? A sniper rifle? Nah mate, I didn't."

The door slammed open.

"But I did!"

Lucien was holding a brown enveloppe in his hand and threw it elegantly on the coffee table.

"Here she is!"

The Frenchman proudly lit a cigarette.

"Wait, how did you find her?!"

"Mundy, my dear, I have my own ways, you should know it by now! Anyway, here are a couple pictures of dear Mélanie."

"Oh my God, it's her! It's definitely her!! We have to go and get her!"

"Calm down, Jérémy. It won't be easy."

"What d'you mean? I saw the boat, it's at bay, nothing easier to do mate!"

"Ah, let me explain. I have made my little enquiries and it turns out that even if André was sent to prison, the drug dealing never really stopped. In fact, it grew stronger."

Lucien removed the hat he had on his head and shook his head a bit. His salt and pepper curls were shining under the living room's lights. Mundy's pupils dilated. The Frenchman hung his hat on the coat hanger and brought a chair to sit on.

"After André was arrested, the gang decided to get weapons and to defend themselves. They would not let anyone the chance to go to a police station. They have very strict rules. If there is any suspicion of you trying to leave the gang and disappear or report them, you get killed."

Misha frowned.

"So, they now have a little militia of their own. And about the weapons, you name it and they have it! Revolvers, knifes, rifles, mounted guns, sentries..."

He paused. He was looking at the ground. He slowly puffed the smoke.

"The thing is, I had no idea if we can infiltrate their base or if we should face them with all guns out. So I infiltrated them today."

"How did you do that?"

"Well, I killed one of their guards and disguised as him."
Lucien paused and frowned.

"It was very bizarre. As I was having a look around in their things, I found these files."

He put another envelope on the table and he continued.

"I have to warn you, this is quite a surprise."

Ludwig removed his gloves and threw them on the floor. Everyone was looking at him.

"Alright, let's have a look at this..."

He opened the envelope slowly and delicately. It contained pictures and reports. Ludwig adjusted his glasses on his nose and frowned. He read the papers diagonally while mumbling.

"Mmh, blablabla, Mann Co, mmh-mmh, Blutarch's heir..."

"Wait a second mate, who's that Blutarch again? The name seems familiar but I can't remember..."

"Ah, mon cher Mundy, let me explain."

The doctor interrupted his reading and let the spy speak.

"Here is the story, the back story of why RED and BLU, why the ongoing war. Well, RED stands for Redmund and BLU for Blutarch, the 2 heirs to the late Mr Mann. The latter owned a gravel company but when he died, he stated in his will that his company should be equally split for both his sons."

He paused.

"Why fight if they share in same proportions?" Heavy asked.

"Ah but that is the point, mon ami! Blutarch and Redmund hated each other so much that they spend their lives trying to kill one another. That way, the whole of Mann Co would belong to the survivor."

"I ain't never heard of 'em! Both dies or what?"

"Oui, mon fils. Both died and before you ask, yes, they died at the exact same time."

"How the bloody hell could that happen?!"

"Well, that's when our dear Gray Mann comes to play! Gray Mann, the man with the robots which I'm sure you all remember. This Mann is the third son, the one who, if we believe the story, was abducted and raised by eagles. So as the only living heir to the late Mr Mann, he legally has to inherit the company..."

"I am sensing there is a 'but' here...!"

"Exactly, docteur, there is a 'but'. You see, Mr Mann's will stated does not mention this third son at all! So, even though it should belong to him, Mann Co cannot be given to Gray Mann, precisely because of the will!"

Mundy put a hand on his chin.

"But he is nevertheless trying to get it, right?"
"Exactement."

"But what about documents?"

The Frenchman smiled.

"The papers you, Ludwig, are holding in your hand are the papers which were in the BLU intelligence case. Now go on reading..."

Ludwig nodded and put his eyes back on the papers he was reading.

"So, it says that Blutarch has an heir... a lady... she doesn't know him so she doesn't know the mess she was born into... Mmh... According to these, the lady is... Oh mein Gott..."

The glasses on Ludwig's nose slid down, his jaw dropped.

- Author's note -

Hey lovely and patient peeps!

I am sooo very sorry for the very long wait and "hopefully, it was worth the wait!" ;)

As always, please do leave some feedback so that I know if you like my scribbles :D, it really means the world to me :)

Stay tuned for chapter 36! ;)


- Quay of the Seine, 11pm -

"Remember, we are trying the subtle approach. Mundy, you stay on this building's rooftop and you watch my back."

"Don't worry, Lu', I will."

Mundy wanted to say that he would love to keep his eyes on his lover but the context prevented him from doing so. The five mercenaries were standing on a rooftop, next to the quay of the Seine. From there, they had an excellent view on the boat and its surroundings.

"Ludwig and Misha, you're only efficient on close range so you'll have to come down with me but I'll show you a bench you can watch me from. It shouldn't be a problem if you need to get aggressive from there."

"I don't have Sasha. I will go with fists."

"I only have my bonesaw but it should do zhe trick."

In the moonlight, only the glasses and the Medic's teeth shone. Mundy found it really scary but Misha on the other hand, found it quite positively impressive and somewhat inspiring.

"And by zhe way, needless to say zhat we don't have any respawn system here and zhat I don't have my medigun or my crossbow, so..."

The German man turned to Misha.

"...stay alive and safe."

Misha's face softened. He smiled to Ludwig and nodded.

"You two step in only on my signal. And Mundy, you'll make people fall asleep if I get detected, ok? But please, don't kill anyone. We don't need to spill more blood. One way or the other, we'll get Mélanie."

Misha, Ludwig and Mundy nodded.

Lucien looked at the boat with his piercing eyes. The moon seemed to be dancing with the clouds. Sometimes, it would shine bright and Lucien's eyes would shine equally. The smoke from his cigarette would fly from his nose like the steam from an angry bull. Other times, the moon would hide behind the clouds but even then, Lucien would still be looking at the moving figures on the boat and around, trying to memorise all the positions of the guards and the trajectory of their rounds.

"What am I s'posed to do?"

Mundy, Ludwig and Misha looked at each other. Lucien, who was close to the roof's edge, took a step back. He put a hand behind his back, elegantly, while his right hand went to his cigarette. He turned around.

"Jérémy, you'll have to stay far and away from all this."

The young Bostonian lost his temper.
"What?! No way! I'm coming with you Pa'!"

The Frenchman walked towards his son, took the cigarette out of his mouth and put it between his index and third finger.

"Non, it's too risky. You should not accept a mission which has interests that are too close..."

He put his two fingers with the cigarette on the young man's chest.

"...to your heart."

"Well that's easy for you to say, what would you say if it was Mundy who was in danger eh?"

Lucien put the cigarette back in his mouth. His eyes flashed angrily.

"Useless question. Mélanie is in danger not Mundy. So now, either you stay next to Mundy without bothering him or you go back home!"

"That's unfair! I want to help! It's me who need to save her!"

"Oh you could try..."

Lucien now smirked.

"But when you'll see her pretty face covered in bruises, will you still think with your head? Will your knees still be able to hold you standing? Will you not lose your mind and swear you'll make those men eat their very teeth?!"

He paused to throw his cigarette end away and quickly light another.

"Eh? Cause that's what happened to me when I found you in that hangar. They were kicking you, you were lying on the floor, unconscious but they kept on kicking. I saw your face bouncing on and off the ground. Then the devil possessed me. I got my knife and ambassador revolver out and I lost my mind."

He puffed some smoke out.

"When I got my mind back, the Seine had turned red with the corpses I threw there and that didn't bring you back... A couple minutes later, Mundy found me next to your body."

Mundy's eyes widened.

"Hold on, so when I asked you where the bad guys were and the pointed at the Seine, you didn't mean that they escaped?!"

"Non, I killed some instantly, others I made sure they suffered before giving their last breath."

Silence fell on the rooftop.

"Such a waste of testing material..."

"Ludwig!" Said Misha, looking angrily at his lover.

"Anyway, you should stay far away from Mélanie until we free her and hide her away from the drug dealers."
He paused.

"If you choose to disobey, just keep in mind that because of you she might end up dead."

Jeremy gulped.

"Mates, let's get this done. Jay', you can stay with me."

He nodded. Lucien, Misha and Ludwig climb down the ladder which connected the rooftop to the ground. Mundy loaded his Sydney Sleeper with actual sleeping darts and got closer to the the edge of the building and sat down. Jeremy sat beside him. Mundy looked through the scope and followed Lucien, Ludwig and Misha.

The three men lead by Lucien stopped by a bench on the opposite barge of the river to the drug dealers boat and a bit further up the Seine. Mundy saw Lucien's lips moving.

*He's giving instructions no doubt. So bossy he can be at times...!*

Unconsciously, he was smiling.

*Oh, now he's moving along, alone.*

Lucien was very careful when he reached the area around the boat. A big wooden door kept outside people from entering. And inside? At least a dozen men were patrolling. Mundy's eye was looking at all the guards, trying to see how to get them in case Lucien needed it.

Lucien, who had brilliantly memorised all the rounds, moved from hiding spot to hiding spot as fluidly as a shadow. He made it to the boat without getting detected.

*Now, time for the actual mission.* The Frenchman thought. But before entering the boat and disappearing from Mundy's scope, he raised his head to his lover's line of sight and nodded as if to say thanks.

On the rooftop, Mundy saw his lover's thanks and sprang to his feet. He raised his arm and waved.

Lucien saw it, nodded again and entered the boat.

*Ah, that's it, I can't do much more...* Mundy thought. He turned to face Jeremy.

"You're very silent Jay'... Oh bloody hell..."

Jeremy was out of sight.

"Bugger... Bugger... Bugger..."

Mundy was confused.

*I can't go after him and look for 'im, Lucien needs me here...*

He took his hat off his head and walked in circles on the rooftop.

*What the bloody hell am I supposed to do now? If only someone could-oh!*

Suddenly he knew. He threw his hat back on his head, ran to the ladder and slid down. He landed in a loud thud but didn't pay attention to that. He ran to his van which was parked near the building he was perched on and slammed the door open.
"Hootsy! I got a job for you!"

The bird rotated his head in a full circle and open its big yellow and black eyes.

"C'mere you beautiful bird, c'mon, chop chop!"

The bird ran on the table it was standing and flew to Mundy's shoulder. When he felt the bird was firmly grasping his shoulder, Mundy slammed the door shut and ran back up the rooftop.

"Okay Hootsy, you gotta find Jeremy but be careful! Lots of bad guys there and don't bother your Papa! He's undercover and we don't want you to blow up his cover!"

The bird looked back at him with a blank stare.

"You understood nothing right..?"

He pondered.

"Oh but wait, I know Lucien has been teaching you frog-eating language, so let me try this...

He cleared his throat.

"Toi, Hootsy... erm..."

"Hoo?"

"Gimme a second, I'm not fluent yet! Erm...Trouver Jeremy... But erm... attention! Non Papa!"

"Hoo Hoo!"

The bird took off his owner's shoulder.

"If even a bird can understand my broken French, I swear to God I'll have a word with Lu' about how you don't need to speak fluent French to save people!"

And he thought to himself: And he'll answer that it doesn't save lives but it helps to get someone when you're lonely...

"Anyway, let's have a look..."

He got close to the ledge, sat down and looked through the scope.

"Oh, that's Lu'... and... what?! Jeremy has Mélanie?! So quick he is this kid! Anyway, where are the guards... Oops!"

One guard saw Jeremy's shadow on the floor and, turning around, he must have raised the alarm as all the gangsters were swarming.

"Boom, headshot!"

Some guards fell to the ground but father and son were outnumbered. And Mundy could hear gun shots.

Bugger.. Bugger... Bugger... I won't be able to take them all out in time!

Looking through the scope, he saw a flying white labcoat and the great Russian's silhouettes got in the fight.
Ah, good, some help, but still, I don't think we'll manage to get them all... What's that then?!

He heard police sirens and saw through the scope at least half a dozen police cars racing to meet the scene. Mundy didn't stop shooting and as the police created a good enough distraction, the mercenaries got nearly all the gangsters.

"Time to join the fun!"

Mundy raced down to his van.

- Author's note -

Thanks again for reading this guys :D

As always, please let me know what you think, it really makes a difference for me if you liked it or not!

Stay tuned for the next chapter ;) !
"VOUS ÊTES EN ÉTAT D'ARRESTATATION!" [You are under arrest!]
"LÂCHEZ VOS ARMES!" [Drop your weapons!]

And weapons were dropped.

"I told you to stay out!"

"I couldn't, I had to come and save her!"

Lucien gritted his teeth in rage and turning his back to his son, walked towards the policemen.

"Ah, Lucien, toujours actif à ce que je vois!" [Ah, Lucien, I see you're still active in the business!]. "Non, Jacques, mon ami, mais si je peux aider..." [No, Jacques, my friend, but if I can help...].

Mundy's van arrived as silently as a marching band at the national day celebrations. He braked abruptly and jumped out the car.

"What the bloody hell just happened?! Luuuuu?! Where are you?! No! Don't touch me you filthy baguette police officer! Lu'?!?"

Trying to cross the mob of policemen, Mundy yelled and shouted.

"Ah, but let me introduce to you my partner in crime, Monsieur Mundy!"

Jacques waved at his colleagues and they let Mundy through.

"Oh bloody hell you are all safe, great."

"Don't worry, Mundy, we are all doing fine."

"Jawöhl, only a few scratches but soon it vill all be history."

The doctor and the Russian joined Lucien, Mundy and the police inspector, Jacques.

"So, Lucien, care to introduce me?"

"But of course! Here are Ludwig, an excellent doctor and medic, Mikhail, an expert of heavy weapon handling and a friend, Mundy whom you met a moment ago is a professional sniper."

"And this young man?"

Jacques turned his head towards Jeremy.

"I'm his son and she's Mélanie, she's my..."

"I'm his girlfriend."

Jeremy was holding her to help her walk. The ropes used to tie her in the boat left nasty violet bruises on her skin. He looked at her and smiled. She smiled back.

"Yes he is the reckless young man who came here when I forbade him to..."

"Well, Lucien, don't be so hard with him, he reminds me of another man who, when he was young,
was reckless, and that's precisely why he didn't stay long in the police force and was directly transferred to the secret services..."

Lucien's eyes rolled and he smiled.

"Fair enough... Anyway how did you come all the way here? Mundy, please tell me you didn't just let him!"

Mundy took his hat off and fiddled with it nervously.

"Well, mate, I know you told me to keep an eye on him and to make sure he stayed with me but I swear I didn't see him escape!"

Lucien palmed his face. Mundy blushed and looked embarrassed.

"Well, if anyone is interested, I climbed down the building on which I was held with Mundy and ran to the docks where you were Pa'. On my way runnin', I saw the doc' and Heavy on dat bench waiting so I understood you were alone. At that point, 2 solutions: either cross the Seine and come through the front door or swim and climb directly on the boat."

"Ah, that's why you smell of fish..."

"Hey, Mél', I'm sorry the Seine just smells like the people who live in this country!"

Lucien angrily took his cigarette case off his jacket and lit one. Jeremy saw him but continued.

"So as I was sayin', I came through the water, climbed up the boat and thought it'd be easy. Man, this boat is a maze! I had to dodge the guards and find you somehow... So as I was thinking about all this, well, someone saw me..."

"Quoi?! You were not hidden all this time?!"

"Hey, I had to think for a second Pa'! It was incredible enough that Mundy didn't hear me nor chase me! But I hadn't thought I'd go that far!"

Lucien sighed.

"Did you not inherit anything from me?!"

Mundy came behind Lucien and patted his shoulder gently.

"Well, mate, apparently he didn't..."

"So anyway I had to fight now, so I did fight my way through the endless corridors of this boat and I shouted your name but I hadn't thought that you might have been tied up and your mouth shut with tape... So I found you and freed you and as I came back from the boat I saw you Pa', and Ludwig and Misha fighting like it was the Mann Co days again!"

He stopped to catch his breath.

"Well, I guess I should thank you all for helpin' me..."

Ludwig and Misha smiled. Jacques walked forward.

"Non, I should thank you all. This gang has been bothering us way too much. And slippery as a fish that you just caught they are! We've been on their case for months on end but if I understand
correctly, you, Mélanie, have had a bad choice of boyfriend by the past which linked you to them.”

Mélanie sighed. While Jacques was speaking, Ludwig came to her and was looking at her bruises.

"Oui, that's true."

Mundy wanted to speak, he opened his mouth but Lucien walked gently on his toes. He instantly shut up.

"But all this business is behind us now. Jacques, with your permission, we will go back home to tend to everyone’s bruises. If you need to get in touch, you know to find me."

Jacques nodded.

"Bien sûr."

[Of course.]

- Author's note -

As usual, thanks for reading and let me know what you think!

Btw, this chapter was added at my dear friend's request, Dragonll237, who asked for Jeremy's POV during the whole adventure! :D

See you around guys!
Chpater 38

- Paris, a week after -

After the recent events, Mélanie decided to ask Jeremy to live with her. Of course, the young man accepted, after trying to "be cool about it" which ended up with him hugging Mélanie and raising her off the ground.

Lucien and Mundy were both very happy for Jeremy of course and now, they could fully enjoy the privacy they longed for. They helped Jeremy move his clothes and belongings to Mélanie's place and all was done quite quickly and without any problem.

Ludwig and Misha wanted to take advantage of being in Paris to visit the City of Lights. They rented a flat not far from Lucien and Mundy's.

A couple days afterwards, Mundy woke up too early as Lucien would have said. He resumed his old habit of going in the streets of Paris, have a walk. The smell of a bakery tickled his nose. He breathed it in deeply and smiled. *The Spook is right, nothing compares with the smell of a boulangerie.*

He decided to enter and buy a couple croissants and pains au chocolat.

"Merci beaucoup Madame!" He said to the baker with a big smile. His accent was still there but for the simplest words or sentences, it was hardly noticeable.

He headed back home. While walking, he looked up above his head and his friend Hootsy was flying in circles above him. He smiled at the sight of the bird, his other faithful companion beside Lucien. He thought about his life for a moment. He was born somewhere in Australia or so he recalled for his parents were Australians, no doubt about that. They were very caring, they loved him. When he reached the age of 6 years old, his dad showed him how to hold a rifle. But of course, he couldn't manage to hold it on his own, the rifle was bigger than he was. But he instantly loved hunting with his father. At the beginning, it was only the odd foxes or dingos chasing the farm's chickens. But little Mundy soon grew up to master the art of using a hunting rifle. By the time he was a teenager, he became obsessed with the way rifles were built. So, after school, he's spend afternoons and evenings on end dismantling his rifle and assembling it again. It took him some time but finally he understood it all, on his own. His father offered him his first rifle when he was legally able to have one, for his 20th birthday. By that time, his friends were very few, and he wasn't doing too good at school so he knew that going to university was not for him. His few friends were all musicians he met here and there in pubs. So he took an instrument, the saxophone, and worked hard to catch up to the level of his friends. He joined their band and played with them. Sometimes, he would hunt some beasts if they were a real problem for his neighbourhood. The extra money was nice to have as he first thought to have his own place. But he realised the way of life he enjoyed was not the one which included paying the rent to a fixed place. No, he preferred the company of his own thoughts and the landscapes of the Outback. So one day he had a long conversation with his family. It was high time he left the family nest but at the same time he loved exploring the Australian Outback with the family van. He remembered it all. His mother, next to his father and his father lowering his head to hide a tear no doubt. His mother did not try to hide them. Her eyes grew red and shiny with tears. *You can have the van, son. But please, come back from time to time eh? Don't forget your old ones, eh?*

That was it. He hugged his father and mother for a long time and when they were finished, his dad raised a finger. *Oh, wait a second, son, I have something for you.*
The old man went to the attic and came back with a pair of aviator glasses and a hat. *I always wore them when I was your age and they brought me enough luck that I met your mum. Keep them, as a souvenir if you like.*

He put them on and was wearing them everyday. Now that he thought about it, he was wearing them when he met Lucien. *Thanks Dad.*

He soon reached home. He took the mail and open the door as silently as he could and closed it behind him. He put the croissants and pains au chocolat on the table. He heard the noise of the shower. *Ah, Sleepin' Beaut' has woken up... It was high bloody time!*

He put his hat on the coat hanger and his glasses on a nearby small table. *Oh I need a good cup of coffee. All this remembering put me to sleep!*

He went to the kitchen space, put the mail on the table next to the croissants and started preparing breakfast.

Meanwhile, Lucien finished with the shower and looked at himself on the mirror. *Mon Dieu I need a haircut...!*

He looked at his black and grey hair and sighed. He hated his grey hair. It scared him. He sighed again and put on his dark blue, satin gown. He let his fingers run through his hair from his forehead to the back of his head as some locks nearly blocked his view, and went to the living room.

"Finally, Sleepin' Beauty is awake!"

"Bonjour, Monsieur."

"Did the lady have a good night of sleep?"

"Yes, she did. And what about Monsieur?"

"Ah, erm... *j'ai bien dormi...* was that correct?" [I have slept well.]

"Mmh, Monsieur is making progress! Yes, it is correct!"

Mundy handed Lucien a cup of coffee. The Frenchman took it with a nod of the head to thank his lover and put his hands on the cup to heat them. Mundy sat down on the seat opposite Lucien on the table. He had prepared everything, the croissants and pains au chocolat had not completely cooled down yet so a faint smell of the golden and sweet pastries diffused in the room.

"Though Monsieur will be happy to know that he still has an accent when he speaks."

Of course, Lucien was teasing. He knew Mundy would love to lose his accent when he speaks "baguette language" as he calls it. But Lucien loved Mundy's accent.

"Ah, what I say. I'm really making efforts to lose it. But it won't go away, I can't pronounce properly your hard "r". They're too hard for me!"

Lucien politely did not say that something else was not soft when he heard Mundy speak French... He moved his eyes on the mail that was piled on the table. While sipping his coffee, he quickly sorted the letters into adverts and other things.

"We receive more and more adverts, what a waste of paper!"

"Well, you have too many short knives and I don't say they're a waste even though I think a kukhri is
a real knife!" Teased Mundy.

Lucien looked at him beneath his long black eyelashes and half smiled. His eyes went back to the envelopes he was sorting out.

"Bill, bill, advert, bill... oh, what's this?"

Two envelopes with an American stamp.

- Author's note -

As always, thanks for reading and let me know what you think of this chapter :D

I'd like to thank Some Gay Bitch, Ships4Life and buffthebison for their incredibly nice comments on this story and I realised that it's been a year that I've been writing this and I really enjoy doing it. Hopefully my English has grown better and less clumsy and I' very grateful for all your comments :D

It is thanks to people like them that I continue updating the story :D

Thanks again and see ya :D
Chapter 39

- Paris, that same morning -

"Two envelopes with an American stamp..."

"You know anyone in America?"

Lucien took the envelopes and played with them, between his long fingers.

"Well, the people from Mann Co. and a couple spies, here and there. But I've been out of the international spying business for quite a while now so I don't expect it's any of them."

"You're forgetting someone..."

"What do you mean?"

Mundy looked nervous. He didn't want to bring that on but he must be honest with his lover. He owed him as much.

"Jay's mum."

Lucien stopped playing with the envelopes. His eyes opened wide in surprise. He blushed and his eyebrows jumped up.

"Merde..."

Silence fell in the room.

_I shouldn't have brought this up..._ Mundy was confused.

Lucien took the envelopes and opened them both hurriedly. He threw one to Mundy, it glided on the table and the Australian took it and looked.

"Whot's that childish handwriting?!"

Lucien raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, that's Jane! The Soldier! Let me read this... _Dear Frenchie and Smelly_- Whot's that surname now?! You're French, you're the smelly one!"

Lucien brightened up and smirked.

"I'm not unhappy with 'Frenchie', it's very correct."

Mundy rolled his eyes and continued reading, mumbling every so often for the useless bits.

"We (_Tavish and I_) are very happy to tell you that we will be flying over to France in a couple of weeks by the time you should receive this letter. We would be del-del- what did he write there?"

Mundy showed Lucien the word he was having a hard time reading.

"Oh indeed it looks like a 7 year-old boy wrote this... Let me see... _hum_... he crossed it so many times to correct it now we can't read it...! Oh wait... I think it's 'delighted' but he spelt it 'd-e-l-i-t-e-d'!"
Oh right, right I see it now. Bloody hell! Has he ever been to school?!... Anyway, so he says 'We would be delighted to visit you if you're ok with that, have a good old American beer...'

Lucien rolled his eyes.

"and talk about the good old days! Yours truly, Jane and Tavish."

"What a pleasant surprise! It will be nice to meet them again."

"Yeah, we shared some good moments back in the days... Oh but there's a PS! 'We were originally coming to open a American/Scottish bar in Paris and we thought we might as well pop by and say hi!'"

"Oh, their business must be going very well in America for them to try and sell their beer here."

"I s'ppose it'll be a lot harder here cause you fancy people like wine but not beer."

Lucien raised an eyebrow.

"You would be surprised how much some people like beer in this country, mon cher Mundy! Yes, we have a strong cultural link with wine but especially the young people nowadays, they prefer beer!"

"Lu', since when do you know 'young people nowadays', eh? Oh wait, you know me so that's the closest you can get I guess...!"

Mundy winked.

"Ouch that hurt! But let me guess, now you are going to say that it is true because after all I am the old frog eater and you are l'homme des buissons!"

"The whot now?!

"Litterally, the 'man of the bush', the Bushman!"

"Oh you c'mere!"

Mundy jumped from his seat and took Lucien in his arms. He raised him off the ground and hugged him. Lucien's hair got messed up.

"Oh, look at what you've done to my hair!"

"Oh sorry Madam, I shall leave you alone."

With Lucien's feet still in the air, Mundy went to the sofa and put him on delicately.

"If Madam allows me, Madam needs a hair cut if she wants her curls not to go wild."

"Shut up you! You're the one who's lived in the desert, I'm sure you had very long hair sometimes."

"Oh so now Madam is implying Paris is a desert, eh? I beg you pardon but pray elaborate on this? Whot kind of species you got there? Mmmh, lots of one species actually, the one that eats snails and frogs!"

"That's enough now!"
Lucien laid down on the sofa taking Mundy by his shirt and dragged him with him. He nearly fell on him.

"Madam! For shame! How dare you! The people of this country like a bit of courtship before this kind of action!"

"Oh now you're an expert in Parisian people?"

Lucien put his hands on Mundy's cheeks. He then moved two of his fingers to stroke his cheek gently. Mundy blushed and closed his eyes. He focused on the delicate feeling on his cheek. He slowly got goosebumps. He put one hand behind Lucien's neck and the other behind his shoulder. He bent down... more... more... until their nose touched and he opened his eyes. He backed up a bit and then melted or rather drowned in the ice blue eyes of the Frenchman. Lucien understood immediately and slowly closed his eyes and opened them again, slowly, lovingly. Mundy's pupils were now the size of the Moon, at least.

But there was another envelope and Lucien wanted to know if it was Jérémy's mother or not. So, against his own heart because he was loving the moment he was sharing with Mundy, he put the envelope between his lips and Mundy's.

Mundy's pupils shrank back to their normal size and his eyebrows jumped up.

"Oh, I forgot about that, sorry Lu', we ought to open this first, you're right."

Both men sat normally on the couch and before Lucien opened the envelope, he put it close to his nose and closed his eyes. He frowned and smelt it.

"Nothing..."

"What were you expecting?"

"Her perfume. When she writes, the letters usually smell of her but that one doesn't smell of feminine perfume."

"So you think it's not her..."

Lucien shrugged.

"Je ne sais pas, Mundy." [I don't know, Mundy.]

He opened the envelope delicately but eagerly.

"Oh!"

A name was written in black, bold letters at the top left of the envelope.

"Gray Mann"

- Author's note -

Thank you for reading a'd as always, let me know in the comments what you think!

To be honest, I have no idea where I'm going with this but let's go and see! :D

As always, thank you all for your wonderful comments, it really pushed me to continue :D
Chapter 40

- Paris -

"Oh bugger..."

Mundy was anxious. He looked up at Lucien but the Frenchman held his head low. He got up, turned his back to Mundy and lit a cigarette up.

"What are we going to do now, Lu'?"

He was lost in thought. His slender silhouette seemed taller than usual as Mundy was sat down and looking up to Lucien. The latter put his left arm elegantly behind his back. The smoke of the cigarette danced up.

"He asks for a fight, against his robots, again... Whoever wins gets Mélanie and Mann Co... We don't need Mann Co but Jay needs Mélanie. We need Mélanie. She's like family now."

Silence fell in the room.

"He really thinks we are pawns in the game."

"Whot?"

Lucien turned to face Mundy, his icy eyes were shining.

"He thinks we are simpletons."

"Lu'... stop smiling like that, you're scaring me..."

Lucien burst out laughing. Mundy raised an eyebrow.

"Whot the bloody hell is happening?"

"Ah, my dear Mundy. While you were hunting croissants every morning and enjoying life, I was busy doing what I do best."

"Spook business?"

Lucien rolled his eyes.

"Gathering information, to be precise. I wrote to the ex RED spy, Patrick, a very nice fellow."

"And so what?"

"It turns out he is Belgian, not French!"

Now it was Mundy's time to roll his eyes up.

"Lu'... I meant, what did you get from him?"

"A confirmation."

Lucien took a chair and sat down.
"I thought in all this time, without the mercenaries to protect them, surely Gray Mann got Mann Co. back! And he did it! The old man has his father's company!"

"So what now?"

"Now, my dear Mundy, two possibilities, actually, three..."

He began walking around the sofa where Mundy was sitting.

"First, he really wants Mélanie to give full legitimacy to his ownership of Mann Co."

He stopped walking.

"But why would he need that?"

He resumed his walking around the sofa in circles.

"Then it could be that he knows that we, the mercenaries, will always be better than his robots."

"So he's after us? Why? To be his bodyguards?"

"Either that, or he wants to study us and see what makes us better than his beloved robots."

Mundy gulped.

"And what's the third option?"

"Both number one and number two! He wants Mélanie and us!"

Lucien finally sat down next to Mundy.

"Wait, what about the other mercenaries?"

"Ah, I guess we all received the same letter."

He got up again and looked through the window.

"But I'll tell you more in the plane! A taxi is waiting for us..."

"Wait, where are we going?"

Jeremy open the front door.

"Let's go! We gotta crush dat Gray Mann once and for all!"

"Alright!"

Mundy jumped up the couch and grabbed his hat. Lucien jumped at the same time and took his dark blue coat. He ran to the bedroom and threw two bags out.

"Mundy! Our luggage!"

"What?! You prepared everything?"

"Oui, now come on! And don't forget Hootsy!"

Mundy was completely taken aback. He felt a bit angry. Well, Lucien could have told him
everything earlier! He could trust him! It's almost as if Lucien thinks Mundy is not quiet enough to keep information for himself. And that hurt Mundy.

After all this time... Why do you still play the spy game? Why don't you let me know about things like that? Why don't you tell me? Am I not trustworthy enough? We share the same bed in the same flat and I'm wearing the ring he offered me when he... proposed to me. And yet he doesn't confide in me...

- Secret ex RED base, New Mexico, USA -

"Aye! Good ta see ya back laddies!"

"Heavy is happy to be in the team again!"

"Alrighty partner, be gentle with the hug now...!"

"Mmmh-mmmh!"

"I see we kept the mumbling thing..."

"Oi, Lu-Spy!"

"Hey guys! We'll do it! We'll make it because we're all best friends!"

"Good friends and very good patients, ja!"

"Hello again nurse! God bless America! None of you maggots changed a bit!"

All the mercs exchanged some good handshakes and even hugs here and there. They were all very happy to see each other even though only few on them knew why they were gathered in the RED base again.

"Alrighty then, what do we say to some good pancakes after unpacking and settling?"

"Mmmmh-mmmmh!"

All the mercs joyfully agreed and went in their rooms.

"Sniper, could you follow me please?"

"Okay mate."

All the mercs resumed their habit of calling one another by their classes and not by their names. And so, even though Mundy and Lucien knew each other very well, they also obeyed this unspoken rule.

"Where are you leading me?"

"Outside."

Spy opened the door and motioned Sniper to go. He obeyed and stepped outside the main building. The sun was slowly setting but the temperature was still quite high.

"Look there."

"Oh! You got it here!"

Spy was pointing at Sniper's van. The latter was overjoyed and ran to it. He slammed the door open
and jumped in. That reminded him a lot things.

*That time when the Spook came and I talked to him about my family... That time I saw his eyes shining like ice drops in the light of my flickering lamp... That time he said my name and I got mad at him... That time he came back yelling at me to let him because he needed to say something... That time he said "Je t'aime"...* Sniper sighed deeply and as he was lost in thought, he didn't realise that Spy had followed him, climbed in the van and shut the door behind him.

"Do you remember, Mundy?"

"How could I forget...?"

They both sat down.

"Though Lu', I must say I'm furious."

"Why?"

Mundy took his hat off and ruffled his hair. Lucien's pupils dilated like a cat in the dark.

"Why don't you tell me anything?"

"About what?"

"Well, I don't know... Everything! You spook everywhere and say nothing to anyone... not even me..."

Lucien smiled a bit.

"You have no idea how many times I've heard that... Not in those exact words, of course, but the same idea..."

"Who said that before me?"

Lucien looked away, his cheeks became red.

"My previous... erm... companions..."

"Yeah well, unless you prove me wrong you didn't propose to any of them?!"

Mundy was fed up.

"Or maybe you did and you never said? And anyway I can understand having secrets when you were an international class spy! But now, you're just my Lucien, right?"

Mundy paused.

"Or maybe you're still spying eh?"

"What? Non, come on..."

"Maybe you need to gather information about us Aussies..."

"Non Mundy, I'm-"

"And you didn't say anything, like usual..."
Lucien felt ashamed and Mundy outraged.

"I thought you trusted me well enough so that you'd no longer have to bear secrets..."

Lucien did not even try to say anything. Somewhere deep inside he knew.

"I... I thought that the day you proposed to me was the day all that weird business ends..."

He turned his head away from Lucien, to hide a tear. But of course, Lucien did not need to see the tear... He knew.

"Why? I trusted you with everything... My family, my friends, my life... And you still keep secrets to me..."

Lucien knew he made a terrible mistake.

"I am sorry Lucien, but if you can't trust me, then I can't imagine that you can..."

Mundy started sniffing repeatedly. The tears streamed down his face.

"I can't imagine how you can... love me... So, I've been thinking a lot today... Oh a lot... And I decided that if you can't trust me, I can't accept this."

The metallic sound resonated in the van. Lucien was horrified. Mundy had removed his ring and put it on the table.

"Goodbye Spy."

- Author's note -

Thank you guys for still following the story! Hopefully it has matched your expectations! In any case, please let me know in the comments what you think of this new chapter, it really helps me go forward!

See ya around!
Chapter 41

- RED Base, the day after -

"The Medibay hasn't changed a bit! Well... apart from the dust of course..."

Ludwig put two fingers on his old desk and swept through.

"Mein Gott, this office and actually this whole lab needs a good spring cleaning! What do you say Archimedes?"

The bird cooed back at his owner.

"Oh and again I'm sorry if I couldn't bring all your friends vizh you, I had to chose one, so it was you! Aw, don't coo like zhis at me, I hired someone to take care of our friends, don't worry, see? Zhey're all right. Now, to zhe broom and let us begin!"

The German medic put on his labcoat and gloves. The dove flew to his open cage, next to the window. And so the medic started cleaning his Medibay...

- Under the base -

"Alrighty Py'! We gotta make sure all the tools we need are there. I have a list here. Here's what we gonna do. I'mma call the names of the tools and you check that they're in the right drawer or cupboard, is that ok?"

"Mnh!"

Pyro nodded.

"Alrighty then, we'll start with the wrenches, you remember where I used to put them? Yeah, right, absolutely! So let's start... Erm... Stock wrench?"

"Mmmh!"

"Good... Jag?"

"Mmmh!"

And the list went on and on, until a phone call. Engie went to take it.

"Hello, Engie here!... Oh... yes, o'course... Yeah, he's with me, we'll come in a minute... Alrighty then, thanks Spy."

He hung up.

"Py', we're needed upstairs, in the meeting room. Spah will finally reveal why we're all gathered again! C'mon, let's go!"

Pyro nodded and followed Engie upstairs, to the meeting room.

- Meeting room -

Spy waited for everyone to arrive. He was lost in thoughts. His mind was stuck on that sound. That
sound that resonated in his mind. The metallic circles that dissolved in the air. The ring that Mundy threw on the table.

"Why do I always end up messing up everything...? Why did I give him that impression...? Well, simple! I didn't even realise I was being the spy I've always been. I didn't realise the importance of getting engaged with someone. Ha! Getting engaged with a man... It will happen in France when America gets an orange piglet for president... I need to repair the damage I've caused... Easy to say, hard to do... Very hard... Impossible? Maybe it wasn't meant to be... Maybe I have to forget about him now... Maybe that's God's way of telling me to let him go... Alright God, I guess I can't go against your will... Let it be then. I'm forgetting about him.

"Oi! Spook! Did you hear Engie?!"

"Ah? what? sorry?"

"He was talking to you."

"Oh, sorry Engie, I was... away."

"No problem partner, I was just sayin' that I guess this is the moment we learn why we're all here right?"

"Indeed, mon ami. We all got gathered here by our old friend Monsieur Gray Mann. He got Mann Co. back! Yes, gentlemen. Now, this is not the only reason why we are gathered here. In fact, he might have mentioned a lady whose name is Mélanie. She is Scout's girlfriend. But, not only is she Scout's girlfriend, she is also the only daughter Redmond Mann has. As a consequence, she should be CEO of Mann Co and could claim ownership of the company!"

"Aah, is interesting, but how Mann got Mann Co?"

"Very good point Heavy. As you might have guessed, the late Monsieur Mann never recognised Gray as his son, that's why legally, Mélanie should be the owner of Mann Co and not Gray Mann. But, as we all got fired from Mann Co., no one could defend Saxton Hale, the Administrator and Miss Pauling."

"Ha! Saxton Hale is bloody strong! That lad could break a wall with only a bottle o'me scrumpy if he wanted to!"

"True, Demoman, you are right. But it wouldn't be the first time he gets caught, remember last time?"

"Nah, I can't remember..."

"Ah, it might be a side effect of zhe brain scooping procedure..."

"The what now?"

"Ach, vell, I was tired of explaining to you zhat I tried 8 times to put your eye back in your eye socket and each time it would come back alive on Hallowe'en and roam on its own, so I scooped zhat part out of your brain."

"You did what to me brains now doc'?"

"Vell, brain scooping is not an exact science so I might have got a bit too enthusiastic and scooped a bit too much, I apologise!"
"Fair enough doc'..."

"Aaaaanyway, gentlemen."

Spy paused to light a new cigarette.

"As mentioned in the letter, it's a sort of duel. Us versus the robots. If we win, we take Mann Co. back and we can go back to our lives. If we don't succeed, we will all belong to Gray Mann who will no doubt carry out experiments on us and Mélanie will do whatever is needed to give him full ownership of Mann Co... Are there any questions?... Non?... Ah, yes Medic?"

"Vhen is zhe battle? And vhere?"

"He said he will let us know so in that matter I don't know anything more than you do. Though I expect we have a couple days, if not weeks to train. By the way I suggest we start training tomorrow at 9am if that's ok for all of you. The only problem is that we are missing targets to practise on..."

"And zhe respawn system, we should see zhat it works during zhe trainings."

"Ah! Good point, Medic. I was forgetting about that. So let's say we gather at 9am to see if the respawn system works, d'accord?"

The mercs nodded.

"I might have an idea on how to come up with training targets... They'll be cheap in metal though I'll need light bulbs and lots of glass..."

"Robots have light bulb."

"True, Heavy! They might also have some parts made of glass..."

"How long will it take you to build your idea, Engie?"

"I reckon a couple days of prototypes and then testing... Hmm... I think roughly a week..."

"Bien, gentlemen, if there are no more questions, then proceed."

"Oh yeah, sorry, one last thing partners! Tonight Pyro will cook some dinner so be in the dining room around 7.30, right?"

The mercs nodded and emptied the room. They all resumed their old habits. Scout went for a run, Engie and Pyro started getting busy in the kitchen. Medic and Heavy went to the Medibay and started a game of guess. Solly and Demo were fighting for the remote and what channel to watch on TV.

Sniper went to his van and Spy went to his room. He closed the door behind him and smiled.

I've only slept here for the first few weeks... This whole thing feels like déjà-vu more and more... Right, a shower first...

He removed his tuxedo vest and hung it in his cupboard. He undid the buttons on his shirt, one by one. One button was missing. He sighed.

I remember Mundy used to get angry at me for my shirts...

"It takes ages to unbutton that bloody thing!"
"Ah, and you're in a hurry now Monsieur?"

"You have no idea..."

He got so annoyed that he tore the shirt off my chest that night...

Suddenly he felt it. Mundy's fingers running across his chest and his back, stopping by his scars, massaging them slowly as if his touch would make them disappear completely. Shivers ran down his spine.

Lucien gasped and put his arms around himself as if to stop that feeling.

I said I needed to get a shower, nothing else.

And so he went to the bathroom, holding his towel like he used to hold a napkin when he was a waiter.

- Sniper's van -

Right, I need to check the rifles and clean them. I'll put a chair and do it outside, in the van's shade.

Sniper grabbed all his rifles, put them in a big bag and went outside with a chair. He went back in the van to get all the cleaning and polishing tools he needed. He opened the van's door again to go out and... He felt a strong wave of sadness, disappointment and even shame. He had to admit it.

I hoped Lucien would be here in front of the van when I opened the door again.

He felt empty and sighed.

Well, the rifles won't clean themselves.

He sat down in the van's shade and started with his stock sniper rifle. From time to time he'd look at the building in front of him, the base itself. He couldn't see through the window as the reflection of the sun blinded him.

It's quite hot.

He went on polishing his rifle, in the silence of desert, only disturbed by a rare breeze.

Please Sniper, open your door. I need to talk to you.

He raised his head and saw Lucien in front of the van's backdoor.

Get away you Spook!

He hadn't opened his mouth yet he heard himself say it clearly... from inside the van.

I said GET LOST.

D'accord now listen yo me Bushman! I only wanted to make friends with your unsocial self. We are both lonely souls and maybe, MAYBE, we could cooperate because remember that we will have to cooperate on the battlefield and-

The van's backdoor slammed open in front of Mundy's eyes.

You mongrel! It was I who saved your skinny arse back there, those headshots came from ME! So
Now quit your fancy talk of "moon amee" tell me what the bloody hell you want to tell me!

You opened your door, shall we continue inside?

In front of Mundy's eyes, Lucien climbed in the van. He didn't think about anything and he felt he had to climb in as well. Inside, he found himself sitting next to Lucien who was elegantly lighting a cigarette. He then resumed his speech.

I would like to apologise.

Let's imagine I accept your apologies, then what?

Then...

What's the problem mate? You lost your tongue?

Shut up Bushman and let me think! In French I would know how to say it...

Say it in French then.

Je t'aime.

"Sniper!? Hey, Snipes!"

"Who-what?"

"Why are you lying on the ground? It's scorching hot and God you've been sweating a lot! Wait, I have a bottle of water, I'll wash your face."

The young Scout splashed water on Sniper's face. God he looks pale, he must've been hit by the sun...

Wait, let's go in your van, I'll help you up."

They both went up the van and Scout poured a glass of water for Sniper.

"So... Scout, why have you come?"

"You kiddin'? It's dinner time and you haven't showed up so I got worried and went looking for you. Actually, Spy was also missing but I found him in his room, well, I mean, I knocked and got told off. So yeah, I came to find you and you're lying on floor outside your van! What happened?"

"I think I must have fainted in the heat... I was cleaning my rifles and then I saw..."

"What? What did ya see?"

"It doesn't matter. Are there any leftovers from dinner? I might take some'in now,"

"Yeah, I left a plastic box in the fridge for Spy and you."

"Thanks mate, I appreciate it."

"No problem but you should see doc' in case there's somethin' wrong."

"I will, just give me a moment to recover some strength."

"Sure thing. I'll leave you now for my evenin' run. Is that alright?"
"Yeah, no problem, go have your fun."

"Alright, take care Snipes."

"Thanks mate."

Scout exited the van and closed the door behind him.

"God I fainted and all I could think about what when for the first time Lu' came to tell me he loved me."

He put a hand on his eyes and closed them for a moment.

"I have to go and see the doc', Scout is right."

- Author's note -

Thanks for reading guys and let me know what you think!

Oh and by the way, that dialogue Sniper and Spy have in Sniper's head, you've already read it! Check out Chapter 8 ;)

See y'all! :D
Mundy pushed the door and found the German medic at his desk. The sound of the door opening startled Medic.

"Oh, hallo, Sniper. Is everything alright?"

"Well, I fainted in the heat and I thought I might come and see you, just to be sure that I'm alright."

"Oh, I see."

Medic stood up and motionned Sniper to a door. He opened the door and found that hospital bed he's been on before, for minor injuries. He sat on.

"So..." Medic grabbed his stethoscope. "...Tell me exactly what happened."

"Well, I was sitting under my van's shade, wipin' my rifles clean and suddenly I..."

"Ja?"

Medic then put a small lamp in front of Sniper's eyes and examined them carefully.

"I..."

Medic put his stethoscope aside. He grabbed 2 chairs.

"Come sit here."

Sniper obeyed.

"Wait a second, I will be right back."

Medic disappeared. Sniper looked around him. The medical instruments gave him the creeps. But Medic soon returned next to his colleague, with a cup of herbal tea.

"Let me ask you, have you run to see me?"

"No, my head still feels like I've been on a rollercoaster."

"Ah, zhen let me tell you my diagnosis."

Sniper nodded.

"I zhink, my dear friend, zhat you broke up vizh Spy, or zhe ozher vay around and you've seen him vhile you fainted."

Sniper blushed and looked down.

"You miss him and you've had trouble sleeping and eating for the past few days."

Sniper fiddled with his fingers.

"Is zhat right?"
Sniper, head still low, nodded.
"Gut, now, let me do somezhing and then I'll ask you vhat is zhe problem?"

Medic went to Archimedes, opened the window. The bird flew out. Sniper sighed.
"I guess some day or other people will know. So it's better if I say it directly."

Medic resumed his seat in front of Sniper. The latter raised his head to look into Medic's eyes.

"It was I who broke up. I don't know if Heavy told you but Lu-Spy had offered me a ring so we were sort of engaged. I thought I'd spend the rest of my life with him. But it turns out that spying for him is too deeply rooted in his personality. So he'd never let me know what he was thinking or what he was preparing. At the beginning I thought he'd lose that bad habit of his, given that he stopped being an international spy. But no, it stayed and at some point I really wondered if it was me not being worth trusting or maybe something was wrong with me. But no, I realised I was ok and it was him who would just not trust me. Now, I didn't think much of it but then I remembered all the little omissions here and there. This first secret was Scout being his son. But at that time we were just at the beginning of our story so I thought ok, fair enough. He might have chosen to wait for the right time to tell me. But then I added all the little secrets here and there and I thought it was enough. If we're a real couple, we should be able to tell each other everything. We should be able to communicate, right?"

He paused to take a sip at the herbal tea.

Medic was carefully listening to his patient but he was also thinking in his own mind.

_He will need some herbal tea in advance, to soothe his nerves for what's coming..._

"I agree, Sniper."

"Can I say something that you keep to yourself Doc'?"

"My lips are sealed."

"I love him too much to just let him go like that. I want us to be together again. But those secrets... they tire me..."

"Do you really want to be togezher again?"

"Yeah, yeah I really do. I... It's difficult to live without him, I really miss him."

"I understand and I will ask you to forgive me but... Come in!"

Medic stood up and the door opened. The masked Frenchman appeared at the door, with archimedes on his shoulder. Mundy realised Lucien had heard him all along. He was outraged. He suddenly jumped out of his chair and pinned Lucien to the wall with a powerful grip to his neck. Medic calmly left the room.

"How long have you been here listenin' eh?"

"Long enough, dear Sniper."

Spy still calmly put a cigarette in his mouth.

"Stop playin' clever, you have no idea how angry I am right now! I love you, you stupid snake and
you act as if I was just a toy for you!"

"Oh, mon ami, now the situation is all in your hands. As you said, it's you who broke up."

Those two words "mon ami" added fuel to the fire. He threw the Frenchman on the floor, he was mad with rage. He punched him. Spy took the blow, his nose started bleeding. Mundy raised him off the floor by the collar and threw him on the wall.

"I loved you and I was just another affair for you!"

"Ca suffit!" [That's enough]

Spy removed his vest, loosened his tie and rolled up his sleeves.

Both jumped at each other again. Lucien being smaller and lighter than his colleague got to punch him in the stomach and when Sniper bent down, Spy kicked him in the face. Mundy's head jerked back and a trail of the blood from his lips sprang and stained the ceiling. His glasses flew away.

"Now Bushman, I had come and was prepared to take the blows but to think that you couldn't see that my feelings were sincere...!"

Spy grabbed Sniper by the collar and punched him in the face again.

"You IMBECILE! I have done with you what I have done with no one else!"

He punched again.

"I have said to you what I have said to no one else!"

Before he could punch him again, Sniper rose to his feet again and kicked Spy in the chest.

"You MONGREL, do you think I'd abandon my van for anyone or anything?"

Spy was breathing with difficulty and was holding his chest, panting. Sniper was also in a bad shape. But Spy, no doubt because of his training got back to his feet quicker and punched Sniper again.

"You have no idea how long I thought before proposing to you!"

He kicked Sniper in the leg. The latter fell down.

"You have no idea how difficult it was for me to think I'd share all I am with someone!"

Sniper was lying on the ground and with a feint, slid his leg on the floor and made Spy trip and fall down. Now both mercenaries were on the ground, blood flowing from different parts of their body. Sniper lied down on his back, breathing loudly. Spy lied next to him and put a hand on his chest.

They could only hear their loud breathing and panting. Other than that, absolute silence...

Spy sighed loudly and his breath came back to normal. He put a finger to his nose and looked at the blood. He was impressed, clearly he had underestimated his companion's abilities at close combat. Sniper could taste the blood in his mouth. He hadn't really thought about it before but of course Spy would be very agile and quick at close combat. He is very efficient as well, that kick in the face was truly impressive.

Both were lying on the floor, not daring to look at each other's face.
Their hands were moving though. Both were looking for the other's hand.

Finally they touched, shyly, briefly and Sniper backed away. But Spy kept going and found his hand again. Now, Sniper was sure, he was really looking to hold my hand.

They held their hands. Both smiled, but neither to look at the other for minutes that seemed like eternity.

Eventually Spy slid closer but he did only half on the job. Sniper understood and took his part of responsibility. He moved closer to Spy. Now their shoulders are touching.

"Je te demande pardon, je suis désolé." [I beg for your forgiveness, I am sorry.]

Sniper smiled.

"No worries, I was stupid as well, I should not have given you back the ring. That was very stupid. We should have talked this through."

Spy put his other hand in his trousers' pocket and put a small thing on Sniper's chest. the reflection of the neon light of the hospital room on that small circular metallic object blinded him for a second.

But then, he felt overwhelmed with a feeling of joy. He was lying on the floor, half disfigured, with countless bruises, but he was happy. Again. Finally.

He took his hand back from Spy and put the ring on. He immediately took Spy's hand again and tightened his grip a bit, as if to say thanks. Spy smiled and tightened his grip as well.

Mundy decided it was enough pretending to avoid each other and put his hand on Lucien's chest.

"Ouch!"

"Oh, sorry!"

"Yes, Bushman, do I need to remind you that you kicked me there?"

- Author's note -

There you go! Lu and Mundy are back together! Let me know if you're happy/relieved/can find sleep again ;)

Thanks as always for your comments and your kind words :)

See y'all later :D
Medic had been listening carefully behind the door.

*No more noises, zhey should be finished fighting... I'll give zhem some time and I'll come back.*

He left the Medibay.

Spy finally got up.

"You got blood on my suit!"

"And you, little Mister..." Sniper got up and grabbed his glasses off the floor.

"You broke my glasses!"

"They were not a model cut especially for you by Pierre Cardin himself!"

"No, but you still broke'em! I could punch you for that!"

"Well, do it then!"

Sniper launched his fist at Spy's face as fast as he could. The Frenchman stood up, completely relaxed because he knew... Sniper stopped his fist only a hair from Spy's face. The latter grinned.

"Ah, what's the problem? Can't punch me anymore?"

"Your ugly mug disgusts me!"

Sniper smirked and Spy was taken aback by this answer.

"What? I am the most handsome of us two!"

Medic knocked on the door.

"Yes?"

"Oui?"

He entered.

"Can I tend to your bruises now or are you not finished? Oh, wait..."

Medic looked at the silver ring on Sniper's finger.

"I guess you're done arguing." He said as he pointed at the ring.

"So who wants to be first?"

Spy raised his hand.

"Apparently my ugly cup disgusts him..."
"Your what?" Medic asked.

"It's your ugly mug not cup you idiot!"

"Cup, mug, all the same..."

"Right, Sniper, do you mind waiting next door, it shouldn't take too long."

Sniper nodded and exited the room. Medic motioned Spy to the bed and he climbed up. The German went to grab some alcohol and compresses.

"Thank you for sending Archimedes with a note."

"Vell, zhe whole team knew somezhing vas wrong betveen you two so I zhought I might try and help you repair zhe damage."

"You've helped me twice now. The first time was when I accidentally called Sniper by his name and you told me to go and tell him what I wanted to, yell at him even."

Medic nodded proudly.

"No offense but I would never think of you as the man who gives good relationship advice."

Medic smiled and nodded.

"Vell, a good doctor has to be able to heal zhose wounds as vell..."

Medic put the medigun hanging from the ceiling, switched it on and directed it at Spy's head. He put some plasters on his nose and then directed the Medigun on Spy's chest.

"He didn't miss you on your chest!"

"Well, I really provoked him but I'd never thought he would be that good at close combat."

"That will teach you not to underestimate your ennemy next time!"

Spy sighed.

"That's precisely it doctor, I didn't even consider him as an enemy... That's why I wasn't focused enough... Ah, anyway, it's all solved now."

"Gut, gut... Now let me test this."

Medic put his hand on Spy's chest and pressed more and more.

"Can you feel anyzhing?"

"I can feel you are pressing on my chest but the pain is gone, merci Docteur."

"Wunderbar! Now I'll take care of Sniper. You can wait for him next door."

Spy nodded and jumped out of the hospital bed. Medic opened the door for him.

"Herr Sniper, your turn!"

Sniper was sitting on a chair in the corridor. He got up. Spy passed him and looked at him with disgust.
"I really disfigured you!"

"Yes, you're the one to blame! Now, go change your suit, you look like a butcher!"

Spy looked down on his suit and indeed, as the blood had dried, Sniper's comment made sense. Medic motioned Sniper inside.

"Sorry again, Sniper."

"Bah, no worries... In the end you did the right thing. We're both too proud to go and talk to the other..."

Medic grabbed the medigun again and started on the job.

"I should thank you actually, Medic."

Medic was whistling, he nodded with pride.

"By the way, tell me, is he okay? I hope I didn't go too far."

"Nozhashing zhe medigun and I couldn't repair."

"Ah, good then... I thought that with his Spy training he's be able to take the blows but I'm still worried."

Medic put a couple of plasters on Sniper's face and he was soon done.

"Zhere you go! Now, please don't fight again, you need to be fit and in your best state for zhe fights."

Sniper nodded.

"Don't worry, I'll make sure we'll be ok to fight."

Medic started to tidy up the hospital room while Sniper left. He headed for the van, grabbed some clean clothes and went to take a shower. In the base, he found he was the only one to take a shower at that moment.

_I'll go in the kitchen grab somethin' to share with Lu' and I'll got to his bedroom._

On his way to the kitchen, he saw Scout watching TV with Demoman.

"Nah, this scrumpy is too strong for a wee laddie like ya!"

"I'm not a kid eh!"

Sniper smiled and got to the kitchen.

"Ah, Sniper, Medic finished with you and Spy?"

Sniper looked on his right and saw Heavy preparing a sandwich.

"Yeah, Heavy, sorry about erm..."

"Nyet, no problem, I get angry at Medic sometimes and he gets angry at me as well. Is good."

The big man smiled and went away.
Now, to have a look at the fridge... Oh wait, I have a better idea... Where's Lu's cupboard again...? Ah, same old place.

He opened the cupboard and had a look. Finally he found what he was looking for. He headed for Lu's room. He walked through the corridor and found the door with the knife logo. He knocked.

"Spy? It's me."

He waited. No sound at all. He headed back for his van.

He might be busy...

He opened his van's backdoor and jumped in.

"Bonjour Monsieur..."

Spy was sitting on the couch, one leg on the other and smoking a cigarette. He had changed into a dark red velvet suit with a black shirt and a bright red satin bowtie. He wore red velvet gloves as well and he had removed his mask, his grey satin short hair was shining. On the coffee table were two empty glasses of champagne along with the bottle in a bucket of ice.

"What's the occasion?"

"I found the love of my life... back!"

"Oh, I see..."

Mundy threw his hat away and sat next to Lucien.

"I'm sorry I didn't know so I'm not quite dressed as you are."

Spy put the cigarette in his mouth and pointed to the bed. Sniper's eyes followed the direction Spy was pointing and saw a suit in a plastic protective bag.

"Ah, give me a second then..."

Spy nodded and went to smoke his cigarette outside the van. Sniper quickly put on the shirt and trousers. His shirt was white, and the trousers as well as the vest were dark blue. He struggled to tie the bowtie.

"Bloody hell! How does he do it!?"

Having finished his cigarette, Spy got back in and found Sniper trying to tie the bowtie and swearing.

"Let me help, please."

Sniper nodded and raised his head up a bit. In no time, Spy tied the satin blue bowtie.

"Thanks Lu'."

"De rien, mon amour."

Mundy smiled and blushed. Those words, "mon amour"... He felt butterflies in his stomach, his heart accelerated and he felt lighter, so much lighter...
They resumed their seats on the couch and Lucien poured the champagne.

"To us, may we never get separated again, and I promise I won't overreact like I did anymore."

"À nous, que nous ne nous séparions plus jamais et je promets que je n'aurai plus de secrets pour toi." [To us, may we never get separated ever again and I promise I will never hide secrets from you ever again.]

They had a toast. Lucien got up and put on some music on Mundy's record player.

Quand il me prends dans ses bras, qu'il me parle tout bas, je vois la vie en rose...

Mundy recognised the song Lucien had sung to him last Christmas in Paris. Lucien sat back next to his lover and put his gloved hand on his thigh. Mundy put his hand on Lucien's. They sipped their champagne and Lucien put his head on Mundy's shoulder.

"I presume you are blushing now..."

"How do you know that?"

"I don't know that, I know you."

Mundy blushed even more. He put his glass of champagne back on the coffee table and kissed Lucien's head before putting his head on Lucien's. The latter stroked Mundy's thigh slowly.

"It's good to be back together, I hate that lonely room in the base."

"Oh, so you think I'll let you invade my van?"

Lucien raised his head to meet Mundy's eyes, he whispered:

"I can't spend my nights without you, and I can't spend my life with you..."

He raised his lips and touched Mundy's.

- Author's note -

Thanks for reading! :D So what did you think of this one?

Thank you Ships4life for your nice comments and don't worry, I'll go on with this until I have no more ideas :D

See y'all around :) !
Chapter 44

- Sniper's van, the next morning -

That morning, Lucien woke up before his lover. He opened his eyes slowly and looked around him. He sat up.

*What a mess!*

He looked on the van's floor and Mundy's suit and his suit were on the floor. The bowties were lying untied as well. He smiled.

*Ah, they did cost me some money but for the night we spent, it was very worth it...*

He turned on his side and looked at Mundy sleeping. He curbed his will to light a cigarette, the smell of the smoke would wake Mundy up. He looked at Mundy, his hair was untidy and a lock of hair was falling on his forehead. He looked so peaceful but God, he needed to shave now. Lucien was not against a beard if it's kept tidy.

*I guess it's also my fault, our temporary break up had just as bad an impact for him as it did for me...*

Lucien's eyes slid down to Mundy's lips. He had thin lips, they would often be chapped but since he's been knowing Lucien, he'd understood that it was only of matter of hydration. Those thin lips... Lucien sighed. He thought of last night... Though Mundy had no idea how to tie a tie, he found a way to untie them!

Suddenly Mundy lips moved.

"You awake?"

"Oui."

Mundy still kept his eyes shut. He pursed his lips and raised his head from the pillow slightly. Lucien put his hand on Mundy's cheek and bent down to meet his lips. Mundy's arms glided around Lucien, pulling him gently to him. Lucien put his knee between Mundy's legs to maintain his balance. They kissed for a long time. Only breaking the contact to catch their breath or caress each other.

Mundy broke the silence.

"I hope it isn't your revolver that I feel there?"

Lucien shook his head, blushing.

"Non, I'm sorry..."

Mundy smiled and blushed.

"Why do you blush as well? Oh, I see..."

Mundy pulled Lucien closer to him. The Frenchman was lying on top of him.

"*Je t'aime mon amour...* [I love you, sweetheart.]

"I love you too, Lu'..."
Lucien was stroking Mundy's chest slowly while Mundy had one hand in Lucien's hair.

"Do you like this new haircut? I thought the curls were getting too long..."

"Yeah, I prefer it now. You still have a few rebel locks of hair at the front, and it's long enough for me to lose my hand in..."

Lucien smiled.

"If Monsieur is satisfied, then so am I."

"Lucien?"

"Oui?"

"Je t'aime."

Lucien raised his head to look at Mundy. It was the first time he said it in French. That meant a lot for him.

"You look very surprised."

"I...I..."

Mundy smiled.

"Say it in French then."

"Je ne trouve pas les mots, même en Français..." [I can't find the words, even in French...]

"Well, do you speak any other languages?"

Lucien was incapable of answering, his heart was beating fast, his eyes were locked on Mundy's lips. The latter finally noticed and reacted accordingly...

- Later that morning -

Mundy came back to the van with some breakfast for both Lucien and himself. He put his hand on the van's backdoor but before he entered he heard something from the inside. He put his ear on the van's door and listened.

"Ah, tu verras, tu verras
tout recommencera,
tu verras, tu verras,
L'amour c'est fait pour ça,
tu verras, tu verras,
Je ferai plus le con,
j'apprendrai ma leçon sur le bout de tes doigts..."

[Ah, you'll see, you'll see]
Everything will start again,
You'll see, you'll see,
That's what love is for,
You'll see, you'll see,
I won't make a fool of myself anymore,
I will learn my lesson on the tips of your fingers...

Lucien was singing in the van.

Such an irresistible voice he has...

Mundy opened the door. Lucien stopped his song mid sentence. He actually had put the song on the record player.

"Please Lu', continue, I didn't want to interrupt you."

Lucien was standing in the van, a hand in the air and the other on his belly in a dancing position. Upon seeing Mundy he blushed and put his hands behind his back. Mundy smiled. He put the coffee and the croissants aside and went to Lucien.

"I don't know how it works, but I'll try and learn."

"What do you mean Mundy?"

"You were dancing right? So, put that record again and teach me, I'll do my best."

- Engie's Garage -

"Mornin' Py', you had some good sleep?"

"Mmh-Mmh!"

Pyro nodded enthusiastically.

"Ah, great. I'm gonna need some breakfast before continuing on this project, what shall I make for you? The usual bacon and eggs?"

Pyro shook his head.

"Mmh!"

"What would ya like then?"

Pyro pointed at the calendar on the wall.

"Well yes, we're Friday today, so what?"

"Mmmh!"

"Wha- Oh it's the cereals on the calendar you're pointing at! Okay! Now, put on your suit and when you're ready, come join me in the kitchen right?"
"Mmh-mmh!"

"Alrighty then!"

Engie headed for the kitchen. He climbed the stairs, whistling. He went through a corridor and the living room before arriving.

"Mornin' Engie!"

"Mornin' Snipah! I see you're in a jolly good mood today!"

Sniper instantly blushed.

"Well, yeah..."

"I guess things are good with Spah again, right?"

Sniper nodded and lowered his head. The Texan came near him and put a hand on his shoulder.

"We all are very happy for both of you, son. You both looked so miserable without each other!"

"Ah, thanks Engie."

"Don't mention it! Erm, will you need the coffee machine?"

"Yeah but don't worry, I'll make plenty of it and only take some to the van."

"Alrighty then. You need any bacon'n'eggs? I'm makin' some for mahself, I could add some in the pan."

"Nah, thanks Engie, thanks a lot mate."

Engie bowed and raised his construction hat off his head as if to say "you're welcome" to Sniper.

- Medibay, Medic's bedroom. -

"Guten tag mein liebe..." [Good dat to you my love...] Heavy smiled and opened his eyes.

"Ah, you are awake before me again?"

"Ja, I've been zhinking..."

"About what?"

"About zhe battle. I don't know what to make of zhis. I zhought Gray Mann was more... erm... I mean I didn't zhink he would ask for a fair and square battle."

"Ah, I understand. It might still be a trap and the battle turns out to be very uneven."

"Ja, zhat's what I'm afraid of."

Heavy turned on his side and looked at Medic.

"I made a promise to you. I won't break it. I will always be there for you, Ludwig. Whatever this madman has in mind, we will face it and destroy him."
"It might be more difficult than last time."

"I expect it to be like that. We destroyed him once. Now I guess he is coming back stronger than before, otherwise there is no point in all this."

"Ja, ja... I hope zhe Kritzkrieg will do zhe trick..."

"Bah, I'm sure it will, don't worry!"

"If only it could heal as fast as zhe Quick-Fix and give me protection like zhe Medig- Oh Gott!"

Medic jumped out of the bed and ran away to his lab, still wearing his pyjamas.

"Ludwig wait, you forgot your glasses!"

Heavy jumped out of the bed, grabbed the glasses and ran after his lover.

That day, both Engie and Medic worked very hard and by the end of the day, both had very good news for the team.

- Author's notes -

Thank you readers and as always, please let me know what you think of this chapter!

I'll be away for some time to spend time with my family but hopefully I'll find some moments to continue to write. It might take longer for me to write and publish new chapters, hopefully it's ok for you guys!

See y'all later!
Chapter 45

- RED Base, the day after, meeting room -

"Gentlemen, we are gathered today as both Medic and Engie had some announcements to make. Medic, if you please..."

"Ja, danke Herr Spy. Vhat I wanted to discuss today is zhe possibility zhat zhis battle is a trap, whatever zhe income. Last time, we beat Gray Mann, fair and square. So what reasons does he have to come and vant to fight us again?"

Silence fell.

"Vhat if, in zhe end, even if ve vin, he takes us prisoners? And zhen of course, he takes Mélanie. So, vith Heavy's help, we have been zhinking and ve designed zhis!"

Medic put a crate on the table, he opened the crate. His hands dived in and came out with white square metallic backpack. A red cross was stamped on it. He then put a long, black tube out as well as what looked like a new medigun. He plugged the back tube to the backpack on one end and to the medigun at the other end. He put on the backpack and took the new Medigun in his hands. Like the other Mediguns, it looked like a large tube. But at the end of this one, pointy metal shards stood out, like wolf's teeth. It was painted black except for a couple of red stripes.

"I present to you my latest Medigun. Zhis one heals as fast as zhe Quick-fix and can give übercharge or crits...or both!"

All the mercs opened wide mouths.

"I could have created it earlier in my career. I really vanted to but zhe Administrator prohibited its prototype. She said it vould be too powerful and vould turn zhe war between RED and BLU in a stalemate. But now, ve are not fighting REDs or BLUs, nein! We are fighting robots and in case Gray Mann's invitation is a trap, I am prepared!"

"Hey, doc', it's all very nice but what about our guns? Can I have like a Scattergun but ya know, a wicked one, like you mega-medigun?"

"Heavy, I vill let you answer zhis."

Heavy stood up.

"I can improve weapons, the easy ones like shotguns, your scattergun or a revolver. Maybe I can try something on your rocket launcher Soldier. But sniper rifles or flamethrowers are not weapons I am used to, so I can't improve them on my own, I would need you, Engie, to help."

Heavy resumed his seat, followed by Medic and his crate.

"Alrighty then, my turn to say things."

Engie stood up and went at the front of the table.

"To answer your question Heavy, I'll be able to help only when I'm completely done with the contraptions I'm working on. But don't worry partner, I'm done with the first one. Now, it's my turn
to introduce you to this!"

He put a crate on the table and got nine objects out.

"Did you take a week to make glasses for all of us?"

"Haha, Scout, son, those ain't ordinary glasses. Here, wear these."

Scout took the pair Engie was giving him.

"Oh, yeah it's all black in there! So you created glasses with which we can't see?"

Engie got a remote out of his pocket and pressed a button.

"Well, very good job hard-hat... Oh my God! I'm in Badwater Basin now?! Did you teleport me?"

Engie pressed another button.

"Wow, wow, wait, how did I end up in Frontier now?"

"Son, this are glasses that show you a different world. These we could use for trainin' purposes. And now, look in front of you, what d'ya see?"

"Well, I'm in front of the BLU spawn. The cart is there, with its nasty teeth and... Oh my God! The BLU team is in there! BLU Solly is calling for his Medic, BLU Heavy is dancing his Kazotsky kick, classic Heavy... Oh, the Admin is saying the battle will start in 30 seconds! Engie, get me outta here, I have no weapon and I'm gonna get crushed by the cart!"

Engie pressed a button.

"You can take them off, son."

"So, we're going ta use these glasses to train?"

"Absolutely, Demoman! The base is in the middle of the desert so we might as well go a bit further away to train. That way, no lost bullets or rockets will harm anyone."

"Excellent!"

"Yeah, great job mate!"

"These training are the results of the recording of all our fights! In fact, the Administrator was recording us, RED and BLU, so I took all the footage, fed it into a computer and if everythin' goes accordin' to plan, if you shoot a BLU one, then should get hurt and go to respawn eventually."

"As if they were real?"

"Absolutely, Heavy. What I suggest is that we try that tomorrow first thing in the morning. It should work but should there be anything to change, I'll be able to do it on the spot. Is that alright for y'all?"

The mercs nodded.

"Great, then in the afternoon we can have a look at the weapons, Heavy. I'll help you upgrade them."

"Good Engineer, very good indeed. Are there any other announcements?...No...? In that a case, let
us call it a day. We can go back to individual training."

The mercs emptied the room quite noisily. They were all quite amazed by Engie's work.

"Aye, Solly, let's go crack up a cold one!"

"Why?"

"Do we need a reason?"

"Affirmative!"

"Ah... Let's just go!"

"Scout?"

Scout looked back. Spy had called him.

"Yeah?"

"How are you doing? I realised I didn't spend that much time with you lately."

"I'm alright, I just hope we can get Mélanie out of all this."

"We will, and we will do our best. All these people turned up despite their not knowing Mélanie at all."

"Yeah... It's quite strange actually... Remember I was in BLU and y'all were in RED. Lots of you killed me countless times. And yet, you show up for Mélanie and me... Why?"

"Ah..."

Spy lit up a cigarette.

"First, we are all mercenaries. Killing is what we do best. So if a job comes, we will answer the call...."

"Yeah I gues..."

"Follow me."

Spy went to the kitchen and poured some coffee in a cup. He went to the terrasse and Scout followed him.

"There is a second reason why they all came."

"What's that?"

"Oh come on, I'm sure you know."

Scout looked around him. He narrowed his eyebrows.

"I don't know, tell me...please?"

"As I said, we are, or were, all very lonely. Look at Medic, his lost his license after one of his experiments went wrong, Heavy's family live in the middle of nowhere with his mother and sisters, Engie with his 11 PhDs is overqualified for any normal job!"
He took a sip of coffee and resumed his speech.

"Then came Mann Co., finally a proper job for the killing machines we are! Paid to kill and the victims don't really die. So no reason to be arrested. Perfect job. Everything was provided, weapons, ammunition, a very nice wage, everything. And little by little, we discovered each other, on the battlefield and outside. First Heavy and Medic, a natural pair, then the 2 introverts, Sniper and I... Soldier and Demo, the 2 brothers from different mothers and Engie and Pyro, the lost child who found his father again..."

Spy smiled.

"It's as if it was all planned... We all paired up, but being 9, there had to be someone who would be alone, more alone than the rest. And that is you. Thank God you found Mélanie. But I'm still not answering your question, am I?"

Scout shook his head.

"Well, we all bonded, in pairs first but then, we learned what some of us never did learn before: to know each other and in the end... We became..."

"Friends?"

"Maybe even more."

He took a sip of his coffee again.

"And that is why we are all helping you. If they had caught Mundy, you would have helped. If they had caught Engie, you would have helped. If they had caught anyone, the rest would have helped."

"Ah, I get it... I should thank them all I guess..."

"When we definitely get rid of Gray Mann, yes, you will owe us something."

Spy smiled at him. Scout smiled back.

"Thanks Pa'..."

Scout hugged his dad tightly. Lucien threw his cigarette end in the ashtray on the table and wrapped his arms around his son.

"De rien mon fils."

- Author's note -

1) Thanks for reading

2) Please tell me what you thought of this one :3

3) Yeah, Engie just invented VR wayyyy ahead of its time

4) In Chapter 44, the lyrics to Lucien's song is actually from Claude Nougaro (French singer and songwriter, very romantic songs) and the song is called "Tu verras" ("You'll see")

See y'all!
"Are y'all ready?"
"Yes sir!"
"Yeah!"
"Leeeeeet's do iiit!"
"Raus, raus!"

The team was in the middle of the desert, far from the base. Everyone was wearing their training glasses.

"Alrighty then!"

Engie was wearing his glasses as well. He pressed a button on a remote.

"Today, we'll begin with Badwater Basin. We're defending our base, as usual. By the way, I managed to include the Admin's voice as well so she'll warn us as she used to! Any questions?"

"Non Engie, proceed!"

"Alright!"

It took a few moments but now all the mercs were seeing their surroundings as if they were in Badwater Basin.

"Gotta move that gear up!"

"Freedom!"

Demoman sticky-jumped to the front and was soon joined by Solly.

"Poot teleporter here!"

"Alrighty then! Buildin' a teleporter here!"

"MISSION BEGINS IN 60 SECONDS"

"C'mere sweetheart!"

"Soldier, I told you not to call me like zhat... Here is your overheal!"

"MEEEEEDIIIC!"

The German took his crossbow out and, closing one eye, he aimed at Demoman.

"Zhere you go!"

"MISSION BEGINS IN 30 SECONDS!"

"As long as nothing supernatural happens, this should be easy."
Spy was hidden with invisibility. He looked far away and saw something shining, blinding him slightly with the reflection of the sunlight. Sniper's scope. He smiled.

Soldier and Demo were at the front with Heavy and Medic. Pyro stayed near Engie, to deter the enemy Spy.

"10...9...8..."

"By the way guys, I slightly changed the system so that it prepares us better against the robots, we are not fighting 9 mercenaries but 40 replicas!"

"Why didn't ya say that earlier?!"

"It is not a problem, it is actually better as on the day of the battle, we will fight a lot more than 40 of these robots, nice initiative Engie."

"Thanks Spah!"

"MISSION STARTS NOW! FIGHT!"

The alarm rang loudly and resonated throughout the map. The gate opened and the battle began. The first to go out were the enemy Scouts and Soldiers.

The team did their best and soon finished the first few robots.

"I'm ready to charge!"

"Get behind me Doktor!"

- After the battle -

There was a knock at the door. Heavy entered the Medibay. Medic raised his head of his papers.

"Oh, Misha! Sorry I have to finish those reports..."

"Who are you reporting to?"

Ludwig smiled.

"It's true I don't have the Administrator anymore to report on your health but it's nonetheless useful to keep track of the injuries of everyone."

"Ah, right."

Misha sat on the chair in front of Ludwig's desk and waited patiently. He looked around. The lab looked exactly like what it used to be back in the Mann Co days. The only difference was that there was only Archimedes cooing softly. Heavy looked at the bird and smiled. The bird flew from his cage, which was always open, and landed softly on Heavy's shoulder.

"Alright, Misha, I'm all yours now. So, what is it?"

Misha stood up and went to a cupboard. He opened it and took a chessboard.

"Ah, you want to play a game of chess?"

"Da, please."
Ludwig made some space on his desk and Misha put the chessboard on.

- Sniper's van -

"Alright guys, as much as you want me to stay, I'm gonna leave you."

"You can stay, Jay."

"Nah, I gotta train."

"You train too much mate!"

"Nah, it's fine. Today I'll focus on my speed."

"As you wish, Jérémy, but please don't push yourself too far."

"Don't worry, Pa'."

Jeremy opened the van's backdoor and jumped out.

"See ya later!"

"Good luck, Jay!"

The young man went back to the base and Mundy shut the van's backdoor.

"So, got any plans for tonight?"

"Well, I would have liked a walk in the desert. Would you like to join me?"

"Yeah."

Lucien put his vest on while Mundy grabbed his hat and both exited the van. They started walking. It was the afternoon and the sun was not as aggressive as it usually was during the day.

"I like the desert."

"I thought you were more of a city kind of person."

"Well, it's true I love cities. But the calm of the desert you can't find there."

"True."

"Especially if in all the cities you could live in, it's Paris you happen to be in."

Lucien grabbed Mundy's arm. Mundy smiled under his hat.

"What do you really think of Paris, Mundy. I've never asked."

"At the beginning I was a bit lost. I had never lived in a city so busy, so crowded... It's like a bee hive!"

"Yes, it's true."

"But I was with you. With you and Jay and it felt like I had my own family so I didn't want to be anywhere else in the world."
Lucien smiled.

"Don't you regret the wild life in Australia?"

"At times, I miss it, yeah, it's true."

"Would you want us to travel there?"

"What? You? The man in the suit with watches as expensive as the whole of Australia?!"

"Oui, himself."

"I'd love to but Australia is so different from Paris... I'm not sure if you'd like it there..."

Lucien stopped walking. They were now quite far from the base. He took Mundy's hand in his gloved hands.

"You'll be with me so I can't imagine why I wouldn't like it."

He pushed himself on the tip of his toes and Mundy bent down, to meet his lips.

Mundy broke the kiss and bent on his knees immediately. Lucien looked at him with questions in his eyes. Mundy put a hand on Lucien's mouth and pulled him down. He put a finger on his own lips as if to say to Lucien to stay quiet.

Lucien could hear it now.

His eyes opened wide. Mundy put an arm behind his back and made his kukhri ready. Lucien slid his hand in his vest and pulling a knife out, he made himself ready for combat.

**CLINK-CLONK-CLINK-CLONK**

- **Author's note** -

Hey guys! Thanks for reading and sorry for the delay, work is taking lots of my time!

Hope you enjoyed that chapter and let me know what you thought of it! :D
"We need to warn the others.", whispered Mundy to Lucien.

Before Lucien could answer, the metallic orchestra stopped.

"WE ARE DELIVERING A MESSAGE."

Mundy and Lucien stood back up. The robots were a dozen of metres away from them. One of them extended his hand forward. It contained a white enveloppe. The other robots stepped back, as if to show they were inoffensive. Mundy looked at Lucien. The latter put his knife back in his vest and walked forward.

"Good day to you robots. What is this?"

Mundy was impressed at how fast Lucien could resume his usual cold-blooded attitude. That certainly must have helped back in the days when he was in the international spying business...

"We are delivering a message."

"I might not be a native English speaker but I understood that. What is it about?"

The robots did not answer. Lucien took the enveloppe from he robot's hand. He put his hand in his vest, got his knife out and tore the enveloppe open with a sharp clean cut. With a trick of his fingers, he folded the knife back and put it back in his vest pocket. He read out loud.

"Dear mercenaries, the battle will take place tomorrow at these coordinates. Sincerely, Gray Mann."

Lucien's thoughts raced fast in his head. Tomorrow, coordinates, must get Engie to tell us where that is, are we ready? it is of no importance, it's tomorrow... tomorrow we shall defend Mélanie and, well...

"Alright robots, we got the info, now leave us. We need to get ready!", shouted Mundy from where he was still standing. His voice broke Lucien's train of thoughts. He nodded to the robots as if to agree with Mundy and thank them. He turned on his heels and joined Mundy as the metallic cling-clong started again and this time, it faded away.

"Are you alright, Lu'?"

"Oui, they did not come to attack."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Well, when I got my knife out of my vest to tear the enveloppe, none of them readied their weapons."

"Ah, I guess you're right... So, we need to warn the others."

"Indeed, let us move."

- Base, that evening, meeting room -

"If everyone is here, then let us proceed. Engie, the floor is yours."
"Thank you Spah."

Engie stood in front of everyone.

"So fellas, the robots told Spah that we're gonna fight tomorrow and the location is this."

He pressed a button on a remote and the screen switched on. It showed the desert and zoomed in, again and again...

"That's the middle of nowhere!"

"Well, not exactly Scout..."

"Yeah, see those rocks at the East and West? That's a good spot for me."

"Absolutely Sniper, it's a valley and those rocky hills ain't too far away so that'll do for ya."

"Apart from those hills, nothing of tactical interest in the region?"

"Well, apart from the couple rocks here and there, no, Soldier, nothin'."

Silence fell in the room for a couple seconds that seemed like eternity.

"Hey Engie!"

"Yeah, Demo?"

"What about our weapons? Are they improved?"

"Ah, excellent point, yeah, they are! We worked hard with Heavy and we came up with improvements for all of you. It's mainly augmented ammo capacity and firing rates for most of us plus an additional perk for everyone. For example, you, Sniper, your Machina rifle has a magazine now so your reload time should be less long. On top of that, I managed to improve the barrel so that the bullets no longer leave a trail behind them. That way, the robots won't be able to tell where you are."

"Ah, thanks mate, great job!"

"You're welcome. I have all your weapons in boxes down in mah garage with an instruction sheet for each of them where I explain what we've improved. You're welcome to come and collect them after this meeting. In addition to that, I improved the earpieces that we're gonna use. They're much smaller and operate for much bigger distances now."

"Excellent job Engie!"

"Why, thanks Soldier. And I think I said everything I wanted to say so, thanks partners."

Spy got up his chair and went in front of the big table while Engie resumed his seat.

"Bien, thanks Engie. You have been working hard with Heavy and we shall appreciate the changes in our weapons tomorrow. Right, gentlemen, are there any other things to say?"

Silence fell in the room.

"No?"
"Yeah, please!"

Scout sprang up his chair.

"Oui, Scout?"

"Please, guys, I... Erm..."

He wanted to ask his colleagues to do their best. He wanted to beg them. He thought about Mélanie. If they failed, he would lose her. She would fade away like a mirage in the desert. The thought paralysed his speech. He suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Do not worry Scout. We will win."

Heavy's voice was unusually soft. He smiled at the young man. Medic stood up in his turn. He adjusted his glasses on his nose.

"Do not worry, Scout. The robots don't stand a chance."

"Aye, you said it lad!" Demo sprang up his feet and raised his bottle up.

"Yeah, we're gonna get them, Son!" Said Engie.

Scout looked around him. All the mercs were standing up and showing their determination as well as their friendship to the youngest mercenary. The doubt that was eating him from the inside vanished in an instant.

- Engie's garage -

"Mmmh-mmmh?"

"Yeah, Py', alright, gotta read you a story."

Both Engie and Pyro sat on the couch. Pyro gave Engie a book. Engie cleared his throat and started reading. Pyro loved how Engie read books. He always had the right tone of voice and each character would have their own different voice of course. Pyro loved it.

Engie soon finished reading.

"Mhmm?"

"Yeah, Py'?"

"Mnh mhh mmm-mmmh?"

"If I'm worried? Why? D'you mean about t'morrow?"

Pyro nodded.

"Nah, it'll be fine. We're all tops of our fields. It will not be easy, true, but I have faith in us, Py'. And so should you."

- MediBay -

"Ludwig?"

"Ja?"
Ludwig had a spacious private room in the Medibay. There was enough space there to have a fireplace, a couch and further away, some shelves that he had filled with books and the chess set. Both Ludwig and Misha were on the couch. Ludwig was sitting with his head on Misha's shoulder. They were both facing the dancing flames of the fireplace.

"You know, when I first saw you in the Mann Co. bus..."

"Yes?"

"You were reading a book, 'The Art of Lobotomy'..."

Ludwig smiled.

"I wasn't scared."

"You never are anyway."

"Nyet, I have my fears, as any other man. But I fear no man."

"Oh."

"I wasn't scared, I looked at you and, well, I was staring at you. I couldn't help it. You looked very focused, with almost no facial expression. Your glasses were reflecting the sunshine in my direction and, well your eyes were shining as well..."

He took Ludwig's hand in his.

"When the others were looking at you like a crazy scientist, I was admiring your dedication..."

Ludwig had closed his eyes but his smile was remaining.

"Then I got to know you better. On the battlefield I would always get your support. A crossbow arrow when I was out of your Medigun range, an ubercharge or crits..."

Misha sighed. He stopped talking for a moment to appreciate the situation.

"You can go on, I was liking zhis."

"You aren't asleep?"

"Nein, I was closing my eyes to listen to you better."  

"Ah, I see. But I stopped because I had a question for you and I thought you were asleep. But since you're awake, maybe you can answer."

"Ja, go ahead."

"When did you realise that you liked me?"

"Ah... Vell... Not in zhe Mann Co. bus I'm afraid. I was too busy reading. And at zhat time I didn't know I could love a man. So it came much later. I know zhat I can be a crazy scientist sometimes. Vell, zhat's how science progresses! Medecine is an experimental science which means someone has to try it to see what works and what doesn't! But I'm going away from zhe subject. Ja, uhm... Let me zhink... Ah, at first you vere a good colleague on zhe battlefield. You zhen became a friend when you came to see me regularly here. But zhere was a moment when I felt somezhing was different. Ja, somezhing I thought I saw in your eyes. At first I vas terrified. And a bit lost. I had never felt zhat for..."
a man."

He paused for a moment.

"And then I saw that special thing in your eyes more and more. I wondered if you felt the same.
But I thought to myself 'If he comes to see me that often despite my attitude and reputation here, he
must at least like me, a bit.'"

He smiled.

"And then I became certain. What I saw in your eyes, was my reflection. And especially once I was
not wearing my glasses, I saw it... I saw my pupils dilate in yours... And then I knew. I felt my heart
beat faster, butterflies in my stomach, the world around was of no matter. All those symptoms
confirmed my suspicions. I had fallen in love with you and you with me."

-- Scout's room --

Scout was lying on his bed. He was trying to visualise the battle.

*How many robots will there be? No idea... Will we be able to take them all down... Even if we do,
will we finally be done with Gray Mann? What if he takes Mélanie anyway? What if we can't protect
her?*

A knock at the door broke his train of thoughts.

"Yeah?"

"It's me, may I?"

"Yeah, yeah o'course."

Spy opened the door and entered.

"I hope I'm not bothering you."

"No, no, it's fine I was just..."

"Anticipating tomorrow's fight?" Spy completed Scout's sentence as he closed the door behind him.
The young man sighed.

"Yeah..."

Spy came close to the bed and pulling his trousers with his delicate fingers, he sat down next to his
son.

"I know, Jérémy. Before I knocked, I knew exactly what you were thinking about."

"How?"

"Remember in Paris when you went afyer Mélanie on your own?"

"Yeah."

"As I was running to get to you, I was overthinking and trying to anticipate everything that could
possibly happen."

Spy put his arm around Scouts shoulders. The young man let his head rest on his father's shoulder.

"I imagined everything. The number of enemies, their strengths, their weaknesses, how to take them down as quickly as possible."

Scout was listening very carefully.

"I didn't even think that I could find you on the ground, under their kicks. So when I did indeed find you in that state, I lost my mind."

He paused.

"You know, as a Spy, we are obviously trained to kill. But more importantly, we are trained to not kill when it is not required or not part of the mission."

He smiled.

"I screwed the rules."

"You what?"

"Isn't that what you say when you disobey rules? 'I screwed the rules'?"

Scout smiled.

"Nah Pa', you just say 'Screw the rules'!"

"Ah, fair enough, English is a messy language."

"Because French makes sense?"

"Of course it does, young man. We have rules..."

"And exceptions to them, and exceptions to the exceptions..."

"You're really speaking like Mundy! Sometimes it's really like I'm speaking to him!"

Both smiled... and sighed.

"Anyway, I just wanted to spend some time with you. I knew you'd be anxious. If you want, I can bring a mattress here and sleep next to you."

"Nah it's fine, I'm not a kid anymore Pa'."

"True, you're not a kid... You are my kid and that's why I care."

"Merci Papa." [Thanks, dad]

Spy stood up and went towards the door.

"De rien, mon fils. Now, you should try and relax or go to sleep." [You're welcome, son.]

"Yeah, don't worry, and thanks a lot."

Spy closed the door behind him.
Spy knocked on the van's backdoor.

"C'm'in!"

He opened and elegantly jumped in.

"So, how is he?"

"Anxious, as expected, but I think he will be fine."

"You sure?"

"Of course not. But in a way, it's his fight. He has to experience this alone. I suggested to sleep near him and he refused. That's good, he's growing fast."

Mundy smiled.

"Why do you smile, Bushman?"

Lucien sat next to him on the couch.

"Because you've grown too."

"How so? Do I have more grey hair?"

"Nah, you idiot, that's not what I meant. I mean, a couple years ago, you weren't sure you had a kid. Then you knew it was true. And in only a couple years you've grown to be a good father."

Lucien smiled.

"The thing is, when I made that infant, I was not ready to father him. I wasn't in the best of positions to. Being a spy, one is rarely at home... But now I found all those missing pieces of me. I found you, I found him and I truly am myself, a spy."

"I see Mister is having la belle vie."

Lucien laughed.

"Ah, now you're getting good at French!"

"Well you know, I'm living in Paris."

Mundy put his arm around his lover. Lucien removed his balaclava and gloves.

"Oh I see, Monsieur lives in Paris and is fluent in French..."

"Ah, I see Mister is interested..."

"More than that, truly, I am seduced..."

Mundy looked down. Lucien raised his head that he had rested on Mundy's shoulder.

"What d'you reckon for tomorrow?"

"It will be hard."
Lucien lit a cigarette.

"It will be difficult and it will be unfair."

"What do you mean?"

"They will outnumber us, as always and with no doubt they will take Mélanie anyway."

Mundy removed his arm from around his lover.

"Wait, are you saying we'll fight for nothin'?"

"Most certainly."

Mundy opened wide eyes.

"Wait a minute, why are we fighting then?"

"To defeat Gray Mann."

"But you're saying we won't!"

Lucien sighed.

"My head says we will not, my heart wants us to do it anyway."

"Then, shut your head and listen to your heart. We have to make it tomorrow. Though I have no idea how to make sure that Gray Mann won't come back."

"I might have an idea."

"That doesn't involve killing the poor bloke?"

"Oui. I think we can say with certainty that that man likes papers, contracts and the like, no?"

"Yeah."

"So if we indeed manage to defeat him, he will have to sign this."

Lucien took some papers out of his inner vest pocket.

"Whot's that?"

"A contract, 2 copies, one for him and one for Mélanie. It states that Gray Mann will renounce any attempt to get Mélanie to him in any way, or any of her immediate or further descendents."

"Oh, good thinkin'! Uh wait, you said immediate descendents, do you think there'll be any?"

"Mundy, I would love that."

"You'd be an old grandpa."

"You too and in any case, have I not always been an old grandpa?"

"True, true... But I love you, even if you're a grandpa."

"Me too, mon amour." [My love]
-- Author's notes --

Thank you patient people :D

As always please let me know what you think, it really helps me go forward :)

See you around for the next one!
"Welcome mercenaries!"

Gray Mann was talking from a distance with loud speakers. His voice echoed on the rocks here and there.

"We are here today to settle a matter. Should I win this, I will get Mélanie and the company my father created and my two idiotic brothers died for."

He paused. There was a light wind, from time to time. The ground was hot and the wind was carrying some dust.

"Should you win, I will leave and not bother Mélanie anymore. Is that agreed?"

"Non!"

Spy stepped forward.

"What?"

"In case we win, we want you to sign these documents that state you will renounce any attempt to get Mélanie and her immediate and further descendents."

Silence fell for a moment.

"So, Gray Mann, what do you say?"

"I agree to these terms."

"Right."

"I have here 666 robots, they will attack in waves. There will be no pause between the waves. Defeat them and I shall sign your documents. Are you ready?"

"We have always been."

"Let's start!"

Loud sirens played from the vessel and a group of robot pyros approached, charging with the flames of their flamethrowers.

"Pyros gentlemen!"

There was no time to think, the battle had already started. The first few waves were easily defeated. Then came a new type of foe.

"Oh good Lord."

A wave of giant demoknights came charging forward. They managed to separate and isolate Medic.

"Help!"

Heavy activated his rage. On his minigun, the bullets would push back the enemies for a moment. He managed to deviate the trajectory of one of the giant demomen.
"Soldier, Demo, go help Medic! I will try and keep the other ones busy with the rest of the team."

"Yes Sir!"

"Aye!"

Spy ran back to meet with Sniper.

"Put this on one of your arrows and shoot it at that Demoknight who's harrassing Medic, quick!"

Spy had cloak back and put the microsappers next to Sniper's feet.

"Thanks mate."

Sniper didn't know where to look to thank his colleague as he was cloak but looking down his rocky high vantage point, only saw a circle of thin dust where his colleague landed, like a pebble in a pond.

The battle continued and it became clear the robots were targetting Medic.

"What do zhey have against me?!"

"They know you're a tactical target, if you fall, we all do eventually!"

"Ach, ja but... Oh scheisse!"

A robot sniper has shot through the tube that connects the medigun and the back pack. As a result, Medic could not use it anymore. He threw it away and rushed quickly to the dispenser to fill his pockets with syringes for his crossbow. He could now fire a dozen syringes before having to refill, but it was a single-syringe refill, not a magazine.

"Alright, I don't have my gun anymore but if you need heals, please stand still for an instant and if you jump, don't strafe too much!"

"Aye, lad!"

It became very difficult for Medic to keep up with his teammates. On top of that, he had lost his ability to give crits or übercharges to his teammates. At this point, he felt useless but nonetheless kept fighting.
I have to go on for Scout but above all for Misha.

"Tank approaching ladies!"

Soldier shouted in his military-like voice.

"MMH-MMAMMMh!"

"Sorry Pyro, I don't have crits, you'll have to rely only on your Phlogistinator!"

"Wait lad, we're gonna tae help!"

The first tank got defeated thanks to the fact all the mercs focused their attention to it. But now a line of three of them appeared.

"Look fellas, more tanks!" Engie shouted while hitting his sentry with his wrench frantically.

Each of them were carrying a bomb and were heading to drop it to the base.

All the mercs were focusing again on the tank until...

"Aaaaah!"

Medic's voice tore Heavy's ears and heart. He turned on his heels and saw a robot spy. He lost his mind seeing his colleague on the ground with a knife planted on his back.

"I spy with my little eye! Pyro, help!"

Pyro went away from the tank and as he was spychecking, he saw Medic's body on the ground.

"MM-MMAMM!"

He put a great effort to try and reveal the spies. It turned out there were only a few of them.

Heavy had run to Medic's body.

"Are you alright, what can I do?"

Medic's body was lifeless. Heavy's eyes widened in shock. His heart stopped beating for a second.

"ENGIE!"

"Yeah?"

"Do we have the respawn chamber?"

Before Engie could answer, Medic came out of it and answered.

"Yes, ve do!"

Spy interrupted the moment of relief.

"Well, a moment has passed, back to work!"

Medic ran to join Heavy again. The tanks were very hard to defeat without the extra crits that Medic used to give. Engie kept on moving his sentry closer and closer to the base as the tanks were progressing. Demo had depleted nearly all his sticky bombs and Soldier, his rockets. Engie hadn't
brought his dispenser up. As a result, only the highly mobile classes could go for a refill, namely the Demo, Soldier and Scout. Heavy switched to his shotgun and soon, his bear fists. Pyro also got his powerjack out.

"Hey, mates, you got crit heavies and übercharged medics coming after the last tank."

The earpieces Engie designed were a lifesaver.

"Roger! Ladies, I'll help Sniper with those, you stay on the last tank."

All the mercs were going at that last tank with melee weapons, faster and faster as the tank was closing the gap to the base. They finally destroyed the last one.

"Run, Scout, go and help Soldier and Sniper while we get some ammunition!"

"Yeah Spy! Soldier, I'm on my way! How we doin' there?"

Sniper answered.

"Charged medics are dead, only a few heavies lef- uh oh..."

"What?"

"Mates, there are lots of crit demos coming in the distance, it's going to rain pipes!"

"Scheisse! Wait, Engie, we can maybe repair zhis quickly?"

"I'm afraid it'll only be duct tape or some'in like that."

"Anyzhing to make it work!"

The mercs regrouped to fight in the rain of crit pipes. Scout would wait for the Demomen to reload to hit them with his fan'o'war. Soldier was out of danger most of the time as he would jump and open his base jumper. He only had to make sure his timing was right to land and take off again. With his rage, heavy could turn some of the pipes back. Pyro was busy airblasting the pipes away from the Engie's sentry. Spy would place sappers on them to slow them down as the Demomen's heads looked more and more like swiss cheese thanks to Sniper's work. It only took a minute or so for Engie to fix the medigun's tube. Medic then jumped in front of the Demomen as they were finishing to reload.

"Medic, get back!" Shouted Heavy.

"NEIN!"

As the Demomen raised their grenade launchers and pulled the trigger, Medic, standing proud and very self-confident flipped a switch on his super medigun. He opened his big bright red shield. The crit pipes exploded on it in a very thick black cloud of smoke. When the cloud disappeared, Heavy (as for the rest of the team) saw the white labcoat still standing and moving under the wind.

"Hahahahaaa! Try again robots!"

Heavy ran to stand between Medic and the shield. With the help of the team, they defeated the Demomen easily.

There was a moment of silence in the desert.
"Is that it, Gray Mann? Well, sign'em papers now!"

"Mister Scout" The metallic voice of Gray Mann could be heard from miles away with the loud speakers. "This is the end, yes, FOR YOU!"

In the distance appeared a line of demoknights. They were only 30 or so. Behind them, a line of Pyros. Then soldiers, and demomen, heavies followed by their medics and finally snipers. The robots were marching in a very organised manner. Another group, identical to this one appeared on the right and left. Then 3 others from behind.

"Mein Gott... we are surrounded..."

"Ladies, it has been an honor serving with you!"

"Aye, lad, if I wasn't the man I was... hiccup I'd bloody kiss ye..."

"Gentlemen, this is not over yet!"

"C'mon guys, we can do this!"

"Y'all ready? This one's gonna be tough to- Spah sappin' mah dispenser! And he sapped the respawn chamber! Aaah!"

Engie got backstabbed. Pyro ran to him and his equipment and got his melee out and shouted in horror.

"What's the matter Pyro? Get rid of the sappers, quick!"

He dropped his melee weapon down and dropped to his knees. He had the powerjack in other words, no way to break the sappers on the dispenser or the respawn chamber...

Medic understood and gasped.

"Ve are out of Engie!"

"Whot?!"

"Pyro doesn't have anyzjing to break zhe sappers."

"Is not good."

"Zhen, if we die..."

"We die for good?!"

"I'm afraid so..."

"No time to think. Now is time to fight."

"Well said Heavy, we will deal with the casualties after the battle."

"Nein! Let me go and see him. I've fully overhealed you."

Sniper had climbed down his vantage down and regrouped with the rest of the group.

"Aye, let Medic go, Spy."
"Alright, alright. But keep your crossbow with you."

"Ja."

Medic turned to Heavy. He raised to the tip of his toes to reach his ear.

"I love you Misha. Good luck."

Heavy's eyes filled with tears. He lowered his head.

"Be careful."

"Ja danke Heavy. Give me a shout when you need an arrow."

"Promise me."

Medic looked at Heavy. He saw the tears in his eyes.

"I promise I'll be careful."

"Nyet, not that. Do you remember?"

"Vhat?"

"The promise I made to you and you made to me."

"Ja, I do. I promised to never leave you."

"Now, promise."

"Misha, I promise to never leave you."

"Thanks. I promise to never leave you either Ludwig. Now, go."

Medic ran to Engie's body.

"Now, Gentlemen, ready your weapons."

"That's gonna be a hard one..."

Sniper threw down his rifle and readied his submachine gun and kukhri.

"Yeah, mate, but we don't have any choice."

*Yes there is a choice, thought Scout. You all could surrender. I won't, cause of Mel'. But you all could. Yet you don't.*

Meanwhile Demo had traced a circle with stickies around them. He dropped his sticky launcher on the ground.

"I thought I'd never get tae use this old weapon again."

He got a pack of dynamite sticks and starting swinging it.

"Spy, give us yer lighter."

Spy nodded and threw a small silver object to Scout as he was standing between him and Demo.
Scout looked down at the object for a second.

*He always carries this old thing everywhere with him.* Scout thought. *The silver one with a lady engraving- Oh God, I never realised...* He gasped. *It's Ma on the lighter! He had Ma engraved on his lighter all along! And his Ambassador as well!*

"Scout, the lighter."

"Ah, yeah, yeah, sorry Demo."

Demo lit the dynamite sticks and swung them in his hand.

"I'm gonna blow them all up! I swear on me mum, if I need tae lose a hand like Da', I will!"

He threw it. The explosion blew up the middle of the first group. He lit more and continued throwing them among the robots. Metal parts flew in all directions until Demo depleted all his stock of dynamite. By that time, some robots were on the sticky bombs. Demo picked his sticky launcher off the ground and clicked a button. More metal parts danced in the air.

"I did it! Engie's back! I'm staying vizh him as he is still a bit fragile but the respawn chamber should be fixed anytime."

"Excellent job Medic!"

"Danke Soldier, I'll try and help from here vizh my crossbow."

"Roger that!"

"Watch out for the pipes mates!"

The pipes started flying as Soldier jumped up to spray rockets everywhere around his colleagues. From up there, he saw a small group of mercenaries surrounded by what seemed like a never ending caterpillar of robots. Scout ran in the swarm of robots and, doging carefully their attacks, hit as many as he could with his fan'o'war. Demo equipped his Eyelander and shield and was charging into the robots. Spy had an advantage in crowded spaces. He could walk around and put his sappers on lots of robots in a very short amount of time before cloaking and appearing again far from the previous place to sap lots of robots again.

"Help!"

Medic was waving at the mercs who all turned and focused their efforts in his direction. They managed to open a breach through which they saw both Medic and Engie running to them. Engie was carrying something on his shoulder.

"Out o'my way! Out o'my way!"

When they got near Heavy, Engie threw the box on the ground. A sentry sprang up and started to help clear out the robots. He called back the dispenser and respawn chamber to deploy them next to him and his colleagues.

"The respawn chamber is fixed fellas!"

"Cheers Engie, good job lad!"

"Thanks mister."
Medic ran behind Heavy.

"Ready to charge!"

"Now doktor!"

Medic flipped a switch and the glowing crit bullets flew, piercing the metal wall in front of the mercenaries. But soon...

"Oh scheisse, not again!"

This time the tube broke for good. Medic threw it away and got rid of his backpack. He readied his crossbow.

"Come close to the dispenser if you need heals or stand still bitte! My medigun broke for good now!"

"Oh, Doc', gimme your crossbow, I just thought of something, Sniper, you think you're done with your Machina right?"

"Yeah mate, you can do whatever you want with it, it's no good for close combat."

"Alrighty then!"

Engie grabbed the Machina and a screwdriver from his pocket. Medic gave him his crossbow and got his bonesaw out.

"Let me know when you're done with it."

"I will!"

Medic ran to help his colleagues.

"Medic! Lad, I'm standin' still, could I get one of your syringes?"

"Not now sorry, I can't heal you, where are you Demo, I can't even see you!"

"Look on the ground! I lost one of me legs!"

The mercs all stopped for a second when they heard it.

"I'm joining you to escort you to the dispenser!"

"Aye, thanks Solly, I can't really walk or stand up... And I'm out of scrumpy!"

Soldier jumped to Demo, he cleared the area around them with rockets.

"DAMN YOU ROBOTS, YOU TAKE AMERICAN JOBS AND NOW DEMO'S LEG!"

He landed and took Demo.

"Hold on tight, Demo."

He aimed his Liberty Launcher to the ground and fired. He deployed the parachute and glided to the Engie's nest. Medic had ran back to help Demo.

"Mein Gott Demo, you didn't exaggerate, they really blew your leg off!"
"Aye, and I'm starting to feel some pain."

"Ja, vell, it's a miracle you haven't felt anyzhing until now! Zhe vound is nasty!"

"I don't feel pain in me leg Doc', it's here, in my belly!"

"Vait, vhat? Zhat's zhe liver! You- Ah, I see, here, take zhis."

Medic handed a bottle of hydrogen peroxide.

"What's this Doc'?"

"Vell, I don't have any ethanol vizh me, but zhis should vork."

Demo opened the opened and smelled.

"Doesn't smell like scrumpy or Scottish whiskey..."

He took a sip.

"I'm sorry to not have any of zhese!"

"Aye, fair enough."

He gulped down the liquid while Medic was taking care of his wound.

"Medic, here is your crossbow, I fixed Sniper's scope on it, it'll be easier to aim that way. I also changed the overall way it works. Now there is a small capsule of pressured air, it boosts up the speed at which your syringes fly. In other words, they fly straighter and farther now!"

"Dankeschön, Engie! Demo, I'm afraid I haven't got anyzhing to replace your leg..."

"Partner, put this on."

Engie handed Demo a metallic leg.

"It looks more like a deer's leg than a man's..."

"Ah, sorry fellow, I only have the robots metal scraps to work with..."

Demo put it and adjusted it.

"Thanks lad! Nah, it's perfect, look!"

He jumped about to test it.

"Oh ho ho!"

"I put a spring in there so jumping shouldn't feel too weird."

Demo unsheathed his eyeland and equipped his shield.

"HAVE ATEM LAAADS!"

He went back to work as if nothing happened.

Soon the mercenaries could see beyond the robots. Gray Mann and his obsession with his father's
business had ruined the landscape. He turned the desert into a robot graveyard. Cold gray metal scraps replaced the orange dry ground and spread around the mercs, nearly as far as the eye could see.

"We're crushin' ya Mann, ready your pen for those papers!"

"Ah, I see, you think I can only send big robots, or tanks? GET READY FOR THIS!"

There were only a few robots left at this points.

"What in Sam Hill...?"

"What the hell is that?!"

"Tank!"

"I can't believe me eye!"

"It's a tank with... sentries?"

Spy ran towards the tank and cloaked.

"This should be easy gentlemen, just wait for me to sap the sent- what the hell is that?! I can't sap the sentries on this tank and I'm running out of cloak!"

Sniper had run after Spy and jumped in front of him as the invisibility disappeared. As he jumped, one of the sentries turned to face Spy but shot its bullets to Sniper.

"NOOON!"

"I don't have a shield, zhis vill be difficult..."

"Get behind me Doctor!"

Spy managed to run back carrying Sniper and laid him behind the Engie's sentry.

"Mundy! Mundy! Talk to me! Say something!"

"Lu'... I love you..."

"Non, non, non! You stay with me, STAY WITH ME GODDAMNIT! MUNDY!"

Sniper closed his eyes.

"MEDIC, PLEASE!"

Medic had run back, he knelt down next to Spy and starting getting busy with him.

"How is he Doctor? Will he live"

"Vell, zhat's a lot of bullets, damn zhat sentry! I'll try and remove zhem, I'll start vizh zhe ones on his chest, zhey're zhe most urgent ones."

"But do you think he will be ok?"

"I don't know yet Spy, go fight vizh zhe others, you're useless here."
"I can't leave him!"

Medic put his hands on Spy's shoulders and pulled him up. Both were standing up now. He looked at the Frenchman from above his glasses. He was sweating heavily.

"Listen Spy, he jumped in front of that sentry so you could live and fight so now go, make it count, otherwise, he took bullets for nothing."

Spy still looked terrified. He closed his eyes for a second.

"Très bien."

He pulled his mask up and threw it on the ground. He undid his vest button and removed his tie. He took out his revolver and ran back to the front.

"Méediic!"

"Demo, I can't, if I go to you now, we might lose Sniper!"

"Lad, it's Heavy, he's tryin' tae absorb all the damage from the sentries but he'll collapse any moment now!"

Medic felt a knife go through his chest. He took the crossbow from the ground and turned his back to aim. As he closed one eye to aim, he saw Heavy's hands drop the minigun's handle, his body bending forward. His knees touched the ground first and his torso collapsed soon after. Medic's arrow flew past, but it was too late.

"Mein Gott..."

Soldier jumped to Heavy, aimed his rocket launcher down and fired. He landed next to Medic.

"Danke Soldier."

Soldier nodded and flew back to the tank.

"The caterpillar tracks are broken, the tank is moving much slower now!"

Medic was sweating heavily. He got rid of his labcoat and threw it on the ground next to him. He rolled up his sleeves and adjusted his glasses. I must remove the bullets from Sniper quickly and then get going with Misha... Ach, scheisse! God damnit, God damn these robots, God damn Mann Co!

"MMH-MM MMMH!"

"SCREAMIN' EAGLES!"

Scout was doing his best to attract the fires of the mounted sentries in his direction and to dodge them. But despite his efforts, the mercenaries and himself took some blows in.

"Doc, the teleporter's up and leads directly back to the base. I'll help you carry Snipah back, let's go!"

"But Misha!"

"It's a two-way teleporter, we'll come back for him."

"Alright, let me just put a syringe to everyone."
Medic took his crossbow and aimed.

"Thanks Medic!"

"Aye thanks lad!"

"Thanks Doc'"

"Mh-Mmmh!"

Medic finally aimed at Spy's silhouette. He was fighting like a devil. Taking the blows in but, because of the rage and helplessness he was feeling, he couldn't feel any pain.

"Alrighty then, let's go!"

--Medibay--

"Danke Engineer, you can go back help zhe team, I'll do my best here."

They had put Sniper and Heavy on two hospital beds in the Medibay. Medic grabbed a stool and sat to continue removing bullets from Sniper. Engie put a hand on Medic's shoulder.

"You're gonna make it Doc', we're all sure of it."

"Danke. Hopefully I vill."

--Battlefield--

"Hehee! We got it guys! The tank is down!"

"GOD BLESS AMERICA!"

"Now, Mann, come here and sign them papers!"

There was silence in the desert, or rather, the metal graveyard.

"Alright, alright. I shall come."

The mercenaries regrouped. An armoured vehicle approached. It stopped around ten metres away from the mercs. A door opened. It was him, Gray Mann himself. Still in a gray suit, still the white straight hair, still the very old man. And still defeated but now, for good.

Spy threw his revolver to the ground. He removed his gloves and walked forward, his vest flying behind him. Once he got in front of Gray Mann....

"Spy, stop! What are you doing!?"

He had grabbed Gray Mann by the neck with his left hand and pinned him to the vehicle's door. Mann was struggling to breathe.

"See, as spies we never remove our gloves, to never leave a trace of our identity on our victims."

"Spy, it's not worth it lad, the old man is already dying, he's so old and has nothing left!"

Spy continued speaking calmly.

"You wanted to take my son's fiancée. Now you took one of my best friends. And you took the man
of my life."

He squeezed Gray Mann's neck tighter.

"Today I want you to remember. I want this moment to be engraved in your memory...."

He put his right hand in his vest pocket and took his knife out.

".... as well as your body."

"Papa, NON!"

Scout was holding his father's right arm.

"We just need him to go away. He... uhm... he signs the papers and then we go home."

Spy's eyes never left Gray Mann's.

"S'il te plaît, Papa." [Please, Dad.]

"Mon fils, he has to pay." [My son]

"Yeah but then what? You kill him and then you go to prison? And then I'm alone again? And Mundy?"

Spy's eyes widened at the mention of Mundy's name. He dropped the knife and the grip on Mann's neck. The old man dropped down and tried to catch his breath back, coughing from time to time. Spy put a hand in his pocket and got the papers out. He knelt down.

"Sign."

Mann looked up at Spy. He took a pen out.

Gray Mann.

Spy took the papers back, folded them and put them in his pocket. Out of nowhere, he punched Gray Mann so fast, even Scout didn't see it coming. A tooth flew out of Mann's mouth. Spy extended his arm and took the tooth from the ground. Still kneeling down, he showed it to Gray Mann, holding it close to the man's injured face for a second. He then threw it in the air, got his knife out and sliced through. He stood up and turned on his heels. Mann looked down. He heard something hitting the ground. Two halves of his tooth.

-- Author's notes --

Thanks for your patience guys, as always, let me know what you think please!

Someone complained about the lack of Heavy/Medic content. I tried to put more of it here and in the next chapters, sorry about that, dear readers.

See y'all around :)
"Thank you, Docteur."

"No worries, it's only a few scratches you have compared with Sniper."

"How is he?"

Medic had just changed Spy's plaster on his arms and also a bandage on his left thigh. Spy put his pair of trousers back. Medic looked at Sniper, still unconscious on the hospital bed.

"Stable, which in his case is very good. He took so many bullets in..."

Spy looked around. It was only him and Medic in the room, if one neglected the mattress that Lucien put on the floor. He had spent the past days and nights next to his lover. He looked miserable.

"Ludwig, I am truly sorry for Mikhail."

Medic looked at Spy. He was surprised. He lowered his head and, removing his glasses with one hand, he rubbed his eyes.

"Danke, Lucien."

"How is he, Mikhail?"

"Same as Mundy I'm afraid..."

Silence fell for a couple seconds.

Beep...Beep...

"You know what? I feel useless..."

"Don't say that, you are the most useful person for them now."

"Nein, I mean, I did all I could of course but I can't help thinking what if my medigun hadn't broken..."

"Ah..."

Lucien lit a cigarette.

"We have a saying in French: 'Avec des si, on mettrait Paris en bouteille'. That means 'With ifs, we would be able to put Paris in a bottle'."

He smiled.

"Don't have any regrets, you couldn't and you still can't do more than what you did."

"How can you smile?"

"I don't know."
He paused and looked at his cigarette.

"I don't know how to feel, Ludwig. I should be happy for Jérémy and yet I can't because Mundy is not here to share it with me."

Ludwig nodded.

"I understand. Excuse me for a second, I vill be right back."

Lucien nodded. He sat next to Mundy and watched his chest go up and down to the sound of the beeps. A few minutes later, Ludwig opened the door with a tray in his hand, two cups and a kettle on it. He sat next to Lucien and poured him some tea.

"I guess you prefer coffee over tea but given our state, we'd better stick to herbal tea. It soothes the nerves."

Lucien nodded and took his cup.

"Merci, Ludwig."

"Bitte."

They took a couple sips before resuming their chat.

"How is your son then, relieved I guess?"

"Oui, very much so."

Lucien smiled.

"He spends his days on the phone with Mélanie."

Ludwig smiled.

"Ah, good for him. I'm happy we could settle this once and for all for him, even though, as you said, it's hard for us to really enjoy the victory."

Lucien nodded.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Ja, of course."

"Last time, I was the one on the hospital bed."

Ludwig nodded.

"And Mundy and Jérémy were the... uhm... let's say 'healthy' ones, for lack of a better word."

"Ja."

"How were they?"

"Vell, vizh Rudolph, the BLU Medic, ve zhought zhere wasn't much hope for you. We vere maintaining you alive but, ja..."

Ludwig took a sip of his herbal tea.
"I took Mundy to my office to tell him. He was devastated... I had never seen him speak loudly, let alone shout, but that time... He shouted and shouted and cried... Couple minutes after, your son came with Misha in the office. He saw Mundy crying and his legs couldn't carry him anymore."

Lucien lowered his head. He closed his watered eyes.

*Mon Dieu... I put them through so much trouble...*

"Misha had to carry him off the ground to sit him on a chair."

Lucien put a hand in his vest and took a handkerchief out. He wiped his tears.

"Tell me, Ludwig, do you have children?"

"Lucien, quit your attitude. I know you're a spy, and a very good one at that. You know I have 2 sons."

Lucien smiled faintly.

"Yes, I do. But tell me, would you be able to be happy for your son if Mikhail was on a hospital bed for it?"

Ludwig sighed.

"I don't know, Lucien... I don't know..."

Beep... Beep...

Archimedes flew through the window, chirping happily. He landed on Ludwig's shoulder.

"Ah, Archimedes, how are you my friend?"

Archimedes sang and chirped and danced on Ludwig's shoulder.

"Why are you so happy? You can't have found a Mrs Archimedes in this desert!"

The bird kept acting excitingly. He flew to the door and landed on the knob.

"You want me to open the door? Excuse me a moment Lucien."

Lucien nodded. Ludwig followed his bird. Archimedes flew through the corridor straight to a door and landed on the knob again.

"Ah, ja, this is Misha's room. But he is ill... I can open the door if you want to stay with him."

He opened the door and the bird flew to Misha's shoulder.

"Good boy Archimedes, you found Ludwig for me!"

Ludwig opened his eyes widely and ran to the hospital bed.

"Mein Gott! Misha, you're awake! Oh thank God you finally woke up."

He was hugging his lover fondly.

"That's thanks to you, Ludwig. Thanks for taking care of me."
"What are you talking about?! First it's my job and second, well... I love you, I care for you."

Misha smiled.

"Let me check your vital signs."

It only took a couple minutes and Ludwig was definitely relieved.

"So, how am I, doctor?"

"You still need to rest but you're on the right track."

"Ah, is nice."

-- Other end of the corridor --

"Ah, Mundy..."

Spy got up and went to the window. He looked at the desert and scratched his beard. He had abandoned shaving his face since he didn't want to go away from Mundy in case he needed him. The whole landscape was so empty, so silent.

"Tu sais, quand je t'ai donné les mini-sappers, et que tu as sappé le Démoman géant, j'ai réactivé ma montre d'invisibilité, tu sais pourquoi?"

[You know, when I gave you the mini-sappers and you sapped the giant Demoman, I recloaked, do you know why?]

Beep.

"Eh bien, quand je t'ai vu si concentré, si attentif sur ce fond de paysage doré où la lumière dessinait ta silhouette élancée, mon corps m'a trahi."

[Well, when I saw you paying so much attention, so focused, on that golden landscape where the sun shone and drew your proud silhouette, my body betrayed me.]

Beep.

"Oui, comme la fois où je t'ai vu jouer du saxophone pour la première fois. Seulement là, il n'y avait pas de coussin pour me cacher, alors j'ai préféré devenir invisible, je ne voulais pas te déconcentrer."

[Yes, like that time when I saw you playing the saxophone for the first time. But this time, there were no cushions to hide it, so I preferred to go invisible, I didn't want to distract you.]

Beep.

"Si tu m'écoutais et si tu comprenais le Français, tu te moquerais de moi. Sans doute suis-je trop sentimental... Sans doute..."

[If you were listening to me and if you could understand French, you'd be making fun of me. Maybe I am too romantic... Certainly...]

Beep.

"Lu', you romantic old man! You grow old'n soft." Lucien said, trying to imitate Mundy's accent.
"Well, some parts of me definitely don't grow 'soft' when you're around..."

Beep.

Lucien smiled. His eyes became warm and tears began to roll down his cheeks. Silent tears.

"I prefer to completely ignore the possibility that I might lose you. But I can't remove it from my head completely. I haven't eaten or slept properly for the past few days. The rest of us are fine. It's only Misha and you... Why didn't you let ME take those bullets?! Why did YOU have to jump in and take them?!"

He banged his fist on the wall next to the window. He opened it to get some fresh air. He put his hands on the windowsill.

"WHY?!" He shouted at the empty desert.

He heard a bird flapping its wings.

"God damn this whole thing! Merde!"

He banged the windowsill with his clenched fist. He lit a cigarette and looked at the horizon line, in the distance. He was boiling with rage.

"You should have let me take these bullets, you... you mongrel!"

Hearing himself use that word that Mundy always uses made something crack and break inside him. He sobbed heavily.

"Putain de merde, Mundy, pourquoi?"

[Fucking hell, Mundy, why?]

He felt something on his shoulder. He turned his head and Hootsy was there.

"Ah, Hootsy, your papa is quite unwell."

Hootsy opened his perfectly round eyes and tilted his head on one side.

"Your papa might... he might..."

Lucien broke into tears again. Hootsy turned his head to Mundy. He flew away from Lucien's shoulder and curled up next to Mundy's neck, on the pillow.

"I can't even be happy for Jérémy! GODDAMN IT!"

He punched the wall and tore a whole in it with his fist. He removed his fist from the wall. He was bleeding.

-- Scout's bedroom --

"How is Mundy?"

"I don't know Mel'... I mean he hasn't woken up..."

"And your dad?"

"What do you think?"
She sighed on the phone.

"Maybe you'd better go and talk to him. It's been a couple days now. He needs some support to go through this."

"Yeah, I guess you're right... Alright, I'll go and do this now. I'll call you back later, ok?"

"Sure, good luck with your dad."

"Thanks, love ya."

Jeremy hung up the phone. He took his cap, put it on his head and exited his room. He went through the base straight to the Medibay. He pushed the main door. He looked around, no one. He went through the corridor. The door to each room had a small window through which Jeremy could see who was lying on the bed. He found Mundy's room easily and opened the door.

At first he saw Mundy, still sleeping on the bed but then his eyes moved a bit to the left and he saw his father sat down on the floor next to the bed, his back to the wall, crying heavily. His eyes moved a bit above his dad's head, there was a hole in the wall. Back to his dad, his hand was bleeding. He was sobbing in a red handkerchief; red because of the blood on his hand dripping and ruining his handkerchief and the sleeve of his white shirt.

Lucien hadn't heard his son at first. He stopped crying for a minute to catch his breath and that's when he saw Jérémy in front of him. He had knelt down in front of his dad.

"Papa..."

"Sorry, son, I don't want you to see me like this."

Lucien cleared his throat, sat up a bit and straightened his shirt and vest.

"You came to see Mundy, do you want me to leave you two alone?"

"No, I came to see you."

"Moi?"

"Yeah, I thought you'd need a bit'a company."

"Ah, well, thanks, Jérémy, but-"

"No buts, Pa', you need someone now. I know you don't like showing your emotions, no, no, no, actually, you were trained not to show when you're happy or sad but... But you're not a spy now, you're... you're sad and it's normal... And I've left you alone for a couple of days, now I need t'help ya."

"Fine..."

Lucien wiped his tears. Jérémy jumped on his feet and opened a cupboard. He took a disinfectant and some compresses. He came back next to his father and sat down on the floor. He opened the bottle of disinfectant and poured a bit of the liquid on a compress.

"Remove your vest and pull your sleeve up."

Lucien obeyed. He took out his vest and undid the buttons on his shirt to roll his sleeve up. Jérémy took his father's hand and started cleaning it.
"There you go, that looks better."

Seeing the blood disappear soothed Lucien a bit.

"You need a bandage now."

Jérémy put his hand in his pocket and got some bandages out.

"I always have some on me, for my own hands. I sweat a lot and then I can't hold my scattergun right..."

He made a bandage for his father.

"Theeere you go, Pa'. I can't do much for the shirt..."

He raised his head up.

"... Or for the wall, but eh, your hand counts more..."

He smiled. Lucien nodded and smiled faintly.

"I am a terrible father."

"No, you ain't! Why d'ya say that?"

"Look at you... and look at me... you are doing what I should have done to you for years... be there for you, take care of you..."

Jérémy sighed. He frowned.

"No! You've always been there for me, I just didn't know about it!"

"Oui but-"

"No buts! Even with Mélanie, you went through of trouble of disguising as an old man to try and know if she loved me... I mean, you're always there... And I promised, yeah I made a promise to ya! Don't look surprised, you didn't know cause you couldn't hear me but last time when you were injured, I promised I'd always be there for ya, like you've always been here for me. So here I am."

Lucien put his hand on Jérémy's shoulder and leaned forward.

"Merci mon fils." [Thanks, son.]

"So... how do you feel?"

Lucien smiled and rolled up his eyes. He took a cigarette and lit it.

"How do you think I feel?"

"Pa', I know what I see, I just don't know what's in your head!"

Lucien puffed some smoke.

"Have a guess, what do you think I am feeling, hm?"

Jérémy took a deep breath.
"Ok, alright, let me think... You're sad... Oh and actually you were furious..."

"What makes you think that? Give me evidence, show me proof!"

"Your red eyes are proof you've been crying or maybe you smoke a bit too much... Maybe both actually... The bags under your eyes tell me you didn't get much sleep and the beard and mattress indicate you never leave this room... Your hand injury and the hole in the wall show that you've been furious..."

Jérémy stood up to have a better look at the hole. Lucien stood up as well and moved so that his son could get closer.

"You're very strong, Pa'..."

"You sound surprised?"

"I mean if I didn't know it was you, I'd say Misha did that, not you!"

"Then you would be very much mistaken my son!"

"Why?"

"See the size of the hole?"

"Yeah."

"Well, that's too small to be Misha's fist."

"Ah, yeah, yeah, right... Still you're very strong... it's like what you did back there to Mann's tooth! How the f*ck did ya do it?!"

Lucien raised an eyebrow. He raised his index finger.

"First, watch your language."

He raised his middle finger as well.

"Second, I just sharpened my knife."

"C'mon you have a butterknife! That thin' can't slice through a tooth like that!"

Lucien smirked.

"It can, if you know how to handle it, now, back to my emotions, what else do you see?"

Jérémy looked at his father, squinting his eyes and scratching his hair from under his cap.

"Alors? " [So?]

"I can't see anythin' else.."

Lucien started walking around the room.

"Open your eyes Jérémy, there are at least 2 elements you have neglected!"

Jérémy looked around.
"Uuuhm..."

"Come on, son! You can see them, you are just choosing to dismiss them but no, be more open-minded!"

Lucien was still pacing back and forth, swinging his right arm with his cigarette either at his lips or at the tips of his fingers. His left arm was elegantly folded behind his back.

"Ah, the open window and Hootsy!"

"Oui! What do they tell you?"

"Hootsy can't have opened that window on its own... And Ludwig never leaves the windows open... So you opened that window!"

"Oui! Now the question is why? Why?!"

"How could I know?!"

"THINK! Start with the obvious and dig deeper and deeper!"

"Right, right, the obvious... If you open the window, you... want light or air?"

"Ah, good, good, you're progressing. Now try and link that to what you already know, would I need air or light?"

"Air! You were furious so you needed some air to cool you down so you opened the window!"

"Excellent! You have quite an accurate picture of what went through my mind, namely, anger, sadness and helplessness."

Lucien paused for a second.

"Wha'? Why're you lookin' at me like that?"

"You would have made quite the spy with some training. Have you ever thought of that?"

Jérémy laughed.

"Oh man, no, I never did! Me? A Spy? Like you?!!"

"No, not like me..."

Lucien puffed on his cigarette.

"Much better."

Jérémy stopped laughing instantly.

"It is the truth Jérémy. You are, in a way, much more mature than me when I was your age."

Jérémy's eyes opened wide. Lucien took a chair and sat next to Mundy's bed.

"You already know the importance of fighting for your loved ones. I am sure you would make an excellent father too, and in that regard, let's not try to compare you to me... I would die of shame."

Jérémy's mouth was as open as his eyes. He was speechless.
"Take a seat, if you wish to stay."

Jérémy snapped back to reality. He grabbed a chair and sat on the other side of Mundy's bed, facing his father.

"Has he moved at all?"

"Oui, in his sleep he sometimes has nightmares and so he moves a bit. Apart from that, nothing..." Jérémy nodded.

"D'you wanna eat something?"

"Non merci, but please, go ahead if you're hungry."

"Yeah I think I'll have something to eat. You sure you don't want anythin'?"

Lucien smiled and nodded.

"Quite positive. Thank you."

"Alright."

Jérémy stood up and moved to the door.

"Jérémy?"

"Yeah?"

"Merci."

He smiled.

"You're welcome, Pa', anything for you."

He closed the door behind him.

Lucien waited for a couple minutes. Silence fell. Well, silence, apart from those beeps. That electronic sound, Lucien hated it. It's a infallible reminder that Mundy was somewhere between life and death. Every second. Though, as Lucien thought about it again, he'd rather have the beeps than a continuous one... He got up his chair and paced the room back and forth again.

"Bon, Mundy. Regarde dans quel état tu m'as mis." [Well, Mundy, look at what state you put me in.]

Beep.

"Blessure à la main droite et obligé d'être soigné par mon fils, comme si j'étais trop vieux pour pouvoir prendre soin de moi tout seul! " [Right-hand injury and compelled to be healed by my son, as if I was too old to take care of my own self ]

Lucien continued pacing the room back and forth. He started humming to himself. Soon, the humming transformed into proper singing.
"Tu es le soleil de ma vie,

Tu es le soleil de mes jours,

Tu es le soleil de mes nuits,

Tu es le soleil de l'amour..."

[You are the sunshine of my life,

You are the sunshine of my days,

You are the sunshine of my nights,

You are the sunshine of love...]

"You old romantic..."

Lucien stopped walking and turned to face Mundy's bed. He opened wide eyes. Mundy's eyes were closed but Hootsy had woken up and was looking at Lucien with his round eyes.

"You heard him too, Hootsy?"

I swear I heard him speak... Ah, but he can't have understood half of what I said in French...

"I... can understand... baguette language.."

"Mundy?!"

He finally opened his eyes.

"Mon Dieu! MUNDY! Finally!"

Lucien jumped next to the bed.

"Careful, careful... It still hurts..."

"Oh sorry, sorry mon amour!"

Lucien sat delicately on the bed. Hootsy stroked his head on Mundy's cheek.

"Ah, Hootsy... You're also here... Good boy..."

"Hoo..."

"Mon amour, take your time, breathe, I'll go get Ludwig! No, actually, Hootsy, the window is open, go get Ludwig, please, good boy!"

Hootsy obeyed and flew out the window.

"How are you feeling?"

"Bloody... Happy... To see you..."

Lucien smiled. He took Mundy's hand in his and kissed it.

"You... sentimental... old man..."
"Well, it's all because of you, Bushman! Look at you!"
Mundy smiled and closed his eyes.

"Sorry Lu...'"

Lucien raised an eyebrow.

"Why are you apologising?"

"I worried you."

Lucien smiled again.

"Yes, yes you did."

The door opened.

"Ah! I see everyone woke up!"

Ludwig gasped and looked at the hole in the wall.

"What the hell have you done to my wall?"

"Sorry, Ludwig, I... that's my fault..."

"We'll talk about that later... Now, Mundy...!"

"Did Mikhail wake up as well?"

"Yes, he did. That's why Archimedes was so excited!"

Lucien backed off to let Ludwig check on Mundy's vital signs. After a few moments, Ludwig backed away from the hospital bed.

"How is he?"

"Very weak still but waking up is a very good sign. Do you have enough strength to speak Mundy?"

"Yeah... Yeah I do..."

"That doesn't look nor sound like it. You should try and save your energy, your body needs it. You'll chat later. Lucien, bitte, don't make him chat too much."

"D'accord." [Agreed].

Ludwig walked out of the room and left Lucien and Mundy alone.

"So, you can't speak eh? Good, good, so even the talking I have to do all alone now!"

Mundy smiled.

"Glad that Monsieur still has the ability to smile... Oh by the way, I was very surprised you can understand French?!"

Mundy nodded slightly.
"Since when?"

He smiled, raised his eyebrows and rolled his eyes up.

"A long time? Good Lord, and I still bothered speaking in English while I could just switch back to French!"

*I just love your accent...*

"Ah, you will have to give me some explanation about this when you are better."

Lucien took a cigarette and lit it but as soon as he got his cigarette out, Mundy looked surprised.

"Why are you looking at me like this? It's not the first time you see me smoking."

*Your hand, idiot, what happened to it?*

"Oh, my hand... Well..."

*Did you get badly injured after I shielded you from those bullets?*

"I didn't get injured during the battle. It's seeing you like this... It might have driven me out of my senses for a second..."

Mundy still looked shocked.

"Sorry Mundy, I behaved like a simpleton... I used brute force to soothe my nerves and release my frustration... That explains the hole in this wall and why Ludwig was surprised..."

*It's alright, luv'... I know what you feel...*

"I just can't bear seeing you so close to me, yet so far... And I can't do anything about it... So, I punched the wall and that's how I injured my hand."

*It's ok, it's fine... In a way I'm glad you can show your feelings. I was in that same state when you were the one on a hospital bed...*

"I'm so glad you came back... And yes, by the way, Mélanie is free."

Mundy smiled but quickly raised an eyebrow.

"And no, I didn't kill Gray Mann... not that I didn't want to or that I lacked the opportunity..."

Mundy looked surprised. Lucien sighed.

"Jérémy stopped me... You stopped me... Yes, even when you're not there I still..."

Lucien looked at Mundy, in his eyes. He half closed his eyes. His eyelashes flapped like a bird's wings. The sun was going on and taking the light away.

*Oh, the ice drops...*

Mundy's pupils dilated. Lucien moved his head closer and closer to Mundy's. He put his lips on Mundy's, delicately. He pressed gently and stayed there for a moment. They both felt shivers.

**-- Author's note --**
Thank you wonderful readers :D

As always, please leave a comment, it changes the world for me to know if you appreciate this story :) 

On a sadder note, next chapter might be the last one for this story... I come at the end of my ideas and I prefer stopping it when it's still ok in terms of content rather than stretching it artificially... **BUT** fear not, I will write other stories about our favourite mercenaries :) (I just gotta get ideas)

(Btw the song Lucien sang is "Tu es le soleil de ma vie" by Sacha Distel and Brigitte Bardot. It came out right after Stevie Wonder's "You are the sunshine of my life", it's the same melody ;)!) 

As always, *merci beaucoup* :)
Lucien opened the door to Mundy's van.

"Ah, you've been slow, I was starving!"

"Sorry Monsieur, I had to help Jérémy on my way."

"Help him do what?"

Lucien sat down and put the croissants on the coffee table. He undid the button of his vest and pulled up his trousers slightly to sit comfortably.

"He is impatient to find Mélanie back. But..."

"But..?"

"But he is anxious."

"Why?"

"Because he loves her too much."

"Ooh."

Mundy took a croissant and before he could bite in it, Lucien jumped slightly and bit it first.

"Oh and I know someone who loves croissants a bit too much, eh!"

Lucien smiled.

"Well, they're not as good as the ones back in France but we'll get there soon enough."

"You're very furtive!"

"Well, I am a spy, what do you think?"

"Ah, I tend to forget, sorry luv'."

"Pas de problème. " [No problem.]

The sun had risen and the desert seemed more peaceful to the mercenaries. They were all slowly packing their belongings to go back to the life that, oddly enough, Mann Co. helped them choose; even though it was not the one they expected.

"Is everyzhing alright?"

"Da, I already told you I don't feel any pain anymore."

"Ja, but I'm worried!"

Misha smiled and Ludwig's chest became warm. Such a charming smile he has...
"What are you going to do when we get back home to Germany?"

"I just expected you to work for the both of us to be honest."

Misha was joking but again, Ludwig did not get it...

"What?! Nein! Out of the question! That's what my ex-wife eventually did to me and I'm not letting that happen again!"

Misha laughed.

"My little Ludwig, I was joking...!"

Ludwig opened wide eyes.

"Thank God you were!"

"Sorry, my love, I did not mean to do any harm."

"Bah, it's ok... But seriously, what will you do?"

They were both in the Medibay, packing up the clothes and uniforms they were given.

"I'm thinking of going back to boxing."

"Ah, excellent idea! You want to play again?"

"Nyet, I want to teach little kids."

Ludwig looked at Misha.

"That's adorable, Misha. I'm happy and proud of you."

Misha smiled again but soon they heard a knock at the door.

"Ja! Come in!"

"Hello partners, are you ready to move your stuff to the truck?"

"Hello Engineer, ja, ve are close enough now. Misha, you can start taking these suitcases and crates please."

Misha nodded and obeyed.

"And by the way fellas, I wondered if Mikhail here could give me a hand movin' some of mah things, they're too heavy for Tommy'n me."

"Sure, let me just put these crates in the truck."

"Thanks, Mikhail."

An hour had passed and everyone was ready to leave the Reliable Excavation Demolition for good. Mikhail and Ludwig were driving the truck with the suitcases and crates while Dell, the Engie, was driving the bus with Pyro, Joe and Tavish. Meanwhile and as always, Mundy, Lucien and Jeremy were in the van. They started driving, following each other and with the rear view mirrors, they all looked at the RED base growing smaller and smaller until becoming a point in the horizon.
"Long day it has been today!"

"Ah, ja, and zhat shower was a life saver... I feel empty! Danke for preparing dinner, Misha."

The big man smiled. Ludwig sat for dinner in front of his lover and both started eating.

"Kein problem." [No problem]

Ludwig raised an eyebrow.

"I see you are making progress in German!"

"Da, those evening classes really help."

"How was training today?"

"The kids are quite tired as holidays are getting closer but they're making good progress."

"No fights today?"

"No, they were well behaved. And what about you at the clinic?"

"Vell, nozhing major happened..."

"Nothing new with your secretary, eh?"

Misha winked.

"Ah, vell, she still flirts vizh me despite me being ice cold with her... At this point I'm really considering taking you vizh me at zhe clinic and kissing you in front of her! Maybe zhat vay she will understand I am not interested!"

Misha laughed.

"And you laughing at me certainly does not help!"

"Sorry Ludwig, but you must admit it is quite funny!"

"Alright, alright..."

"And to be honest, I can only agree with her!"

"Vhat?! You'd encourage her?"

"Nyet, if I were her, I would try my luck with you."

Misha smiled and blushed slightly.

"In zhat case, I understand..."

Having both finished dinner, Misha sat on the couch and took his book from the coffee table to read it. He was expecting Ludwig to sit by him and watch TV. But instead, Ludwig headed straight to the bedroom.

"Sorry Misha, I feel quite tired tonight."
"Wohin kannst du gehen mit deiner sehnsucht in der hand?" [where are you going with my longing in your hand?]

Ludwig's jaw dropped and his eyes opened wide.

"Vas?! You can speak pretty advanced German!"

Misha laughed heartily.

"Oh, Ludwig, and you are easily fooled, it's the title of a song I heard on the radio and we've studied its lyrics at the evening lessons, so I'm merely repeating it!"

"Still, I am impressed... and quite curious now!"

Ludwig turned on his heels and headed to the couch.

"Not going to sleep finally eh?"

"Not until I find out what you can say and understand in German!"

-- Texas --

"Ah, see Tommy, you don't have t'be scared o'the horses. They're gentle if you're gentle with'em!"

"Yeah... You know I remember when you used to ride, back in the days."

Dell smiled.

"I'm glad you have some memories of those times."

"They're not very clear but the smells and the colors definitely are back now that I'm standin' next to a horse."

"Would you like to try and ride your own?"

"Oh, I'm not sure... I'm quite scared..."

"No need t'be scared, I'm here and this one is pretty calm... So, what d'ya say?"

Tom looked doubtful.

"If you ain't convinced, it's fine, we can try another time."

"Nah, you know what, help me and I'll do it, dad."

Dell's face brightened. Father and son spent a very good afternoon that day. Come dinner, both sat on the terrace and enjoyed their meal.

"Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"You're still alone?"

"What? What'd'ya mean? I got you here with me."

"No, I meant you haven't found another lady after Ma'?"
Dell looked down at his plate.

"Why, yeah, I haven't found anyone after your mom. I mean, I tried eh! When I first lost y'all, I thought t'myself 'Dell, you need to find someone else and start anew'... The truth is, I wasn't missin' a family, I was missin' y'all..."

Tommy looked at his father.

"You know, I miss them too..."

Dell smiled.

"So do I, son... But they wouldn't want us to be all sad! They would want us t'be happy and enjoyin' ourselves, so... I was thinking, you're nearly 20 now eh?"

"Y-yeah, I am..."

"So I'd like to celebrate your 20th birthday with ya properly."

"Oh... Thanks but you don't need to do anythin' special y'know..."

"I don't need to but I wanna! So, is there somethin' you wanna do?"

"To be honest, I quite miss the times at Mann Co., well, apart from the damn Spy!"

Dell laughed.

"But I do miss the friends we made there..."

"Ah, I understand... In fact, I think I'm missin' them too, a fine bunch we were eh? And I agree I'm less missin' that damn Spah... always messin' with mah contraptions!... You know what, we should go n'see them.. Yeah, yeah, have a tour of Europe!"

"Oh that would be amazin' Dad!"

"Heck yeah!"

-- Paris, a couple months later --

"Jérémy, I told you already, you can't wear a pair of white trousers for this!"

"Pa', I'll be fine.."

"Non, you won't, white is fine as long as you keep it white but believe me, they will end up brownish! Plus it will just be on one leg!"

Mundy exited the bathroom, having freshly showered and joined the living room and the conversation.

"What's all this about?"

Lucien sighed and lowered his head.

"Your son here wants to propose to Mélanie..."

Mundy liked how Jeremy was also his son in the eyes of Lucien.
"Aaah! Excellent news mate! So what's the problem with you shoutin' and everythin'?"

"... with a white pair of trousers!"

Mundy opened wide eyes.

"Ah, mate, let me tell you some'rin... You know I wouldn't give a flyin' f-"

Lucien raised an eyebrow.

"Well, I don't pay attention to what you want to wear is what I wanna say. But your dad's right, white is a bad idea."

"Jesus..."

"All I'm sayin' is the last person who did that ended up looking ridiculous..."

Mundy winked at Lucien who rolled his eyes up while nonetheless smiling.

"Alright, alright, what should I wear then to go there? Pa', you told me I should dress sharp in that fancy restaurant o' yours! And by the way, if it's that fancy, it'll cost me an arm and a leg!"

Lucien sat on the armchair and looked up at his son.

"Sit down, Jérémy, I need to talk to you seriously."

His tone of voice had changed.

"Mundy, please..."

Mundy moved to take a seat on the sofa as well.

"Now, Jérémy, that restaurant I told you to go to is where my life and career started. It would be an honour for me to keep this establishment at the heart of our family history. And do not worry, they won't charge a cent for your dinner, it's already been arranged."

Jérémy's jaw dropped.

"When I was about half your age, I used to live with my father. My mother had died when I was but an infant. Father was a lawyer and would pressure me everyday to become a lawyer as well."

He took a cigarette out of his case and lit it.

"But I hated him and so I also hated lawyers in general. In my mind, they are only capable of the worst things. Their knowledge of the laws makes them the best criminals. But that's not why I hate him."

He puffed some smoke out.

"I hated and still hate him because he was beating me up when I was a child. I grew up to be extremely clever and furtive. The type of boy who doesn't say much but sees and analyses everything around him. I had to be furtive if I wanted to go see friends for instance. He would of course forbid me to but I would still go. Until I took a big decision. I wouldn't spend one more day with this man."

He paused for a second.
"And so I fled. I knew lots of people in the streets, mostly homeless people and I became homeless like them. But I was free and with their help, I could do what I wanted. I even gave them a fake name, so that my father would never find me. Of course I had to learn the hard ways of the street and learnt how to fight. At that time, fighting was a necessity, it was crucial to know how to defend yourself."

"Lu', why did you never say?"

"Say what?"

"All this!"

"Because that is not how you see me. Had I told you all that, you would have seen me with pity in your eyes and there is nothing I hate more than that."

Hootsy hooted from his perch and went to Mundy's shoulder.

"Anyway, let me continue."

Mundy nodded.

"I spent some months like that. Talking to whoever had a moment to give me in the streets. One thing helped me though: I was young and, in all modesty, quite handsome."

Mundy raised his eyebrows.

Oh I bet you were...

"Every sunday, I would hang around a church here in Paris and one of the ladies who used to go there - a very old lady - she would always have trouble going up and down the few steps at the church's front. So I'd help her. She thought I had the manners and good education of a gentleman. I was only lacking the looks..."

"Wha'? I saw pictures of you when you were young, you looked amazin' Pa'!"

"At that time, I wasn't shaving or taking much care of myself. I couldn't as I didn't have the means. But she gave me a chance. She surprised me once with a suit. It was an old one but I looked much better. I'd wear it every sunday to take her up and down the steps. Then one day, she said she knew a place where they needed a waiter. It was only a small bistrot, but they would appreciate my manners. I told her I would love to accept but with long hair and a beard, it would be difficult for me to pass as a respectable person. I'll remember what she said to me forever. She gave me money and said "You can consider this the start of a respectable life, or spend it on something stupid, it's your choice." I rushed to a barber, cut my hair, shaved my beard. I had enough to buy a hat as well. It was only second hand, but it looked decent. For the next couple of sundays, I was busy at the bar so I couldn't go and see the lady, whose name I didn't know. Finally one sunday, I managed to gather enough money to pay her back. So I went to church but I was late for the beginning of the mass, so I waited for her outside. When mass finished, she came out and I was there to help her down the steps. She didn't recognise me until I told her my name, my real one and I gave her back her money."

Mundy smiled.

"She was delighted for me and I was very proud of myself. One thing my father taught me and really paid off: go to church on Sundays!"

Jérémy smiled and they all laughed.

"After that bistrot, there were some gentlemen's clubs I worked in, until finally ending at Le Mistral
Gagnant, that restaurant on the Champs-Élysées. The rest, you know, Mundy."

He nodded.

"You dad got noticed by no less than the head of the French secret services, the chef of frogs' secrets!"

"Stop mocking this country! You're also a frog now!"

"What the bloody hell you talkin' about?! I'm a-

"Kiwi?"

Mundy rolled up his eyes.

"That's New Zealand, you idiot!"

Jérémy laughed.

"But anyway, your dad got noticed cause, well, who wouldn't notice him?"

Lucien smiled proudly.

"And then you became a spy?"

"Oui, absolutely. I was quite gifted I realised, or rather, life had me prepared for this. Plus I didn't have any relatives so I didn't have to hide my identity to a hypothetical family. But I'm going away from the main subject..."

He smoked his cigarette and puffed some smoke.

"Jérémy, if you want to propose to Mélanie, please do it in that restaurant and above all..."

Lucien raised his index finger dramatically.

"... Don't wear a pair of white trousers!"

--- Author's notes ---

That's all folks!

Thank you all for reading this story and commenting it. Know that I read everything even if I don't reply and I take it into account. Someone recently said that there were typos in the chapters and I would like to apologise for this. I am currently proof-reading and correcting the mistakes. As some of you might know, I'm writing on my mobile phone, on the bus and I post chapters as I finish them. (Which I admit is a bad thing, I should proof-read them first!!)

I will continue writing on the mercenaries but I think I will focus on individual couples. Writing about all of them and trying to give them equal treatment is quite difficult...

So, if you liked this fanfic, stay tuned for more mercenary stories from me :)

Merci beaucoup.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!