Summary

MEKA pilot Hana Song needs to find a way to make her mech’s self-destruct ability a permanent feature. Help comes from an unexpected quarter.

Notes

Although this is tagged as pre-relationship Sombra/D.Va and was written with this intent in mind, it can be read as simply the beginning of a Sombra & D.Va friendship. I hope you enjoy!

Alone in her empty MEKA bay, Hana Song laid her head down on her computer desk and groaned.

The bay was silent tonight. No point in turning on the news, not when Dae-hyun wasn’t around to make fun of the broadcasts with her. And quite frankly, she wasn’t in the mood tonight to hear about the “glitz-and-glamor lifestyle” she and the rest of her squad enjoyed.

She’d been poring over lines of code for hours, trying to build in a way for her to overload her reactor at will. She might not always have Dae-hyun standing by to do it remotely, and what if she needed to make the decision instantly? No, she had to find a way to trigger a self-destruct on her own, without relying on anyone else’s cooperation or assistance.

The problem was, MEKA had quite reasonably implemented an astounding number of safeguards designed to prevent the reactor from ever overloading. Then, if the impossible somehow happened...
anyway, there were the cooling, ventilation, and shielding systems all in place to prevent a meltdown or explosion. Dae-hyun had been incredibly lucky to be able to override or disable all these systems in time—something that probably wouldn’t have been possible if the mech hadn’t been extensively damaged by the Gwishin’s tentacles and missiles.

She was getting nowhere with this. Hana was good at playing games, not hacking them. And even if she did have a more solid coding background, she was nowhere near the level of the MEKA designers and programmers. She sighed. Maybe the answer wasn’t in the code, but in the components of the mech itself. Those, at least, was something she was pretty much an expert in. Tokki was her baby, and she knew the mech like the back of her hand.

Now that she didn’t need complete silence to concentrate, she queued up a saved video of one of her old streams to run as background noise while she worked. It was one of her favorites. Not exactly before the omnic crisis—Hana could never actually remember a time when Gwishin couldn’t rise out of the sea at any moment—but a more innocent time for Hana, personally. Before MEKA, before leading roles in the movies, before D.Va-branded snacks and drinks and makeup; before all of that, when she’d spent her days in school and her nights playing games with friends.

She watched for a little while, a wave of nostalgia overcoming her as she took in the outdated graphics and ancient memes and the familiar handles of friends she hasn’t been very good about staying in touch with. She listened to herself bantering with Yuna over the voice chat, the intervening years allowing her to feel mostly amusement instead of embarrassment about her not-so-subtle attempts at flirtation. A more innocent time, indeed.

The viewer chat scrolled by in the corner, faster than even her quick eyes could keep up with. Walls of emoji spam and text were intermittently interrupted by a hexagonal skull emote. Hana huffed in disdain. At the time, the hacker Sombra’s well-known skull symbol had been adopted by spectators; sometimes it was used in chat to express appreciation for a shot so good it looked as if the streamer must be hacking, but more often it was used to accuse the streamer of actually cheating. As if she needed to hack to be the best.

But that was before, when games were just for fun and not a matter of survival. Now that everyone was depending on her, she needed every possible advantage over the enemy, and if that meant changing her mech’s code or breaking the safety rules, then that’s just what she would have to do.

She queued up a few more old videos to autoplay after this one ended before leaving the computer and climbing up to sit at the top of Tokki’s—well, Tokki 2’s—chassis. She unscrewed the panel between the mech’s bunny ears, revealing the lines of coolant supplying the reactor. If she could wire in an explosive device close to the reactor, she could probably destabilize the core and damage the cooling lines with a manual detonation. Of course, she’d have to place it properly so that she still had enough time to eject, but not so much that the mech might fly to an unpredictable location before it exploded. Unfortunately, it wasn’t like she had a bunch of extra mechs hanging around to practice on. Well, she’d just have to take her best guess and see how it held up in battle.

She began disconnecting and removing each of the lines of coolant criss-crossing the reactor housing. The lights flickered once or twice while she worked; there was probably a storm coming in off the ocean tonight. Maybe she should pause her videos and check the news, but that would require climbing all the way down from the mech—ugh, nope. Once she had cleared a spot big enough to hold a bit of C4 or a small IED, she paused. What would she use to cause the blast? How big of an explosion should it even be? Nevermind, that could come later. First she’d work on running a detonation wire to the cockpit.

Don’t let obstacles stop you. Don’t focus on the negative. Just take it one step at a time—easy stuff
first—until you’ve won.

She reached for the spool of wire she kept nearby and peered into Tokki’s hull. The video playing in the background lagged for a second, then resumed; must be a pretty big storm if it was messing with the electronics. She could probably bore a hole for the det cord straight through the top of the cockpit, but maybe it would be better to run the line down the inside of the mech’s arm instead. Yeah, then she could have the trigger right next to her hand! Hana didn’t notice the video stream pausing itself, or the screen flickering a couple times before finally resolving to a static image of a purple hexagonal skull which took up the entire screen; she was too busy reaching down inside the reactor housing—

“O-kay, that’s enough, conejita.”

A black-gloved hand with long, violet fingernails materialized out of thin air and darted out to encircle her wrist. Hana screamed and recoiled, but the hand held on tight. She jerked back with her whole body, only to come up against a warm mass. A person. Behind her. There was another person in her mech bay; someone had snuck into her mech bay and was sitting on her mech! Well, not if she had anything to say about it!

With a shout, Hana wrenched her wrist free and slid down the windowpane of Tokki’s cockpit. She smashed the quick release button, causing the windowpane to pop open so she could swing herself inside to grab her blaster from its hook in the cockpit. Gun in hand, she crouched under Tokki’s bulk, listening for sounds of the intruder climbing or jumping down. Several long moments passed without any sounds of motion. Time to go on the offensive, then. She took a deep breath and prepared to leave her hiding spot. Suddenly, a feminine voice murmured in her ear, accompanied by a warm breath.

“Looking for me?”

Hana didn’t hesitate. She spun around, blindly grabbing the front of the intruder’s collar to keep her from running away. At the same time, she flicked the safety off her blaster and shoved the barrel under the unknown woman’s jaw. The woman obediently went still, though if the slight smirk turning up the corners of her lips was any indication, she wasn’t nervous or scared. Her chin was tilted up due to the pressure of Hana’s blaster, so the woman angled her eyes to look tolerantly down at Hana.

“Okay, you got me,” she taunted. “What now?”

“Now, you tell me who you are and how you got in here!” Hana hissed.

The woman laughed. “You can call me Sombra. You may have heard of me—and if you have, then you know that I don’t give up my secrets that easily. Especially if you can’t ask nicely.” Her eyes flicked briefly in the direction of the blaster barrel before holding Hana’s gaze again.

Hana glared back. “Well if you’ve heard of me, then you know I don’t give up so easily, either!”

Sombra’s expression softened and her smile became almost sad. “Oh, conejita, I know you don’t. I know that’s why you’re here in the middle of the night while the rest of your team is out having fun. I know that’s the only reason they and the rest of this city are still standing.”

Hana scoffed. “You shouldn’t believe everything you hear on the holovids, you know. It wasn’t just me in that fight; my friend was with me the whole time!” Her grip on Sombra’s collar faltered as memories of the battle washed over her, Dae-hyun’s frantic voice echoing in her ears. “I couldn’t have done it without him,” she whispered.
“Well then where is he, now?” Sombra’s unimpressed tone interrupted Hana’s thoughts.

“We’re...maybe fighting a little bit right now,” she admitted. None of this was Sombra’s business, but the woman didn’t seem like the type to let her questions go unanswered. And it wasn’t like there was anyone else she could talk to about this—everyone else in the squad was taking Dae-hyun’s side.

Hana tentatively released Sombra but kept her blaster trained and ready, just in case. Sombra smoothed out her clothing as she raised an eyebrow, prompting Hana to continue. “He won’t help me, won’t tell me how he overloaded my reactor so I can do it myself when I need to!” Hana paced in frustration, all the while keeping her blaster pointed perfunctorily in Sombra’s direction. “He keeps telling me it was too dangerous. As if we’re not already in danger, all the time!”

“It was too dangerous,” Sombra countered. Hana opened her mouth to argue her point, but Sombra continued on, “Pero it was also a good idea.” Hana closed her mouth with a pop. She lowered her blaster.

“Well...thanks, I guess? But I don’t think you came here to give me compliments. What are you after—MEKA schematics, battle plans, military secrets? You should know I’ve been trained to resist attempts at interrogation,” she said flatly.

“Relajate. I’m not here to steal your information. Why would I fly across fifteen time zones for something I could do from my couch?” She leaned casually against Tokki 2’s leg.

“Then why are you here?” Hana demanded, frustrated.

“I’ve had my eye on you for a long time,” Sombra said. “After all, you can’t live on the internet like I do without constantly hearing about Korea’s beloved shooting star. So I saw your little battle.” She wiggled her fingers in a complex series of motions and beams of electric purple hard-light shot out the tips. They coalesced into an image that hovered in the palm of her hand. Hana watched a miniature hard-light Tokki wrestle with the Gwishin in midair. As the footage played, a tiny purple D.Va flew out the back of the mech—was she really so small in comparison?—and fired at the mech’s grappled body. The image flickered a blinding white as the reactor core exploded and miniature-D.Va’s body was thrown a truly incredible distance. Just as her form was about to impact the surface of the ocean, Sombra closed her fist and the holo-footage winked out of existence. Hana looked up to find Sombra already gazing at her intensely.

“I heard your comms,” she murmured. “Saw your hospital records. I watched you build a whole new mech while anybody else would have been resting and recuperating. Can you blame me for stopping by to make sure you don’t work yourself back into a hospital bed?”

“I have to work hard. What if I really did relax instead of building Tokki 2, and then the Gwishin attacked again before it was ready? They could attack tonight and I still wouldn’t be ready because I just—can’t—figure this—out!” She slapped her palm against her mech’s leg in frustration.

“You know, your mechanic friend might be wrong about some things, but he’s not wrong about putting the burden for all of this on yourself. You really should ask for help every now and then.”

“Oh yeah? Who is gonna help me with this? My squadmates won’t, my commanders won’t, the mechanics won’t—”

“I will.”

Hana stopped mid-rant. “You? Why would you help me?” she whispered.
Sombra stepped close to Hana, placing a hand on her shoulder. “Because I know a thing or two about working all alone. About being the only one with the power to fix a problem.” Her voice trailed off and her gaze went distant and unfocussed. “About taking risks and making sacrifices for something really important.”

Hana waited, uncertain if she should respond or try to break the other woman out of her reverie. She tentatively brought her own hand up to place on top of Sombra’s gloved one where it lingered on her shoulder. She squeezed gently, and Sombra shook her head and stepped back, putting a proper distance between them again.

“So come on, amiga, show me what makes this thing tick.”

Hana helped Sombra climb up Tokki 2’s body to her earlier perch. She gestured inside, pointing out the reactor and its cooling and shielding systems, and explained her plan to rig up a manual detonation system. Sombra looked on with an expression which started out impressed but quickly gave way to wariness as Hana got to the details—or lack thereof—about her IED.

“So let me get this straight,” Sombra interrupted. “You’re just going to stick a bomb in here—and oh yeah, you don’t know what kind of bomb or what size or where to put it—set it off, and hope you can get far enough away before the whole thing explodes? Dios mio, you’re as crazy as those junkers down south.”

“I mean, I was gonna figure all that stuff out,” Hana defended. She looked at the exposed reactor housing and the dismantled cooling lines scattered around the open panel. Hearing it summarized like that...well, maybe she should have had a more thorough plan before taking her mech apart. She deflated. “At first I was gonna try to do it with the mech computer—that’s how Dae-hyun did it—but I couldn’t figure out how. I don’t know if I can learn in time, either.”

“Ah ha! Now you’re speaking my language!”

Sombra slid down Tokki 2’s back and made her way over to the computer workstation, Hana scrambling to follow. As she approached the desk, Sombra absenty wiggled her fingers again, making a purple hard-light menu appear in the air above her palm. She tapped the hovering buttons as she walked, and by the time she sat down at the console like she owned the place, all the holoscreens in the room displayed windows with various lines of code. The closest one on the computer desk itself scrolled through lines of text. Warnings flashed and errors appeared, then were subsequently dismissed and replaced with new text.

Sombra snapped her fingers, and the scrolling paused. “See?” She pointed to the first line of replacement text on the screen. “This is where your mechanic started overriding the failsafes.”

Hana perched on the desk next to Sombra’s seat and leaned in to look where Sombra was pointing. “Wait, this is the log from that night? How did you get that? I’ve been trying to find it all evening!”

That had been her initial plan, of course: to see what Dae-hyun did and then copy-paste his commands into a new program she could trigger on demand. Instead, she’d found herself unable to access the log files and buried in a mountain of confusing code that she’d have to make sense of before trying to write her own program from scratch.

Sombra hummed a laugh and winked, but didn’t actually answer the question. She started the text scrolling again at a slower speed as she summarized each step of what had happened. She paused every now and then to transfer bits and pieces, heavily supplemented with her own script, into another window which contained Tokki 2’s default operating code. For a while Hana was content to simply watch Sombra work, but as the hours wore on, she started asking questions and offering suggestions. Could Sombra make her defense matrix last longer, too? Why did it take sixty-four lines
of code just to tell the computer not to do something? Could they set up a remote detonation option so she didn’t have to be inside the thing right before it blew up?

The console desk became littered with empty soda cans and noodle packets as they worked through the night, making food and chatting while they waited for various iterations of code to compile. By the time the sun was coming up, Sombra had created a way to overload the reactor and eject D.Va from the cockpit with the push of a button, but she would have only three seconds to get to safety before the abandoned mech would explode.

“So how are you gonna protect yourself so you don’t wind up in the hospital again next time you have to use this?” Sombra asked.

Hana considered. “Well, I guess I’ll just hide behind something. I can try to only use it in places where I can quickly get to cover?”

Sombra gave her a skeptical look. “Like out over the ocean? What, are you going to hide behind a fish or something?” Her dry tone and joking manner belied the seriousness of her words. What would Hana do if she had to self-destruct in the open? And what if her team was nearby, or civilians? What good was all of tonight’s work if Hana couldn’t even use her new ability without hurting herself or others?

“I…” she hesitated. “I don’t know.” The words felt foreign in her mouth; she was supposed to be the shot-caller, the one with the plans and all the answers. She looked at Sombra guiltily, then hung her head and waited for the criticism to come.

“Hey, it’s okay,” the other woman said. She tilted Hana’s chin up to meet her eyes. “We’ll think of something. In fact, I might have an idea.” She smiled.

Hana was about to ask for more details, but a noise in the outside corridor startled her before she could formulate a response. She and Sombra both tensed and turned to watch the mech bay door, listening as the footsteps in the hallway grew louder...then fainter as they continued past.

Hana turned back to face Sombra again, her chin still resting lightly in the other woman’s hand. “My squad must be arriving; morning training starts soon.”

“Looks like it’s time for me to go,” Sombra replied. They could hear the sounds of more teammates approaching in the corridor. “I’ll be in touch.”

Sombra wiggled her fingers in a wave-like motion, and all the windows displayed on the room’s several screens closed and were replaced with a screen saver. She withdrew her other hand from Hana’s chin and winked before pressing her index finger to the tip of Hana’s nose.

“Boop.”

Before Hana’s very eyes, Sombra’s figure flickered purple and disappeared. Although she couldn’t see the other woman anymore, she felt the air whoosh by as Sombra left Hana’s space and sped past her to leave the bay.

“Thank you,” she whispered to the empty room.

A moment later, Dae-hyun walked in the bay door, stopping in his tracks at the sight of Hana standing next to Tokki 2, seemingly staring off into space.

“Ummm...long night?” he asked. Hana blinked and surveyed the room. Her mech was still partially
dismantled, all the electronics were still running, and food and drink trash littered most of the available surfaces. In other words, everything was perfectly normal.

“Yeah, just making some adjustments. Guess I lost track of time.” Hana grinned. “I bet your evening was way more interesting,” she prompted.

Hana began cleaning up the mess while Dae-hyun told her about his outing last night with the other MEKA mechanics and pilots. She was glad he was finally getting a taste of the socialite lifestyle he always daydreamed about. The shine would probably wear off soon enough, but at least he was starting to be invited along with the rest of the squad and making new friends.

As the previous night had reminded her, it was pretty nice to spend an evening among friends.

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A couple weeks later, Hana had little time to dwell on her strange late-night visit. The Gwishin never tired or took breaks, and therefore neither did the MEKA squad. Her relentless schedule—train, battle, repair; rinse, repeat—left no room to think of anything other than new and different strategies to stay one step ahead of the ever-changing capabilities of Korea’s omnic threat.

One afternoon Hana returned to the locker room following an intense training session, deep in thought as she considered potential flying formations. The omnics were getting too good at splitting their six-person squad apart, forcing an individual pilot to fight several enemies at once and preventing any teammates from coming to their aid. They either needed to make more of an effort to stick together or start being proactive—the MEKA pilots should strike first and drive a wedge into the Gwishin formation, using their own strategies against them.

She lingered in the shower, mulling this over, until she realized that the locker room had emptied and the water was starting to run cool. She absently shut off the taps and went through the automatic motions to dry off and dress. Towel off, wrap up, what if three of us struck from above while another three circled behind? Brush hair, moisturize face, maybe three teams of two would be even more confusing. She opened her locker on autopilot, reaching inside only to find an empty hanger where her uniform usually hung.

Jarred out of her contemplations, she truly looked at her surroundings for the first time, taking in the silent room and the locker in front of her, empty except for a row of bare hangers and a decent-sized package resting on the floor.

She crouched down to inspect the package, the towel wrapped around her bunching where it rested on the floor. The cardboard box was plain, with no postage or address anywhere on it. The only identifying feature was a square of paper on top with her name, Hana, attached to the box by a small sticker in the shape of a stylized, hexagonal skull.

She looked around the room again, ensuring there was no one around to see her lean down towards the package, her head tilted to the side as she brought her ear close to the nondescript box. She strained to hear—no ticking, no whirring, no sounds of any moving parts or electronics. She knew the responsible thing to do would be to report the suspicious package to MEKA security, but what would she even say? Don’t worry about it, officers, Sombra snuck in here a while ago, and I’m pretty sure she would have planted bugs and explosives then if she wanted to, instead of going to the trouble to hide them in a package almost a month later? Right.

Although she knew the hacker was dangerous, she hadn’t felt threatened when Sombra was helping her rewrite her reactor monitoring code. She hadn’t felt worried or wary; rather, working with Sombra had felt comfortable and...intimate. A lot like tinkering with Dae-hyun or duo-queuing
during downtime with Yuna, only…

Dae-hyun probably knew her better than anyone in the world, maybe even her own family, but he didn’t know what it was like to have the safety of an entire country depend on his skills and split-second decisions. And Yuna certainly felt that burden just as much as Hana did, but too often these days, their camaraderie would turn into competition. They’d always been too similar, right down to the matching names that had seemed so cute when they were fifteen.

If half the rumors were true, Sombra held the fate of corporations, of armies, of nations, in the glowing purple palm of her hand. And yet, she refused to be beholden to anyone, guarding her stolen intelligence close and doling out pearls here and there only when it helped achieve her goals. Whatever those were.

She could have leaked the recordings of D.Va’s solo fight with the Gwishin. Let the people of Busan see just how close they came to annihilation, if her desperate plan with the reactor hadn’t worked, if she hadn’t been able to trigger the self-destruct while the mech was still out over the ocean. Let them hear the despair in her voice when she realized she couldn’t stop the last omnic, hear her scream as her mech creaked and groaned in the crushing grip of the Gwishin’s mechanical tentacles. What would they do if they caught this glimpse behind her superstar persona and realized that they relied on a scared little girl, who might—not that day, but one day—not be good enough to keep them safe?

Hana snapped out of it, taking a few deep breaths to calm herself before the thoughts could run any farther down that well-beaten path. She’d been good enough this time; the city was safe for now. And although Sombra could have easily punched a hole in Hana’s reputation, or even privately taunted her for showing fear and uncertainty, she hadn’t. She’d seen Hana’s emotions and shortcomings laid bare and had come to check on her instead. Come to help her.

Decision made, Hana dragged the package out of her locker and set it on one of the empty benches. It was heavy, but not horribly so, and filled with something which didn’t shift or make noise as she lifted it. She removed the packing tape and, steeling herself, opened the box.

Inside was a flight suit. A flight suit which looked exactly like the suits missing from her locker, in fact. She withdrew it from the box, noticing that it felt heavier in her hands. The fabric had a thicker texture, yet it was still stretchy and flexible. Peering inside the garment, she noticed thin but densely woven panels sewn into the front and back of the torso and in strategic places along the hips, arms, and legs. She checked the inside back collar: no tag, but there was a black screen-printed logo in the shape of a skull—although, not the hexagonal one matching the sticker on the package; this one was long and thin like a real skull, or maybe a mask. She looked back into the box and saw a similar flight suit underneath the one she’d just removed, only this one was orange. She pulled several suits out, one after the other, in an array of colors—green, blue, gold, even one that was yellow and black like a bumblebee. When she finally reached the bottom of the pile, all that remained was a note, handwritten on a piece of violet paper.

*Conejita*

Miss me? One of my...associates...owed me a favor—these should help protect you from the little “upgrade” to your mech. The nanofiber panels will absorb a lot of the radiation and shock wave energy if you can’t get behind cover in time, but they’re NOT PERFECT, okay? So be careful out there and maybe let someone else take a risk every once in a while, mm?

See you later,
She put down the note and reverently smoothed her hand over the fabric of the suit she held, unable to stop the grin that widened across her face. Well, Dae-hyun was always after her to accept help from other people. Sombra probably wasn’t quite who he had in mind, but she suited Hana just fine.

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