This Can't Be Happening
by Sabene4511

Summary

Mac and Jack are temporarily called back to active duty by the U.S. Army for a single assignment. To say things go wrong would be an understatement.

This story takes place early in Season 2, sometime in Fall 2017.

Formerly known as 'Masteritsa', but with a whole new chapter, lots of revisions.
Okay, here’s the thing. I decided to make this story part of my Vampire AU Series. However, doing so meant changing it quite a bit -adding some sections and taking out a few things. The two page epilogue is now a full length chapter 7. But, I didn’t want to lose the original either. So, I left the original one posted under its original title Masteritsa, and I’m posting this second version with the vampire adaptations. You don’t need to have read the original version, or the first story in this series, Everybody Has At Least One Crazy Ex, or the third story in the series Fun In The Sun. But you REALLY need to have read the second story, He’s A...Wait, What? for parts of this to make sense. For anyone who has read the original Masteritsa, this version adds some twists I hope you’ll greatly enjoy, let me know in the comments!

One additional note, this series is a slow build Mac/Jack pairing. There is no (consensual) smut in this one, but the series will get there…promise. Any advice or constructive criticism is greatly appreciated. Please excuse my lack of military knowledge, I did some research, but I can’t claim it was in depth, since it isn’t really the important part of the story. Also, this story takes place in 2 different time zones. Los Angeles, California is 10 hours earlier. I think I accounted for that pretty well, but please don’t kill me if I goofed. All the other standard disclaimers apply, I don’t own MacGyver or the characters, blah, blah, blah…

***Read the tags!! This is dark. I mean, real dark. Have tissues and a stiff drink handy (if legally of age to have it, and if you are reading this, you really should be). This fic contains rape, torture, suicide, and plenty of non-con. Rated MA for a reason, you’ve been warned.***

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

Chapter 1

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

Jack wakes with a start, unsure what had startled him. He looks around his apartment for anything out of place and finds everything as he had left it...mostly. The TV was still on, and the disc menu for Die Hard was running on a continuous loop. He doesn’t even remember how much of it he watched before falling asleep.

He looks at his watch -11:47pm. He probably missed the whole movie, he should go to bed. He turns off the TV and Blu-ray player without bothering to take the disc out, picks up the beer he’d only taken 3 sips of and dumps it in the sink. He looks around again trying to figure out what is bothering him -nothing. He’s probably just tired. He turns off the lights and goes to bed.

------------------
Mac sits in the war room absently twisting the thin strip of metal in his hands, hardly paying attention to what he is shaping it into. He looks up as Jack walks in and immediately notices that he looks tired.

“You okay, man?”

“Yeah, just didn’t really sleep well. I kept waking up. Any idea what Matty called us in for?”

“Nope.”

Matty walks in, closing the door and frosting the glass as she walks up toward the monitors.

“Don’t get too comfortable guys, you’re wheels up in about 10 minutes. The US Army is temporarily calling you both back to active duty. They have an issue in Qatar and need Mac’s expertise. I told them I wouldn’t allow it unless Jack was his overwatch.”

Jack breathes a sigh of relief. “Thanks Matty. For a quick second there, I thought I was gonna have to get difficult.”

“You’re always difficult, Jack. But if I’m going to let Mac go back out there I want someone who can translate Mac speak and actually be able to watch his back so he comes home in one piece.”

“Not to mention the non-verbal version of Mac speak.”

Mac waves his hand in between them. “You both realize that I am standing right here, don’t you?”

“Relax, blondie. And you’re welcome by the way. They wanted you to go on your own.”

Mac nods his head. “Thank you. So, what do they need me for?”

“They’ve found several bombs in the northern section of the Doha region that are different from anything they’ve seen. They’re worried they have a new player and need someone ‘adaptable’ to create a sort of profile of this bomber so they can put him out of commission. Your assignment is
strictly recon and bomb disposal. There shouldn’t be any need for Jack, but there is someone out there planting bombs so I’d rather be safe than sorry. Your CO will give you more info en route.”

“Sounds pretty straight forward.” Mac drops his latest paper clip sculpture on the table (a cloud with a lightning bolt). He notices a look on Jack’s face like he wants to argue, but watches as his friend shakes it off and turns to leave.

“So, what’s bothering you big guy? It’s more than just not sleeping well.”

Jack smiles and shakes his head. Mac always knows.

“Not sure, man. I’ve had this weird feeling that something is off. It’s what kept waking me up. Just do me a favor, keep your head on a swivel out there? We haven’t been in a combat zone like this in years. I’ll be real happy when we get back.”

“Relax, Jack. It’ll be fine, and I promise to be careful.”

“Mac, you’ll need to see Dr. Lewis before you leave.” Says Matty.

“He’s not due for a dose until Friday. Can’t he get it in the field?” Says Jack confused.

Mac responds, “Yeah, but most Army docs aren’t read-in on vampire anemia and this prevents us from having to come up with an explanation for why I need a blood transfusion. Not that it hasn’t been done before, but it’s easier, and safer, to avoid it if we can. We should be back before I need more.”

“Fair enough.”

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

3 days later -Qatar

“Mayday, mayday, mayday. Bravo 4 to command. Does anybody copy?!” Jack hears the call go out over comms as he struggles to lift himself up. The only thought in his head ‘get to Mac.’ He’d
watched Mac go down at the same time 2 bullets hit his own vest and a third hit his left arm, slicing through the bicep.

“Command copy, sitrep Bravo 4.”

“We’ve been ambushed. Unknown number of hostiles at our location.”

Jack tunes out the chatter. It isn’t important. He has to get to Mac. Jack is halfway to his feet when he feels a sudden pain on the back of his head and the world spins. As the town starts to fade, he looks up. He hears more shots being fired close by and sees a man right behind him falling, blood seeping from a hole in the center of the man’s forehead. Then Jack’s world goes black.

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

“Looks like they were after hostages. They almost had Dalton, too. Pierce took out the guy who knocked him out.” Jack hears the voice through the fog in his brain.

“Any idea where they took them, sir?”

“No intel yet. We’ll find them.”

Jack opens his eyes to see the canopy of the medical tent. He tries to sit up, but the world starts spinning again.

“Easy Dalton. You’ve got a concussion and that arm still needs stitches.”

“Where’s Mac?”

Jack watches Lt Volk take a deep breath and sigh. “We’ll find him.”

“Find him? What the hell do you mean ‘find him’?”

“MacGyver and Donovan were taken by the ambushers. Stevens is dead. You, Jones and Pierce
were the only ones on scene when backup arrived. Jones is in surgery, we’re still waiting for word on him. Pierce took one in the vest but he’s fine.”

Jack’s brain had stopped working and he missed everything but the first sentence. Taken. “Taken by who? To where?” Jack sits up, starts trying to get out of bed and promptly falls on the floor. He feels hands lifting him back onto the bed while stars dance through his vision and his ears ring.

“‘We’re already looking. We’ll find them. There is nothing you can do yet if you can’t even stand. Sit tight, breathe, and you can join the search as soon as the doc clears you.”

I knew it . Jack thinks to himself. I knew something was off .

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

2 days later

Jack is going nuts. The doc won’t clear him to help search in the field because of his arm. He’s making phone calls and talking to anyone and everyone who might be able to help get intel on where Mac had been taken. His first call had been to Matty and he knows she’s calling in favors all over the place to find him, but no one has any leads yet.

The squad had already followed the tracks of a truck that left the area at high speed. The trail was lost when they hit the paved road just north of town. There has been no contact or ransom demands.

“Dalton.” Jack looks up and Lt Volk gestures for him to come into his office then steps back inside. Jack gets up immediately, walks quickly into the office and the lieutenant closes the door behind them. Jack stands at attention before the desk, waiting as Volk goes around the desk and sits down.

“Word on Mac, sir?”

“At ease Dalton, take a seat.”

Jack blinks at the Lt and slowly sits. This can’t be good . “Sir?”
“There’s been contact from the attackers. It’s ISIS.” Jack feels his heart pound and realizes he’s holding his breath. He knows how ISIS treats American hostages.

“What do they want?”

Volk takes a deep breath and slowly sighs. “Nothing.”

“Nothing? What do you mean nothing? What did they say?” He’s starting to hyperventilate now. Volk is being far too compassionate.

Volk closes his eyes as he takes another deep breath. He opens his eyes and looks directly at Jack. “I’m sorry, Dalton. They aired a video online, live. It showed both Donovan and MacGyver being executed.”

Jack freezes. He can’t move, breathe, speak, think. This isn’t happening, can’t be happening. “No.” His voice sounds somehow calm, yet hollow. “I don’t believe it. Show me.”

Volk shakes his head. “It’s not something you want to see, Dalton. Trust me, I’ve seen it. It’s him.”

“I don’t believe you. I can’t...I can’t...no. I’d know. I don’t believe it. He isn’t dead, I know he’s not.” There is a strange buzzing in his ears, he wishes it would stop. He needs to think.

Volk sighs as he shakes his head again, but reaches for the laptop on his desk. He spins it around to face Jack. “Are you really sure you want to see this? You can’t unsee it once you do and you’re going to regret it.”

“I have to. I don’t believe it. I’d know if he was dead. I’d know.”

It seems against his better judgement, but Volk presses play.

There’s Mac. On his knees next to Donovan, hands tied in front of him, chin high, a defiant look on his face. They’re surrounded by men with AK-47s, all with their faces covered, the ISIS flag
hanging behind them. One of the men starts speaking and the translation scrolls along the bottom of the screen.

“You know the penalty for your interference. This is our land and you are not welcome here.”

Another man steps forward with a pistol and points it at Donovan’s head. Donovan stays silent as he lifts his chin higher and closes his eyes. The shot rings out and Donovan falls. Mac jumps slightly at the shot and his eyes snap shut. He slowly opens them again as the gun is turned in his direction. He looks right into the camera and speaks. “I’m sorry, Jack.” And he moves. Mac had somehow gotten his hands free and turns toward the gunman, reaching for the gun as it goes off. Mac’s head snaps back and he falls.

“You were warned. You have now been warned again.”

The screen goes black. “I’m sorry, Dalton. I know that kid meant a lot to you. We’ll repay them a dozen times over. You have my word, we won’t give up.”

Jack sits frozen, staring at the black screen. He feels numb and all the air seems to have gone from the room...he can’t breathe. “Dalton?” The stupid buzzing in his ears is even louder. He realizes there are tears streaming down his face nonstop and unchecked. He doesn’t care.

----------------------
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

This is where this fic starts earning its MA rating. Last warning!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 2

The car pulls up to the Phoenix. Someone is talking but it takes a few minutes for Jack to realize it’s the driver trying to tell him they’ve arrived. Jack slowly gets out of the car, wincing slightly as he accidentally bumps his injured arm into the doorframe and starts moving towards the familiar building. He hears more talking behind him, then the driver is walking next to him trying to hand him his bag -right, he forgot it in the car. He nods silently to the driver, takes the bag and keeps walking. When did he get back here? He vaguely remembers plane flights and car rides, but it couldn’t be enough time to get all the way back to LA. Could it? It’s almost a 2 day trip after all. But here he is.

As he reaches the door, he looks blankly at the keypad trying to figure out what he’s supposed to do. Access code, access code, he chides himself internally while making several failed attempts and altogether forgetting how to work his fingers. He forgoes the endeavor and stares at it instead. What is he doing here? He shouldn’t be here. Except that his family is here. The friends that have become his chosen family are here, and they’re waiting for him.

Well, all but one.

The door opens in front of him. It’s Riley. Her eyes are red and there are tears sliding silently down her face. She wraps her arms around his neck and sobs into his chest. The bag slips out of his hand and he puts his good arm around her, holding her tightly. He should say something, but what can he say? It’s okay? It sure as hell isn’t okay and never will be again as far as he’s concerned. He settles for silence.

Slowly she untangles herself from him and just looks at him. He has bags under his eyes that say he hasn’t slept in days. The expression on his face says he’s only semi-aware of what’s happening around him and there’s a look in his eyes that scares her....empty and hollow, except a glimmer of what looks like panic brewing deep down. “Let’s go inside, Jack. Matty and Bozer are waiting.”

He wordlessly nods his head and lets her steer him through the door and up the elevator to the third
Bozer gets up from his seat as they walk into the War Room and hugs Jack briefly. Stepping back, Bozer asks “How are you holding up?” Jack just slowly looks at him. “Right. Stupid question. Sorry.” Jack makes his way over to one of the chairs and sits down heavily as Matty walks over. She knows some of what’s going on in his head.

“Jack, I’m so sorry. You know it wasn’t your fault, right? There is nothing you or anyone else could have done to protect Mac. It is not your fault.”

“Then who’s fault is it?” His voice is rough from not using it for days. “Protecting that kid was my only job on that whole assignment. It’s the reason you sent me and the reason they let me go!”

“It’s their fault, Jack! ISIS are the ones who took him. ISIS are the ones who killed him. It’s their fault and no one else’s, Jack. You need to know that. Mac would NEVER have blamed you for this, and he’d be pissed if he knew you blame yourself.”

“Yeah, but he doesn’t know does he? He doesn’t know anything anymore cuz that big old brain of his has a bullet in it, rotting somewhere in the desert because of me.”

Matty’s hand hits him across the face harder than he would have thought possible. His head snaps around and his eyes widen in shock. Tears well in his eyes as he turns back to look at her. He blinks and they start to fall.

“God, Matty. That should have been hard enough to wake me up. Why am I not waking up?”

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

They all sit on the back porch of Mac’s house later that day. Who’s house is it now? Jack wonders idly. Does Mac have a will? Matty and Riley are on the computer ordering flowers and setting up things for Mac’s memorial service on Friday. Since there isn’t a body and therefore no coffin, a photograph of Mac would serve as the center of the ceremony. Bozer is going through photos trying to find the perfect picture of his best friend to have enlarged.

Jack takes another sip of the beer in his hand without noticing that it’s warm and flat. He’s not really paying attention to the others, just grateful for their company. He’s more fixated on the
After a few more minutes, he can’t take anymore and gets to his feet. The others stop and sadly watch as he walks into the house. He hasn’t been able to help with any of the decisions for the memorial. He knows he should. Mac is his best friend, but doing so would make it too real somehow. He still can’t believe he’s gone. There’s so much he’s never said to him. He never told him, made a conscious decision, not to tell Mac he’d fallen for him, but now he can’t even change his mind if he wants to. Mac will never know. Was that the right choice?

He wanders into Mac’s room which hasn’t been touched. None of them can even think of going through Mac’s things yet to get rid of them. He sits on the side of the bed and looks at nothing in particular. Then he notices a box of paperclips on the nightstand and picks it up. Such a stupid thing, but it’s all it takes. He starts laughing and crying at the same time, finally falling apart into near hysterical sobs and collapsing into the sheets and pillows that still smell just like his best friend. This can’t really be happening.

Day 1

Mac slowly blinks awake. He doesn’t recognize the room he’s in. His mind automatically reaches back trying to recall how he got here. Had he really been laughing with Jack in the command tent just 3 days ago while meeting the team they’d be going into the field with?

He remembers starting to work on a bomb he’d found. It looked fairly simple. Not the type they were looking for, but he couldn’t just leave it there. He was about to cut the first wire when pain exploded in his chest at the same time he heard shots start ringing out and everyone started yelling. He’d hit the ground hard, looked down and seen a bullet in the center of his vest. He’d barely had time to register relief that there was no blood when something stung his arm. He looked over and saw a dart just below his right shoulder.

That’s all he can remember before waking up in a small room. He couldn’t have been out long. His body burns off sedatives too fast. The only light came from a single light bulb in the wall on the far side of the room and a dirty glass casing cut the light by half. As his eyes slowly adjusted he’d seen only an empty, filthy room, the floor covered in sand. Donovan lay a few feet from him, still unconscious. They spent 2 days in that room with the guards hitting them whenever they were bored. Then they were dragged in front of the cameras.

The next time he’d woken up had been a surprise. He’d thought he’d be dead. His head was pounding and he’d absently lifted a hand to it and felt something sticky in his hair. Looking at his
fingers he could see blood even in the dim light. He was alone. Donovan hadn’t been as...lucky? Mac remembered that he had tried to fight. He’d known it was pointless, but he couldn’t just sit there waiting to die on his knees. Then there had been people arguing outside his door and one of the guards who spoke broken English came in.

“I have news, little one. I have, how do you Americans say it, good news and bad news for you. Good news is you won’t be staying with us. Bad news is you won’t be staying with us. Good news? If you had stayed with us, you would have died sooner. Bad news is you would have died sooner. I do not envy the pain you will soon face. You may come to wish we had not sold you.”

He’d spent another 2 days in that little room, beaten a couple times a day and taunted with reminders of his having been purchased. Then one of the guards had stuck him with something, a needle maybe or another dart...doesn’t really matter.

At least he knows how he got here, but that doesn’t tell him where here is or who has him now. He slowly becomes conscious of his surroundings, starting with the fact that he’s cold, which might have something to do with the fact that he’s completely naked and laying on a cold stone floor. The whole room is gray stone, about 8 feet by 8 feet. It’s a lot cleaner than the last room he was kept in -that’s something. There’s a bright light above him that hurts his eyes a little. It’s caged into the ceiling almost 10 feet above him. There’s no furniture, nothing but a hole in the floor about 5 inches around. Well, at least it isn’t a bucket. There is a metal chain about 3 feet long attached to the back wall of the room opposite the door. The other end of which is attached to his left ankle. He sits up and the chain moves. A small window in the door slides open and he sees a pair of eyes looking in at him.

“The new toy is awake.” A man calls out as the window slams shut again. Mac hears talking outside but it’s too far away to make out the words. ‘New toy’...that sounds...ominous. Mac closes his eyes and mumbles under his breath “Shit. Come on, Jack. Tell me you didn’t believe that ISIS video. Please.”

The door opens and four men enter. Mac stands and does a very quick assessment as he’s trained to do: The three in front are not armed, smart. Someone like Jack would easily disarm one of these guys and really ruin their day. The man who stays by the door carries and M-16. They aren’t Arabic, their skin is too light. They’re big...like bigger than Jack big. They’re all taller than Mac, easily over 6 feet and are clearly regulars at the gym. Their shirts stretch over bulging muscles, not an ounce of fat.

Mac can handle himself well in a fight, but he wouldn’t really be a match for all three of them. Not without giving away the existence of the virus and he’s a little too vulnerable to risk that at this point. The guard second closest to the door is holding a pair of thick manacles which Mac assumes will be for his hands.
“Behave and we won’t hurt you. Kneel.” Mac doesn’t move.

The punch to his stomach is swift and bone breakingly strong. Mac feels a rib crack as he doubles over struggling to breathe, dropping to his knees.

“Hands.” Mac decides it’s better not to antagonize them further and save his strength. He lifts his hands up in front of him. Two guards stand to either side of Mac holding him in place while the guard with the manacles locks them around his wrists then moves to unlock the one tethering him to the wall.

“Time for you to meet the mistress. She is going to love you, pretty boy. She’s been waiting for you to wake up since she saw you brought in.” Mac places the accent as probably Russian.

They lead Mac out of the room and down the hall. Other guards start whistling and cat-calling at him. Very aware of the fact that he’s still naked, he feels his skin crawl at the predatory nature of some of the comments. It looks like he’s in some kind of basement or dungeon. The light isn’t as bright in the hall and the same gray stone lines the walls everywhere he looks.

They turn into a room that’s as brightly lit as his cell -almost painfully, or maybe it just seems that way because the walls, floor and ceiling are white. There’s a second door on the wall to the left as they enter. No other doors or windows. There’s a two foot square grate in the middle of the floor next to a small, plain, empty metal table that’s bolted to the floor and a simple chair. He’s led over and shackled by the ankles to the very short chains on the grate.

He hears a rattling sound and looks up. There’s a large hook hanging from the ceiling, and it’s lowering. The two foot long chain between his hands is looped over the hook and it’s raised again, pulling his arms up over his head until he is standing completely straight with his feet flat on the floor. It’s well done. The hook is big enough that there’s no way for him to unhook the chain and get his hands down, especially with his feet chained to the floor.

The three unarmed men leave by the same door they entered and the armed one moves behind him presumably to the other door. Several minutes pass before Mac hears the door behind him open and footsteps getting closer. A woman walks passed him and places a tablet on the table before turning to look at him. Her eyes move slowly over his body from head to toe and back up again. Her gaze lingering in places that make him uncomfortable. He feels extremely exposed and helpless...which of course, he is.
She isn’t much older than Mac, maybe about 30. Pretty, with long dark hair pulled back in a tight braid down her back. Her clothes are simple, blue jeans and a black button down shirt with several of the top buttons undone.

When her eyes finally travel up to his face again she steps forward and puts her hand on the side of his neck, brushing his cheek with her thumb.

“You have beautiful eyes.”

He stares back at her but says nothing. Her hand slides down over his chest, testing the muscle there. She starts to walk around him, still appraising and dragging her hand still lower, across his abs to his hip. As she steps behind him her hand lifts off him and starts again between his shoulder blades, traveling down his back and squeezing one of his cheeks. “Mmm, very nice.” Mac manages not to flinch until she steps back in front of him and her hand closes around him, slowly stroking. He stares at the wall in front of him willing his body not to respond, and only partially succeeding.

She leans forward to purr into his ear. “You might as well not fight it. I’m not going to stop until you cum for me.” Out of the corner of his eye he sees her head dip and his breath catches as she takes him in her mouth. It doesn’t last long, just long enough for lubrication then she returns to using her hand, moving faster. His mind is losing the battle with his body. He’s fully hard now and it’s not long before she gets what she wants and she’s purring in his ear again, “Good boy.” He hears snickering from the guards behind him as she steps back and turns to pick up the tablet from the table.

“Do you know me?”

It’s an odd question. How would he know her? He racks his brain for somewhere he may have seen her before. There is something vaguely familiar about her, but even his vampire assisted memory isn’t giving him anything. He gives no response and keeps his face blank.

“Very well. You may call me Masteritsa, everyone here does.” Mac recognizes the Russian word for mistress, confirming his thoughts about the accents earlier.

“I have a couple of things to show you. This first one is what the world saw 2 days ago.” She plays for him the video of ISIS shooting he and Donovan in the head. Damn...that looks fatal. As it finishes she walks around him again to look at the wound on his head. “My doctor tells me you turned just enough at just the right moment. The bullet only grazed your head, but it hit with enough force to knock you unconscious. You may have a slight skull fracture and/or concussion, but no serious damage. Unfortunately for you, it looks very convincingly like you died. So
convincingly in fact that this was in your newspaper this morning.”

She turns the tablet back to face him again. Mac sees a picture of himself and what is clearly an obituary. She turns it back to her and she reads. “‘A memorial will be held this Friday’….how sweet. I’m sure all of your friends and family will be there. This means of course, no one is coming for you. You’re going to die here. I’m going to kill you….eventually. How much pain…and pleasure…you have before that happens is entirely up to you.”

She closes the tablet and turns to put it on the table. Mac closes his eyes briefly, screaming in his head ‘Don’t you believe it, Jack!’ She slowly moves back up to him, looking slightly up into his eyes as she pulls something from her pocket…a scalpel. “Shall we get started now?” She makes a show of removing the protective sheath from the blade less than an inch from his face. Mac feels his pulse quicken as he looks at the blade and then at her eyes. The fire he sees there sends an involuntary shiver down his spine. He returns his gaze to the wall behind her.

Taking half a step back she slowly, gently drags the blade down his neck, scratching, but not cutting him. Reaching his collar bone, she applies a little pressure, slicing easily through the delicate skin, just deeply enough to draw blood. Mac gives a slight twitch of his eyes in response, but keeps his chin and breathing level.

“One.” She nicks him again near his shoulder. “Two.” She continues in this manner, counting each small cut as she circles him. “Eight, nine, ten.” Mac keeps mostly still and silent. “Thirty three, thirty four.” His breathing is faster and small gasps of pain escape against his will, but he says nothing. “Forty nine, fifty.” His body feels like it’s on fire. The dozens of little gashes stinging all together. She leans forward, licking a droplet of blood from his chest. “I’m impressed. Not even a whimper.” He looks down at her, hatred churning inside.

She turns to the guards behind him. “How many are waiting today?”

“Three, Masteritsa.”

“That’s all? Hmm.” She looks back to Mac. “An easy day for you.” Mac tries to figure out what she could be talking about. Three what?

She motions to the guards and walks away, moving the tablet from the table to the chair. Two guards lower the hook above Mac and unchain his feet. He is pushed roughly into the table, knocking the breath out of him. In the few seconds he’s winded, the chain on his wrists is secured to something below the other side of the table, bending him forward over it and his feet are tied to the legs of the table. Shit. Mac realizes the position he’s in as she moves to whisper in his ear
again. “If you relax, you might even enjoy this.” Panic starts to rise in Mac’s mind. He knows now what’s about to happen and he can’t help pulling at the restraints holding him. More snickering guards and a new voice right behind him...deeper, male.

“Ssshhh pretty boy. Listen to Masteritsa. Relax or this is really going to hurt. You. Not me. I’m going to love it either way.” Mac is truly panicking now. He buries his face between his arms so they won’t see his expression, but he can’t slow his ragged breathing. A hand touches his back and he feels someone lean over him, then a tongue licks a trail up his spine. Mac can’t stop the shiver that crawls all the way up his back, fogging his brain. There is no warning. Pain shoots through him as the man slams all the way into him and Mac cries out, feeling skin tear. A groan from the other man makes its way into Mac’s ears.

“Mmm...am I your first, pretty boy? I’m honored.” He pulls almost all the way out of Mac before driving back in again. More ripping, another small cry. The pace starts slow, then builds in speed and power as his rapist nears release. Mac clamps his mouth shut trying not to let them hear his pain, but he can’t hold it all in. Each time the man pulls back it burns just as painfully as each thrust. Finally, Mac hears his attacker cry out and feels him spilling into him. A wave of nausea follows the sensation. Disgust, shame and hopelessness join the jumbled thoughts and feelings chasing each other around his head.

“Thanks for that, pretty boy. Not to worry, I’ll be visiting you again soon.” He quickly pulls out of Mac drawing a gasp of pain from the blonde. It’s over, finally -except it’s not. Relief turns to dread as he remembers the guard’s words, “Three, Masteritsa.” By the time the third man is finished, it’s all Mac can do not to sob out loud. His entire body is burning. They were less than careful to avoid touching, scratching and grabbing all the cuts from the scalpel, not to mention all the ones on his chest and stomach that have been rubbing repeatedly on the metal table.

For the fourth time, Mac hears Masteritsa’s voice in his ear. “I’m jealous. The boys got more noise from you than I did. Challenge accepted. See you tomorrow, beautiful boy.” She kisses his temple and he hears her walking away.

Wait. ‘Beautiful boy?’ He’s heard that before...where?

The thought is driven from his mind as hands pull him up from the table. Fingers digging into the cuts on his arms. He’s roughly walked back to his cell, each step sends a jarring pain through him as the muscles in his backside flex and move. Once again made to kneel, the ankle chain is replaced and then the manacles are removed and the guards leave.

Mac stays on his knees for a moment before slowly, gently lowering himself to the floor on his side, back to the wall. The cold stone is soothing on the scalpel cuts. He slows his breathing and he begins to calm. Thoughts swirl chaotically in his mind. Is the obituary real? Or is it something she
created? If it’s real....he can’t think about that. Tears silently leak from his eyes onto the floor as he whispers into the air. “Jack, please. You know, you have to know, you always know. God Jack, please don’t leave me here. Please….help me.”

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

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think with kudos and comments!

By the way, you have to copy and paste the link, but this is the woman who I picture as Masteraitsa: https://www.pinterest.ch/pin/298926493989840875/
Chapter 3

Day 2

Mac sleeps fitfully, every noise waking him. The light in his cell is never turned off so he has no sense of time. A small amount of food and water are brought in twice. After what seems like forever -and yet no time at all -his four escorts are back and trading the ankle chain for the manacles. They take him to the same room and chain him to the hook in the ceiling and the floor grate as before. If he can still judge time with any accuracy, it’s over 20 minutes before the door opens behind him and he hears Masteritsa approach, coming around in front of him.

“Good morning, beautiful. I trust you slept well.” She runs her hand down his chest and immediately begins pumping his length hard and fast. Once again dipping her head to wet his shaft with her mouth briefly. “The boys have been talking about you. They’re very excited. They haven’t had such a pretty young thing to play with for quite some time.” Mac looks straight up cursing his traitorous body as it releases a stream of cum and a wave of pleasure courses through him.

“Mmm...such a stunning specimen of man. I am so glad you survived. I have no show and tell today so we’ll just dive right in, shall we?” She pulls the scalpel from her pocket and removes the cap. “Unless you would like to talk with me?” Mac takes a deep breath and focuses on the wall again. “As you wish.”

She proceeds like the day before. Counting each cut as she makes it. Mac’s breathing gradually gets faster and more ragged. Gasps and small sounds of pain are wrung from him but he doesn’t cry out or take his eyes from the wall. Another 50 cuts.

“That’s 100 cuts so far and I’ve gotten barely a sound from you. That’s a little frustrating. We’ll see how well you do tomorrow.” She turns to the guards behind him. “How many today?”

“Six, Masteritsa.”

Mac’s breath catches...twice as many. Something of the fear must show on his face because she smiles and approaches. “How about a deal?” He refuses to look at her. “I’ll send them all away and
let you go back to your room. You just have to tell me your name.” His eyes flicker to her in brief confusion...she already has his name, the obituary. She’s trying to create a crack...start him talking. He narrows his eyes at her then closes them. Taking a trembling breath, he lifts his chin and opens his eyes to stare back at the wall.

She chuckles. “So be it.” He hears the door open and decides that today, he won’t just take it. Though it’s doubtful he’ll be able to escape, he can at least cause them some problems. The guards remove the shackles from his legs and unhook his hands from the ceiling: that’s his cue. Mac lifts his left foot and kicks sideways into the knee of the guard on that side. He hears a satisfying snap and the guard goes down, screaming and holding his knee. Mac turns and slams the manacle on his wrist into the face of the guard on his right side as more hands try to grab him. Another crunch of bone and the guard’s nose begins to bleed freely.

Mac’s head snaps sideways as a fist meets his jaw. There are too many. Then a taser hits him just below his ribs on his right side. He locks his jaw as he falls, refusing to scream. He’s dragged to the table and secured as before. He tries to fight, but his muscles still aren’t completely obeying his commands.

He hears Masteritsa’s angry voice behind him. “Ivan, come here.”

“Yes, Masteritsa?”

“You know how I feel about damaging their faces! After all, how else will people easily identify the bodies?”

“He was fighting Masteritsa. I was just trying to...”

“That is what the taser is for. Let me show you.” Mac hears the telltale clicking of the taser as the guard is punished. “Understand?”

“Yes, Masteritsa.”

“Good.” There’s more clicking, lasting longer this time and the guard screams. “Be sure not to forget again.”

Masteritsa’s face appears before Mac. “Naughty boy. You injured two of my men and caused a
third to forget the rules.” Mac smirks at her and she responds by grabbing a fistfull of his hair and wrenching his head up. “You will pay for that,” as she lets go, she shouts, “Send the boys in.”

Mac hears the guard with the broken knee being helped from the room as more sets of feet enter. “Boys, show him what happens when he fights.” An icy chill slithers down his spine. Shit, he really is going to pay.

The first man leans in front of him and sneers at him. “I don’t get why you’re fighting. You chose this. She offered to let you skip it. All you had to do was tell her something you know she already knows. You chose to let us fuck you. You know what I think? I think you enjoy it as much as we do, and I wouldn’t want to deny you what you clearly want.”

It’s brutal. More forceful and violent than yesterday. They deliberately dig their fingers into the cuts covering him and the fourth guy decides to rape him twice, not content with just the once. When they’re finally done, Masteritsa’s voice is in his ear again. “I hope you’ve learned your lesson, my beautiful boy, and you’re more cooperative tomorrow.”

Back in his cell laying on the floor, Mac is in agony. His whole body hurts. The second round of rapes has left him even more torn and bleeding. The cuts are still oozing blood and stinging constantly. Every muscle aches from tension and strain and he can feel a bruise forming across the front of his hips where the table repeatedly hits him. Not to mention the heated bruises were the prongs of the taser were pressed into his side. All in all, it seems that fighting was a bad move. It felt good at the time, but the punishment had not been worth it. Fighting is not his forte. He’ll never escape that way. He needs to wait for an opening he can take advantage of...not one Jack would use...Jack. “Come on, man. Get me out of here.”

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

Mac’s third and fourth days at Materitsa’s mercy go pretty much the same. Each day she begins by making him cum, followed by 50 more cuts with the scalpel and the promise of sending the boys away if he simply tells her his name; each day he refuses. If he can manage it, he’s never going to let her hear him speak...not a word.

Of course, if he keeps bleeding without getting more blood, he’ll be in real trouble anyway. It’s already been eleven days since his last dose. He needs almost a pint a week to keep up optimum levels even when he’s not injured. The cuts are shallow and as fast as he heals, they aren’t bleeding much, but it adds up. At this point, he figures he’s about 1 1/2 to 2 pints low. Which means at this rate, he’ll be dead in a little over a week and starting to go into shock in half that time.

Where are you, Jack?
Riley helps Bozer with his tie, fixing the knot and smoothing it out. “Is Jack any better?”

“I don’t know, Ri. I did finally get him to eat some food yesterday and he told Matty he’d deliver Mac’s eulogy, but he woke up in the middle of the night last night yelling about how he had to go find Mac and he can’t just leave him there.”

“So he’s still sleeping in Mac’s bed?”

“He hardly comes out of that room, Ri. I’m starting to get really worried.”

“Maybe this memorial is just what he needs. Maybe it will help him face it so he can start to process and heal a little.”

“I hope so. And I’ve written a eulogy too, in case he can’t do it.”

With a sad smile she says, “So did I.”

Together they walk into Mac’s room and see Jack sitting on the edge of Mac’s bed, like always. Only now he’s wearing a black suit, his left arm in a black sling. His eyes are still vacant, disbelieving. His face is drawn, proving he hasn’t really slept and Bozer knows he’s been drinking too much and eating not enough. “Ready Jack?” Bozer asks softly.

Jack turns to look at them, then back down at the box of paperclips he’s holding. “I don’t think I’ll ever be ready for this, Boze, but we can go.” He still doesn’t move until Riley gently takes the paperclips from him and puts them back on the nightstand. Then he slowly rises and allows her to lead him from the room and to the car.

The drive to the memorial is silent. Bozer keeps glancing back at Jack in the rearview mirror as he drives. Jack is peering out the window like he doesn’t really see anything. When they park the car and get out, Jack again needs prompting. He steps out of the vehicle and just stares at the building.

“Let’s go inside, Jack.” Urges Riley.
“I can’t. I...I don’t think…”

“Come on.” She gently pulls him towards the door and he complies. As they enter the hall they see Matty just inside greeting everyone. She has the look of someone holding everyone together by sheer will. Her best team is devastated, maybe beyond repair and the rest of her agency is in mourning. Mac was well liked by those who knew him and well respected even by those who never personally interacted with him. Still, she smiles at each person, shaking their hands and thanking them for coming.

“Hey guys. Our seats are up front on the left.”

Bozer kneels to hug Matty. “I’ll stay here for now and help you greet people.”

She holds on perhaps a little longer than she ordinarily would, grateful for the support. “Thank you, Bozer. That would be nice.”

Riley leads Jack up front. She turns to sit but Jack stops. “Just give me a minute, Ri.” She nods and takes her seat while Jack walks up to the picture of Mac. Bozer did good. He remembers this day and the photo perfectly captures all the things Mac is.

As if he expects the picture to come to life and answer, he whispers aloud, “Talk to me Mac. Why am I feeling this...this restless panic? Like I should be back out there in the desert looking for you. Why do I feel like none of us should be here right now?”

The hall is quickly filling with people and Jack stays where he is, staring at a picture from the birthday party that Mac finally agreed to allow, and waiting. For what, he can’t say...just waiting.

Eventually, Matty takes his hand and guides him to their seats without a word. A woman heads up to the podium and starts to talk. He doesn’t know her. Jack hears something about a ‘brave sacrifice’ and a ‘promising life cut violently short.’ Jack tunes her out: he can’t listen to this generic shit. This woman is talking about a man she clearly doesn’t really know. Brave sacrifice? Mac would never see it that way. He just does what he needs to, or did what he needed to. He still can’t think past tense about Mac. He’s lost people before and not had this problem. Why now?

“Jack? You still want to do this? Bozer and I will do it if you can’t.” Riley offers soothingly.
Right, he’s supposed to speak now. “I got it.” Jack gets to his feet and makes his way to the podium trying to focus…the buzzing in his ears is back. He puts his good hand on the podium and takes a slow, deep breath to calm himself, it doesn’t help. He still feels like he needs to run, hit something, do anything. He looks at the picture again.

“Hey Mac.” He turns to the front row. “That’s a great picture, Boze.” Pointing at it before turning back to the room. “When Matty asked me to speak today, of course I agreed, and I did actually try to write what I was going to say, but nothin’ worked, nothin’ sounded right. Many of you know me, I ain’t exactly what any of you would call eloquent.” There was some snickering in the crowd.

“God there is so much I want to say to him.” He says glancing back at the picture. “Then again, he probably knows.” He chuckles as he adds “That man knows everything. Smartest man I’ve ever met. I actually watched him make a lightsaber out of a flashlight once.” People laugh as he continues. “No lie, I swear to God…a flashlight and pieces of some old radio he found laying around…unreal. It worked, too! Cut a hole in the wall with it!” More laughter fills the hall as Jack smiles at the memory.

“This is still so surreal to me.” His voice is quivering, a knot starting to form in his throat. ”This just doesn’t feel right to me. Probably because it’s not.” Tears start to well in his eyes. “There ain’t nothing about this that’s right. That kid is 15 years younger than me…he wasn’t supposed to….“ He froze. He’d said it, “wasn’t,” past tense. Tears instantly spill down his face in a nearly steady stream.

“Damn. Thought I’d get further before I lost it.” Jack tries to control his breathing at least a little as he sees Riley get up and come over to him, putting one hand on his far shoulder and rubbing his good arm with her other hand. She’s crying too. “Thanks, baby.” Another shaky breath and Jack tries to proceed. “Mac is…was…. His throat closes and he can’t stop shaking. He’s only getting air in staccato puffs. “Okay, nope, sorry. I can’t…I’m done.” Is this what a panic attack feels like? His eyes dart frantically around the room before settling on Riley next to him. Riley puts her arms around him. “It’s okay, Jack. I’ll take it.”

Jack nods his head to her and quietly tells her “I gotta get some air.” Jack steps away on unsteady legs and heads for the door. Bozer moves to go with him, but Jacks waves him back. “I’m fine. I just need a minute. I’ll be right back.”

Jack doesn’t return. When the memorial ends 45 minutes later, Bozer, Riley and Matty head outside expecting to find Jack pacing or sitting in the car. After several minutes of searching, they still haven’t found him and Matty’s phone buzzes in her purse. She looks at the number, frowns slightly and answers. “Webber.” Her frown turns into shock and then her eyes close. “Condition?” A slow exhale as her eyes open and then, “Keep me posted.”
Riley and Bozer watch this exchange with fear. They’ve seen that expression only once before...when she told them Mac was dead. They wait anxiously as Matty hangs up and takes a few steadying breaths. Bozer can’t take it anymore. “What’s wrong?”

“Oh God.” Matty whispers as she closes her eyes again and puts a hand over her mouth.

“Matty?” Riley asks hesitantly...she doesn’t really want to know.

“Jack is on his way to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. He went home, and his neighbor called the police when she heard a gunshot from his apartment.”

Riley is starting to panic. “Jack’s been shot?!!”

Matty closes her eyes again briefly before gulping enough air to answer. “Self-inflicted.”

Riley collapses into Bozer crying hysterically as he stands silent in complete shock, holding her up.

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

Chapter End Notes

I love the idea that the bond between Mac and Jack is so strong that it's almost like twins. Hope you don't think it's too hokey! (I'm also a sci-fi fan, so hey, telepathy is cool).
Chapter 4

Day 5

Mac lay on the floor of his cell trying not to move and aggravate his injuries. Any minute they’re going to come get him again and he’s starting to wonder how much more he can take. Jack has never let him down before and he won’t now. He just has to hold on a little longer, he won’t give up. He just hopes his body cooperates with that plan. He hears the door open and lets out a sigh, here we go. His body is on autopilot as he gets slowly to his knees and lifts his arms.

“Good boy, but today is going to be a little different.” Mac lowers his hands. “Stand up and move over by the hole in the floor.” As Mac begins to move, another man comes in with a hose. “Time for a shower.” Mac lets out another small sigh, aware of how much the spray is going to hurt as it digs into all the cuts, but he also knows it’s a good thing if they get cleaned out.

It doesn’t hurt as much as he anticipated. The jet from the hose is not as powerful as he would have thought and the water is very, very cold so it has a numbing effect...surprisingly kind of them. Or maybe it’s just practical--heating water takes electricity and electricity isn’t free. Still, he can’t help feeling a little grateful for small favors... dangerous. Of course now he’s freezing, but hey. “Now you can kneel.”

As his four escorts leave him chained in the now horribly familiar torture room, the door behind him opens almost immediately. “Good morning, beautiful boy. How did you like the shower?” Her voice bores into his mind forging a loathing unlike any he’s ever felt in his life. “Still won’t speak to me? Hmm….you have a guest. Vadim has missed you.”

“Hey pretty boy.” Mac knows that voice and sees the man attached to it for the first time as he steps in front of him. Short but fit, with short black hair. Plain jeans and a t-shirt. “You remember me, sweetie? I had the very great pleasure of popping your cherry.” Hatred boils in Mac’s brain. Of course he remembers... the first in line to rape him.

“Masteritsa has very kindly agreed to let me help with you this morning.” He wraps a rough hand...
around Mac’s cock and starts stroking him. Mac can’t fight the urge to spit in the man’s face. Vadim stops his hand and lifts it to wipe his face, then smiles. “Okay honey, we can do this another way.” And he drops to his knees. It’s Masteritsa’s turn to smirk at Mac as she watches him struggle not to react to Vadim’s mouth.

“It never fails to amaze me.” She coos while circling him, caressing his arms and back, carefully avoiding the gashes. “The male body is so primal. No matter what your mind is thinking, you will always succumb to the basic, the carnal. You can’t help yourself.”

And she’s right. A tremor surges through him as he cums down Vadim’s throat. Angry and humiliated, he closes his eyes, struggling to master himself. “Mmm...maybe I’ll see you tomorrow, pretty boy. Better yet, maybe I’ll come back in when she’s done for the day.” Vadim slaps him on the ass as he walks toward the door and leaves.

Masteritsa saunters up to him and kisses his cheek. “I think he liked it better that way. How about you, beautiful boy? Would you prefer my hand or his mouth for tomorrow?” Mac simply glares at her. “I guess I’ll surprise you.”

She walks behind Mac. “As your escort should have told you, today will be new for you. The scalpel doesn’t seem to be working. There are now 200 of these little slashes on your body and they haven’t created even a small scream, and they’re already closing up somehow.” He feels her finger running over one of them on the back of his shoulder. “So it’s time to change things up.”

Mac tries to keep her in his line of sight to see what she is planning, but he can’t turn around. He can only turn enough to see her in his peripheral vision. She walks up to the side of him, there’s something in her hand partially hidden behind her leg. He doesn’t get the chance to figure out what it is before she swings it into his back.

The surprise attack forces half a scream to issue from him before he clamps his mouth shut over it. It’s a thin, flexible piece of wood...a switch. Mac feels the skin rip open across his back as it hits and the tickling of blood oozing from it. His breathing is already almost a pant.

“Ooooo, close. That’s one.” The switch whips across his back again, creating another bleeding gash. “Two.” Mac grits his teeth, determined not to scream. He makes it to 15 before any sound more than a grunt or choked wheeze escapes. It’s half strangled, but it’s definitely a scream. “Very good, but you can do better.” She reaches 20 and stops. His breaths are coming in painful gasps.

“I think that’s enough for today. We’ve made some progress, but I think we can do better. How many today, Anton?”
“Four, Masteritsa.” Mac feels like he could cry, but holds it back. He won’t give her the satisfaction.

She comes back around in front of him holding the bloody switch. “You’ve been through a lot today my beautiful boy. Would you like to take my offer to send them away? All it takes is your name.” Slowly, Mac drops his head looking at the floor and releasing a trembling breath, shaking his head no. “Are you sure? You know I already have it.” Mac closes his eyes tightly, draws himself up, lifts his head and opens his eyes to the wall.

-----------

Day 6

Mac is roughly awoken by hands dragging him off the floor of his cell. “Wake up, time to go.” His escorts already have the manacles on him and are removing the chain from his ankle. “Move,” they order, pulling him to his feet. As they enter the other room, Mac sees Vadim sitting in the chair by the table. He ogles Mac openly as the escorts chain him up and leave.

“Morning, pretty boy.” Mac ignores him, resuming his now customary habit of staring at the wall. “Sorry I didn’t get to come back yesterday, I was held up. I promise I won’t miss out today when she’s done, and Masteritsa says I get to pleasure you from now on. You seem to enjoy it more.” Mac narrows his eyes at the wall but otherwise gives no response.

Time drags by. Vadim continues to leer at him but says nothing more. After about half an hour, Masteritsa finally enters. “Good morning, beautiful boy. Sorry to keep you waiting. We had a little trouble with another guest. He died. Pity...he was just getting interesting. At least Vadim was here to keep you company. I do hope I didn’t miss the show.

Vadim jumps to his feet. “Of course not Masteritsa! I would never deprive you of that!”

“That’s because you know better Vadim. Proceed.”

Vadim grins hungrily at Mac as he approaches. Mac tries to focus on something else, anything else as Vadim gets to work on him, and only manages to delay the inevitable. Vadim’s mouth pulls on Mac, his hand twisting around the base of his shaft. It’s quickly effective and Vadim moans as Mac shivers through the orgasm wrung from him. Vadim pulls away from him with a small pop and continues stroking him with his hand. “Want another one, pretty boy?”
“Enough Vadim, later.” Masteritsa chides him with a smile.

Vadim reluctantly removes his hand and stands up. “You got me all worked up now, pretty boy. I can’t wait until she’s done.” He licks up Mac’s neck and gently bites his jaw. Mac pulls away as much as he’s able with his restraints. “Don’t play coy, pretty boy. We both know how much you look forward to having me inside you. See you soon.”

Masteritsa chuckles as Vadim leaves and she picks up the tablet Mac hadn’t even noticed. “He’s really quite taken with you.”

She turns on the tablet and starts flipping through a menu. “I have something for you to see. I couldn’t resist letting you see your own funeral, so I had a couple of friends attend it for you. They got some great footage.” Mac’s blood goes cold. “No...not possible.” “You’re going to love this. Is this Jack? The one you apologized to before they shot you.” She turns the tablet around to show him the paused video. There’s Jack, standing at the podium next to a picture of him; Mac can’t stop the look of pain and surprise as his jaw drops at the hollow look on Jack’s face.

“Ah, so that is Jack. He’s cute.” Mac pulls himself together and tries to make his face a blank mask again, but he knows his eyes still say more than enough. Then she presses play. He watches as Jack fights through the eulogy and then Riley takes over and Jack leaves.

The video switches to outside as Jack walks out of the hall. He goes about 30 feet from the door and stops, chest heaving as he struggles for air. Mac’s heart breaks as Jack’s face crumbles into sobs and he sinks to his knees. Jack’s hands ball into fists as he puts them to his temples and lowers his head almost to the ground, rocking back and forth.

Suddenly, Jack gets up, walks over to the nearest car and breaks the back window with a rock. Reaching in, he unlocks it and gets in behind the wheel. He leans forward, clearly hot-wiring the car then drives away, tires spinning out. As the video ends, Mac realizes that there are tears leaking from his eyes that he hadn’t even noticed. Masteritsa ambles up to him and licks a tear from his face. “That...is even better than a scream.”

She puts the tablet on the chair and walks behind him again briefly before moving back up to stand on his left side. “Ready?” Mac tries to relax, knowing that tensing up his muscles will only make it hurt more, then he nods his head yes and closes his eyes. Shit! He already forgot just how much this hurts. She only gets to 11 before the switch hits a spot it’s hit previously. A true scream issues from him for the first time.
“Wooo, very nice! I bet you can get louder though.” She whips him even harder. He manages to choke back part of the scream but he’s in tears. He can’t help it. It feels like his back is literally on fire. The next lash forces another full scream. He’s losing control and he can’t hold them back anymore.

“Now we’re really getting somewhere!” Another lash and another scream. And another, and another. When she finally reaches 20, he’s just trying not to sob audibly. “Excellent, my beautiful boy.” She purrs at him before looking to the guard. “Four. Masteritsa,” is the answer to her unasked question. “As always, your name gets them sent away.” Still crying, his body trembling, he shakes his head. “No? Very well.”

Vadim is present as promised, and makes up for the fact that he missed out yesterday by exuberantly taking him twice today. Mac has to be half marched, half carried back to his cell. His back is shredded so badly the muscles don’t want to work. By the time they leave him in his cell, he can barely move at all.

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

Day 7

Mac hasn’t really slept. The pain in his back is excruciating. Yesterday’s lashing is easily the most painful thing he has ever experienced, and there is sure to be more today. Without more blood, even the virus can’t heal this much damage. The small scalpel cuts are one thing. None of those are even open anymore. But the gashes from the switch are bigger, deeper. The bleeding is slower than it would be for someone else, but he’s still losing too much blood. He’s lost at least another half a pint. His survival window is closing rapidly.

His emotional torment however, is far worse than anything physical. The look on Jack’s face when he collapsed outside the funeral haunts him. The level of raw emotion from his best friend was like nothing Mac had ever witnessed. He’s seen Jack upset before, but he seemed to completely shatter before Mac’s eyes.

The funeral, the eulogy, and Jack’s broken hearted reaction mold into the horrific realization that Jack isn’t coming for him, no one is coming for him. They think he’s already dead. Despair threatens to overwhelm him. What the hell is he going to do? The system here doesn’t seem to have any weaknesses to exploit. There’s nothing in this room for him to do anything with and outside of this room -the short stretch of hallway and the torture room -he is heavily guarded and chained.

Is he really going to die here? At this point he has to admit, the odds are stacked that way. So what now? Does he give up? Can he really bring himself to do that? Or should he use what little strength
he has left to fight, even if they kill him for it? At least the pain would stop...he knows his body won’t take much more.

There’s talking outside his door. His escorts already? He’d have thought it’s early yet. The door opens and Vadim steps in alone, closing the door behind him. “Hey, pretty boy. I thought we could spend some quality time together before she rips you open again.” He starts to undo his belt and pants, licking his lips. Mac doesn’t move or respond, just stays laying on his side watching as Vadim moves closer.

Vadim kneels next to Mac and begins to lean over him. That’s when Mac strikes. He knocks Vadim’s arm out from under him and spins him around so that as he falls, his back is against Mac’s chest. Mac quickly wraps his right arm around Vadim’s throat to keep him from calling out. But Mac is injured and weak, Vadim is not. Vadim struggles enough to gulp some air and yell. Mac’s muscles are screaming in protest at the exertion, but he refuses to submit to his body’s demand to stop.

Mac hears yelling in the hall and guards running...he doesn’t have much time. He wraps his leg around Vadim to hold him and regains control of his neck. His left hand slides up and around the back of Vadim’s neck and his right grabs the side of Vadim’s face. With all the strength he can muster, Mac pulls Vadim’s chin to the right. He hears a crunching snap and Vadim goes still. He quickly shoves the body off of him, works free the tongue from Vadim’s belt buckle and tucks it into the corner of the room. His only chance will be after most of the guards are sleeping. Then he slumps to the floor, exhausted.

He waits less than a minute before the door opens again and guards enter. Mac doesn’t move. He’s not even sure if he can. One guard grabs Vadim’s arm and drags him from the room. The others simply glare at Mac until one says “She’s going to kill you for this...I hope it’s slow.” They leave, surprisingly without touching him.

Today when they raise the hook securing his hands they go higher, lifting his feet from the floor so his toes only brush the grate beneath him. The manacles bite into his wrists as they hold up his entire body weight. His back screaming as the gashes are pulled and stretched.

The door opens immediately and quick, angry footsteps approach. Masteritsa charges around in front of him and slaps him across the face with astonishing strength. Spots explode in Mac’s vision as she hisses through clenched teeth “You killed two of my men.” Mac isn’t positive how he killed two men since he only killed Vadim, but he can guess that the guard was severely punished for allowing Vadim into his cell alone.

In that moment, something in Mac snaps and he starts to laugh. It’s the half crazy laugh of a man who knows he’s about to die and there’s nothing he can do about it. She hits him again and he
laughs harder, his sides aching. She walks away hollering “Douse him!”

A powerful jet of water hits him square in the back. His laugh becomes a scream as the spray rips into the wounds on his back. A guard walks around him with the hose. The pressure is so high that even the patches of skin *not* already injured throb beneath the spray. Then it’s directed into his face, and stays there. Mac coughs and gags, turning his head into his arms struggling to breathe. It stops as abruptly as it started.

Masteritsa walks back in front of him. “I had planned on more lashes today, but your little stunt this morning has changed my mind.” Mac hears something being rolled into the room behind him. It’s brought all the way up in front of him and he feels his heart begin to race and his breathing hitches. His jaw drops slightly and his eyes widen in fear as he takes in the two paddles connected to a small generator...electric shock. Now he understands the water, better conductivity.

“Aren’t you so glad you angered me, beautiful boy?” Mac can’t entirely suppress a whimper as a guard forces a thick strip of cloth into his mouth and ties it behind his head. Masteritsa powers up the generator and turns a couple of knobs, adjusting the settings before picking up the paddles. She touches them together and they spark.

Mac is terrified and he can’t hide it. His whole body is shaking, his breathing is shallow and trembling, tears sting his eyes. “I guess you should have considered the repercussions before you acted so rashly. Are you ready for you punishment?” She approaches slowly, savoring his obvious fear as he tries to pull back as far as he can. Then she reaches out with the paddles and touches one to each side of him at the very bottom of his ribcage.

Unimaginable pain.

A sound like nothing he has ever made rips from his throat as his body convulses. It lasts for days - or seconds. He can’t tell. When the paddles are finally removed, his body continues to twitch painfully for several seconds. His breathing is erratic and his heart feels like it’s about to beat a hole right out of his chest.

When the spasms eventually stop, she does it again. He can’t breathe. His teeth have clamped down onto the cloth in his mouth and his head feels like it might actually explode. This time when she pulls away, it takes longer for the tremors to stop. She gives him a moment to actually breathe, before shocking him a third time. By the time it stops, Mac is nearly unconscious.

He’s vaguely aware of his feet touching the grate and then his knees. He can’t even open his eyes, his muscles won’t obey even the smallest commands. He hears Masteritsa’s voice above him
coming from what sounds like a mile away “Wake him!” Smelling salts are stuffed under his nose. His head instinctively jerks away and his eyes snap open. He’s already chained to the table.

Her face blurs into his vision before his eyes can focus. Her silky purr is back as she whispers into his ear, “Hedeon will be the only one to play with you today, but don’t think that means you are getting off easy. Hedeon is the...um... biggest man here and believe me, he knows how to use it. And wait until you see his stamina.” She kisses him on the temple and backs away.

It’s as vicious as she warned. Hedeon isn’t just big, he’s huge. The rapes up until now had become less and less painful and more purely humiliating. This is back to square one. Hedeon literally tears into Mac. Ripping him open more than anyone prior. He also doesn’t hold onto Mac for leverage. While it’s good to not have his hands digging into the lacerations all over him, what he does instead is worse.

He grabs the table, allowing him more solid purchase to pull himself into Mac harder and deeper. His pace is merciless, gaining speed as he builds his own excitement. When he finally spills into Mac, he waits the space of a few heartbeats before starting again. Sometime toward the end of the forth time, Hedeon is slamming him so hard that Mac feels his left hip give and dislocate, adding to the cacophony of pain his body is already experiencing.

Hedeon doesn’t even slow down. Just the opposite, he laughs while Mac screams and then adjusts his grip to go even more ferociously. The guards behind them are cheering him on and it seems there’s quite the audience, at least a dozen. Mac screams with every thrust now. By the time Hedeon is finished with round five Mac is sobbing, every part of him feels broken.

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

7,500 miles away, Jack wakes up screaming for his partner, pulling frantically on the restraints holding him to the hospital bed.

Chapter End Notes

The Russian name Hedeon means 'Destroyer'
Chapter 5

7,500 miles away, Jack wakes up screaming for his partner, pulling frantically on the restraints holding him to the hospital bed. “Mac! Maaaac! Let me go, I’ve got to get Mac! Please!”

Riley jumps up from the chair she fell asleep in, blanket falling to the floor as she runs over to him. “Jack! Jack, stop! You’re going to hurt yourself!” She’s trying desperately to stop his thrashing around. “Please, Jack. Sshhh.”

“Baby, you gotta let me go. I can’t just sit here. I’ve gotta go find him, Ri. I can’t leave him out there!” His eyes are wild and he’s shaking. He’s still trying, though less violently, to get out of the restraints.

“Mac’s dead!” She screams at him. Jack stops moving, staring at her in shock. “You think that’s easy for me to say? You think I don’t miss him, too? Do you think I want to believe this is real?” She’s crying and not even bothering to try to hide it from him. “But Jack, I can’t lose you, too. Please, you have to stop this.”

“Ri, I can’t explain it. I really wish I could. I can’t shake the feeling that he’s not dead. I hear him screaming in my sleep. Hell, even if he is gone, the idea of him just rotting out there, picked apart by birds is driving me nuts.”

She sits on the side of his bed and wraps her arms around him. “I know, Jack. It bothers me too, that they haven’t found him. But Jack, what are you going to do? Search the entire desert all by yourself? And if you really believe that Mac is still alive, why would you do that?” She points to the bandage on his chest. “Jack, you shot yourself. You missed your heart by less than half an inch!”

“I know, Ri. I know. And I know I’m scaring the hell out of you and I’m so, so sorry for that. I’ve always said I go where he goes. When I was supposed to rotate home and he still had time left in Afghanistan, I signed back on for another tour so I could stay to watch his back. When he decided to resign from the Army, I left with him. Same when he came here to work. Ri, I don’t know what to do without him anymore. I just kind of cracked. I doubted what I knew in my heart - he’s alive, Ri.”
She pulls back to look him in the eye. “So that’s it? You regret shooting yourself and it would never, never happen again?”

He can’t look at her. “Riley.”

“You don’t regret it do you?” She asks sadly. “You’d do it again if you really believed he’s gone.”

“Not unless I find him. Not unless I know for sure.”

She gets up, picks the blanket up off the floor and puts it in the chair, and heads for the door. “Go to sleep, Jack. I’ll come back in the morning.” She leaves him alone.

As she walks out into the main hospital area of Phoenix, she sees Matty waiting for her. “Any progress with him, Riley?” Matty can hear Jack still calling out to Riley, practically begging her to release him.

Tears continue to leak from Riley’s eyes as she answers. “He doesn’t regret it. He said so. He’s convinced Mac is still alive and wants to go find him. But he’ll do it again if he finds out he’s really gone.” She shakes her head as she looks at the floor. “What are we going to do, Matty? I don’t know how to reach him.”

Matty takes her hands. “We stay with him. We help him the best way we can. He will get through this. He just has to face it first. I’ll sit with him for a while, you go get some sleep.”

Matty watches as Riley leaves and then goes into Jack’s room, closing the door securely.

“How’s that feeling?” she says pointing at the wound in his chest.

“I’m fine, but Mac is not.”
“You still think he’s alive?”

“I know he is, Matty. Don’t ask me to explain it, I can’t. I’ve always trusted my gut and it’s telling me he’s alive, but hurt, and getting worse. If he survived the gunshot, how long would he have?”

Matty looks at him intently for a moment. “Just a minute.” She leaves the room briefly and when she returns Dr. Janet Lewis is with her.

“Matty says you have some questions about the virus?”

Jack lights up a little looking quickly at Matty who nods for him to proceed. “Yes. Yes, I do.”

“I’ll answer what I can.”

“Ok, assuming I’m right, and Mac’s alive, how long does he have?”

“Hmm. There are a lot of factors that can affect that. In normal, daily life, your body loses almost a pint of blood a week, just through the natural breakdown and replacing of cells in the body. That’s why he gets a pint of blood each week -to replace what’s lost. On average, an adult male can lose about three pints before starting to slip into shock, and around four is considered potentially fatal, the heart doesn’t really have enough blood to pump effectively. Those like Mac who are infected with vampire anemia have a little bit longer, but it’s only marginal.”

“So, roughly four weeks and it’s been almost two.”

“That’s assuming he isn’t injured at all. If he’s bleeding, that timeline would get shorter depending on how bad it is. Injured or not, he would get gradually weaker as his blood level drops. You’re saying he’s hurt, and you saw him go down when the shooting started. Could you tell if he was hit or bleeding?”

“No. I got hit at the same time. I couldn’t get to him.” His eyes dropped to the floor.

“You’re also forgetting...Jack, we saw him shot in the head. Even if he somehow survived that, head wounds bleed a lot. He probably lost at least half a pint, maybe closer to a pint just from that.
Plus a pint and a half just due to time. That’s puts him going into shock within the next few days, even without other injuries.”

“All the more reason to let me go. I have to find him before he runs out of time! Please!”

“Jack, with that injury, you aren’t going to be much help.” Matty says. He inhales to argue and she holds up a hand to stop him and amazingly he obeys. “We’re still looking for him.” Hope blooms across Jack’s face. “We haven’t completely given up. But Jack, you need to accept the possibility that he’s truly gone and we may never find his body.”

“If you get a lead, you’ve got to let me go. Wounded or not. I’m beggin’ here, Matty. Please.”

“If we get a lead, it’ll probably be on the other side of the world, Jack. I doubt you want them to wait almost a day for you to get there before they act on it. So rest, heal. And I promise I will keep you informed if I hear anything.”

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

Day 8

Mac is spent. He’s hardly moved since his escorts unceremoniously dropped him into his cell once Hedeon was finished with him. He’s not really sure how he managed it, but he somehow succeed in relocating his hip. He was also able to swallow the glass of water and small bowl of some kind of porridge that was brought to him, but that’s it. He knows he doesn’t have much time left. He’s lost enough blood that he’s feeling a little lightheaded. His body is broken and his spirit is little better. He has two chances left and only one is up to him.

It’s hard to know the time for sure with the lights never being turned off, but Mac is pretty sure it’s the middle of the night. He retrieves the belt tongue from the corner where he stashed it and goes to work on the shackle on his ankle. It doesn’t take long, then he quietly moves to the door.

He hears nothing through the door. He starts on the lock, hoping the guard won’t hear it and realize what it is. He hears the click of the lock and waits. Maybe the guard doesn’t stand at his door at night, but makes rounds? Could he really be that lucky? Slowly, cautiously he turns the doorknob.

He knows how loud the hinges are on this door. The moment he starts to swing it open anyone in the area will know. But he has no choice. As gently as possible he moves the door open. He’s able to open it several inches before it begins to creak and he stops to look out. The hallway is lit, he can
As quickly as possible he opens the door enough to step out and then pulls it shut again. He’s right, it’s really loud. He hears someone to the left, talking, alarmed, so he goes right. He walks unsteadily down the hall and turns right into the next hall -dead end, he leans against the wall, panting. He is having a harder time moving than he thought and he’s dizzy. He needs to get out fast if he’s going to make it.

He goes back and peeks around the corner into the main hall. There are guards coming, 6 of them, and they head straight to his cell. As soon as they see it empty they split up. How the hell did they know it was him? One of them calls out “You might as well show yourself little one. There are only two ways off of this floor and they’re both guarded and locked. And you won’t get anywhere near them without passing several security cameras. You’re probably on one of them now. If you come out, it will hurt a lot less than if we have to find you.”

Cameras. What an idiot. Of course they have cameras. There’s probably one in his cell. His brain really must not be working right if he didn’t even consider that possibility. Then he hears another guard. “He’s in the hall on the right.” Shit, they can see him. He drops his shoulders and sighs deep. Then he puts his hands around the corner, fingers spread and slowly steps out.

“Smart boy.” They advance on him, knocking him to the ground. The beating is brief, but effective. Several kicks to the stomach and one to his back -right in the middle of all the lashes. He’s in agony and having trouble breathing again as they re-secure him in his cell. Now the only chance he has is for someone else to rescue him, and that’s not at all likely to happen.

When the escorts arrive in the morning, it takes Mac almost a full minute to struggle to his knees while they laugh. They have to physically drag him to the other room and they chain him up as they did yesterday, hanging by his wrists. A few minutes later, the door opens and he hears the horribly familiar sound of the generator being rolled into the room, along with Masteritsa’s foot steps.

“Good morning. I hear you had a little adventure last night, naughty boy.” He can hear the smile in her voice even before she steps into his line of sight. “I have something for you before we get started today and I’m very curious to see how you’re going to react. Just like your obituary, it’s from your newspaper.” As she comes into view he sees the tablet in her hand. Why did she stress the word ‘your?’ Something about the smirk and the glint in her eye makes Mac dread whatever it is. She opens the tablet and pulls up what she’s looking for and reads sweetly:

‘Jack Wyatt Dalton Jr, 42, born in Texas, died late Friday morning of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.’ All the air goes out of the room. Dead? And what do they mean ‘self-inflicted?’ Jack would never... “Wait, late Friday morning? Wouldn’t that be right after your memorial?” She
Dalton was a Sergeant with the Delta Force, the U.S. Army’s Elite Special Forces Unit which is primarily tasked with anti-terrorism efforts around the world. He served in the Army 18 years before retiring and moving here to Los Angeles.

“No. Stop.” Mac breathes. He can’t think. His brain has gone completely blank. Jack can’t be dead, there is no way he would do that to himself, to Riley. Tears force their way to the surface and down his face.

“Since then, Dalton has been working at a think tank with one of his best friends from his military days, separated Army Corporal Angus MacGyver, who is also recently deceased.’ “Looks like we know where he took off to when he fled your memorial. I guess he didn’t handle it very well, did he?”

“Stop, please,” Mac says louder, tears falling freely now.

She ignores him and continues. ‘Memorial services will be this Saturday.’ “Oh, and look! He’s going to be buried with his dad. That’s so sweet.” She teases.

That’s it. Mac loses it completely. How could she know he was planning to be buried with his dad when the time came? He’s now crying so hard he can’t breathe or see. “STOP! Please, please. No, please stop. Please, no more. I don’t want to hear anymore. Please.” By the time he stops talking he’s barely whispering, his head hanging, completely defeated.

She walks right up to him and lifts his chin to look at him better. “Your name?”

He doesn’t even hesitate, it doesn’t matter now. “MacGyver.” He chokes through the tears. “Angus MacGyver. Please, no more.”

She kisses him on the cheek. “Good boy, Angus.” Then steps back. “Take him back to his room.”

Day 9
Mac cries for hours when the escorts bring him back to his cell. He no longer cares what they think. Jack is dead -because of him. If only he’d done what Jack told him to before they’d even left the Phoenix, kept his head on a swivel -he always had trouble with that in the field. He got so hyper-focused on what he was doing he forgot he was in enemy territory. That’s why he’d apologized to Jack just before ISIS shot him.

By the time morning comes again, he’s cried out and numb. She’s won. He’ll die soon and that will be the end of it. He’s not even sure he cares. He just wants the pain to stop. His head is pounding and he’s feeling dizzy all the time now. Even laying still on the floor, the room is spinning. When the escorts come for him again, he doesn’t move. He stares blankly at nothing while they swap out the chains and carry him limply to the other room where they hang him as before.

Masteritsa notices his complete lack of reaction as they wheel in the generator. She also notices that he’s looking at the floor now, not the wall behind her. “Oh, dear. I didn’t think I’d broken you that badly yesterday. He really meant that much to you? Sorry for your loss, beautiful boy. If it’s any consolation, you’ll be joining him before too much longer.” No reaction. “Hmmm. Let’s see if I can wake you up a bit.”

She turns on the generator, picks up the paddles, and tests them as before, making them spark. He doesn’t even twitch. A guard ties the cloth in his mouth and steps back. Mac’s mental state does nothing to dull the pain however. He screams through the gag as his body jerks against the chains holding him. When she moves back again, his chest is heaving, struggling for air, and he is somehow managing to cry again. Though that’s the extent of the reaction she gets from him.

She hears yelling in the hallway and turns to one of the guards. “What’s going on out there, Anton? Go find out why they are disturbing me.”

“Yes Masteritsa.”

“Sorry beautiful boy, where were we? Ah, yes.” She shocks Mac again with the same results. “You are starting to get boring, Angus. Where is all your defiance?” There’s more noise in the hall. “Someone find out what the hell is going on out there! Why hasn’t Anton come back yet?”

She steps forward and shocks Mac a third time. However, before she pulls the paddles away, Mac stops twitching and screaming. She touches the paddles together and nothing happens. She turns to check the generator and sees several men standing in the doorway, pointing guns at her, one of them holding up the unplugged power cord. She’d been so focused on Mac she hadn’t even noticed that it wasn’t her people coming back in.
They wear the uniform of the U.S. Army.

“That isn’t going to work without power, Masteritsa. Back away from Corporal MacGyver and put your hands up or we’ll kill you.” Pierce advances on her, gun aimed at her heart. She steps back, but doesn’t lift her hands.

Another soldier steps forward and shoots her with a tranquilizer and two soldiers secure her for transport. Pierce approaches Mac quickly and checks for a pulse. It’s stable, but thready and he’s breathing too fast. He’s unconscious. “He’s alive, for now. Let’s get him down, gently.”

Pierce pulls out his radio. “Bravo 4 to command.”

“Sitrep Bravo 4?”

“Situation secure, Lieutenant. And we have him. He’s in real bad shape, but we have him. We need a medical evac pronto.”

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

Matty walks quickly into the Phoenix hospital unit, immediately followed by Bozer. “You wanted me to meet you here, Matty?”

“I need to talk to the three of you, now.”

They walk into Jack’s room to find Jack asleep. Riley is sitting in her customary chair and looks up puzzled as they come in. “What’s going on?”

“Take the restraints off and wake him up.” orders Matty.

“Jack is finally sleeping peacefully for once, and you know what could happen if we take those off.” Riley stands up, alarmed.

“Not any more. Do it.” Riley and Bozer look at her for a moment, noticing the shift in her mood. She’s happier, more upbeat, eager. So, they do as they’re told. Jack wakes up slowly and startles as
he realizes they’re removing the restraints.

“What’s going on?” He asks a little suspiciously.

“You three are going to France, you’re wheels up as soon as you get to LAX, there is a private jet standing by courtesy of the Secretary of Defense.”

“Okay, I’ll repeat. What’s going on?” Jack asks with the ghost of a smile.

“Lieutenant Volk kept the promise he made to you Jack.” He looks at her in confusion, so she continues. “I told you we weren’t giving up. Turns out, you’ve been right all along, Jack. You aren’t completely nuts after all.”

She notices the others looking very cautiously hopeful. Jack has started breathing faster and he stares at Matty as if his life hinges on her next words. “Mac survived the gunshot. The bullet only grazed his head.”

The effect of these words is palpable. Riley covers her mouth with both of her hands and drops into her chair. Bozer’s mouth is hanging open as if he’s forgotten how to use it. Matty couldn’t smile any wider if she tried. Jack practically jumps off the bed and drops down to hug Matty and pulls back to look her in the eye. “So, he’s alive? Right? That’s why we’re going to France?”

Matty actually laughs and nods her head. “He’s being transferred to Val de Grace Hospital in Paris as we speak.” Her smile fades though as she continues. “But you need to understand. Mac’s condition is very, very critical. He’s been tortured for over a week. He’s lost a lot of blood. He was in full hypovolemic shock when they found him. On top of that he’s dehydrated and malnourished.”

“What does that mean? Hypovolemic shock?” Riley has stopped smiling and is looking very concerned.

“It means he’s lost so much blood that his body is having difficulty functioning. They have him in a medically induced coma and are giving him IV blood transfusions, as well as fluid and nutrients. The next 48 hours will be incredibly important.”

Jack looks ready to panic again. “You’re saying he still might die.”
“At this point it’s incredibly unlikely Jack, but technically yes, it’s still possible. I’ll give you more information when you’re in the air. Dr. Lewis will be going with you. Get going.”

“Where are my clothes?” He asks, standing up.
The trip to Paris seems to take forever. They try to rest as much as they can, but sleep doesn’t come easily for any of them. Matty’s briefing about Mac from Riley’s laptop takes up a maddeningly short time:

“Pierce led the team tracking the ISIS group that took Mac and Donovan. They found and raided their camp, captured several insurgents and recovered the body of Private Donovan, but not Mac. Under questioning, one of them somewhat gleefully told them that Mac had survived. ISIS doesn’t really deal with live captives long term, so they sold him to this woman.” A picture comes up on Riley’s computer screen. “Most know her simply as Masteritsa, which means mistress in Russian. Her real name is Sapozhnika Dernova. She’s a Russian national and her father is loaded.

“She’s...well, she’s a sociopath for starters. She’s been suspected in the torture and murder of dozens of men, but no one has ever been able to prove it or catch her. Her father owns a manor outside of Al-Jalaa, Syria, which is where she was operating this time. Lt. Volk’s team, led by Pierce, descended on the complex this morning, rescuing 11 hostages including Mac.”

“They sold him...to a serial killer? Seriously?!” Jack says incredulously. “Holy shit.”

“He was unconscious when they found him and he was immediately airlifted to the field hospital and started on IV fluids, nutrients and blood transfusions. A short time after arriving at the field hospital, he woke up -and panicked. He was very disoriented and didn’t seem to realize where he was. They ended up having to sedate him when he ripped out the IVs and knocked out three people trying to get away.

“That’s when they decided to put him into a medically induced coma. His mind and body need to rest, really rest in order to heal. Not to mention the pain he’s in at the moment when he’s awake. It’s more kind to let him sleep through the worst of that. Once arriving at the hospital in Paris, Dr. Lewis, you will take over Mac’s care and make the decision on when to wake him up.”

“Of course, ma’am.” Says Dr. Lewis, looking up from the medical reports she’s looking over.
Bozer asks the question they’re all thinking but are afraid to ask. “So, what are we looking at? What did she do to him?” He says, looking back and forth from Janet to Matty.

“I had them send over the field medic’s preliminary report and Janet has it as well. It was brutal, guys. The field medic isn’t sure how he survived this long. It’s going to be a very long recovery. And there is no telling the mental toll it has taken on him.”

“I think Bozer was asking a little more specifically, Matty” Jack interjects. “What did this whackjob do to our boy?”

“You don’t need the details. You don’t want the details.” Matty responds sadly.

Riley chimes in. “If we’re going to help him get through this, then we need to know what he’s trying to get through.” Matty looks at each of them. The same look of resolute fear is on all three faces.

Matty takes a very deep breath. “Ok, but...just...ok. We won’t know all the details until Mac wakes up and feels up to answering a few questions. However, we know he was beaten, whipped several dozen times and cut with some kind of small, sharp blade almost 200 times. Not to mention the abrasions that he received from the chains they restrained him with. He was also electrocuted multiple times and...raped repeatedly.”

By the time she finishes listing the injuries, Riley and Bozer have closed their eyes and Jack looks like he’s ready to kill somebody. He’s shaking and furious. “So where is this psycho bitch now?”

“She was on site at the time Pierce’s team infiltrated the manor. She’s in custody, Jack. The Army has her. Her specific location is strictly need to know and apparently, I don’t need to know.” she says with obvious annoyance. “Let the authorities deal with her. She can’t get away with it this time. She was actually in the middle of electrocuting Mac when the team entered the room and unplugged the generator. We just need to focus on Mac. He’s going to need us.

“I’ve booked rooms for you at the Seven Hotel for two weeks, with the option for extending the stay as long as necessary. It’s directly across Berthollet St from hospital so it’ll be easy for you to go back and forth.”

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

Between the 14 hour flight and the 9 hour time difference, they lose almost an entire day. A private
car picks them up from the airport with instructions to take them directly to the hospital. Jack finds it very difficult not to sprint through the front door and struggles not to scream at the front desk receptionist or curse at the deliberately slow elevator as it crawls up to the sixth floor.

Once there, the others attempt to keep up with him as he charges up to the nurses desk. “Angus MacGyver, s’il vous plait?” He barks at the startled nurse.

“You are his colleagues from America?” she asks.

“Family.” Riley corrects her. “Chosen family.”

“The Doctor is expecting you and he wants to speak with you before you go in. If you will have a seat I will tell him you are here.”

Jack is already shaking his head before she even gets halfway through. “Listen, chéri. I really am trying not to be a total jerk here, but I have spent a week thinking this kid was dead, and it was my fault.” He closes his eyes as he repeats “It was my fault.”

Bozer tries to argue, “Jack, it wasn’t…”

“It WAS MY FAULT!” He roars at him and everyone freezes. “It was. It was my fault, Boze. I was supposed to…” he takes a deep breath to steady himself at least a little and looks pleadingly at the nurse again. “Please darlin’, I really need to see him with my own eyes. I gotta...I gotta know. Please, I’m begging here. My heart won’t take waiting anymore.”

“Excuse me.” Interrupts Janet. “My name is Dr. Janet Lewis. I’m Angus MacGyver’s private physician. You should have been told I’ll be taking charge of his care? I’d like to see my patient please.”

The nurse looks at Jack for just a moment, noting the tears standing in his eyes, ready to fall and she responds, “Room 605, end of the hall, straight ahead. I’ll send the Doctor in to talk to you when he arrives.”

Jack sighs, visibly relaxing, “Thank you, sweetheart. Thank you.” And he takes off.
He enters the room, Janet and Riley right behind him, followed a few seconds later by Bozer, and Jack looks to the left where the bed is inset and stops. He’s there...Mac. He’s really there, laying on his right side, asleep. He walks to the side of the bed Mac is facing and lowers himself so his eyes are level with Mac’s.

There’s a look of careful excitement on Jack’s face and a single tear escaping. Hesitantly, he reaches for his friend’s hand, half afraid he’s dreaming and the whole thing will dissolve if he touches him. Skin. He huffs out the breath he hadn’t realized he was holding “Real...he’s real!”

He grabs Mac’s hand harder, then has to let go long enough to quickly yank his left arm out of the stupid sling, tossing it behind him. He retakes Mac’s hand and runs the fingers of his other hand through Mac’s hair. “Hey, buddy.”

Dr. Lewis picks up Mac’s chart and checks a few things quickly, “He’s still in the induced coma, Jack.”

The hospital’s Doctor walks in a few minutes later. “Good afternoon. I understand you have had quite a trying time so I’ll be brief. My name is Doctor Luc Laurent and I have been assigned to Corporal MacGyver. I have spoken at length to Miss Webber as she is his medical proxy.”

“Wait, Matty is Mac’s proxy?” says a confused Bozer.

Jack is the one who answers. “Yeah, he did that last year. He figures she’d be objective and actually do what he’d want, at least easier than any of us could. Gotta say, he’s probably right. There’s no way in hell I’d ever tell the docs to give up and let him go, no way. And you can call him Mac by the way Doc, he prefers that.”

Doctor Laurent continues “Of course. As I said I spoke to her at length and assuming Dr.Lewis agrees, we’re going to keep Mac in the medically induced coma for at least another week, maybe two. It will depend on how quickly he heals, but at least until we are sure he’s completely out of hypovolemic shock. He’s surprisingly free from infection considering his injuries, but we are monitoring him very carefully for signs that infection is setting in.”

“How much blood has he been given so far?” asks Dr.Lewis.

“One liter.”
She looks at the others. “That’s about 2 pints.” Turning back to Dr. Laurent she adds, “Let’s order another liter please.

“Very well. We did a full body x-ray and MRI to check for any injuries that were not as obvious. We found only two, the first is a slight skull fracture from the gunshot wound.” He looks to Jack, pointing at his hand on Mac’s head as he adds “So monsignor, if you would be mindful of that, it is just behind and above his left ear.” Jack nods his head. “The second is a dislocated left hip, likely from the recurrent rapes. His injuries were, for lack of a better word, minor. And he is healing remarkably fast. He was actually quite lucky all things considered.”

“LUCKY??!!” Riley yells angrily. “Look at him!”

“I did say for lack of a better word, mademoiselle. His injuries seem to have been designed for maximum pain, not maximum damage.” replies Dr. Laurent calmly. “Pain is temporary, damage can be very permanent. It could have been much, much worse. So, yes. In the long term, lucky. That is the other reason for the continuation of the coma. Even with the maximum amount of painkillers we could safely give him, it still may not be enough to keep him comfortable. Best to let him sleep through the worst of it.”

“Right, sorry. I just…”

“I quite understand, believe me. I have been informed by Miss Webber that the four of you will be staying at the hotel across the street. Dr. Lewis will be informed of any changes in his condition and she will decide what to share with the rest of you and when. At this point, barring any major complications, I do expect him to make a complete recovery. At least physically. We won’t be able to judge his mental state until we wake him up.”

“He’ll be fine, then. Mac is one of the strongest guys I’ve ever met.” Responds Jack with a huge smile. He’s almost giddy. “And I’m not staying at any hotel, I’m gonna be right there on that couch until he leaves.” Pointing at the couch behind the others under the window. “I’d love a pillow and a blanket if you can spare them and a chair to sit in so I don’t have to keep kneeling on the floor, if you can arrange that.”

“You must be Jack,” guesses the Doctor. “Miss Webber said you’d probably refuse to leave his side. I’m sure we can arrange those things for you. As to his mental state, everyone has a breaking point. I don’t say this to upset you, but you do need to have realistic expectations.”

“I know Mac. He may have a rough time of it, but he’ll get through it. He’ll be fine. And merci beaucoup for the pillow and such.”
“I hope you are right, monsignor. Miss Webber also tells me that we’ll need to keep an eye on your two gunshot wounds?” He turns his gaze to the other three. “Do I need to be worried about how he got the chest wound?” Indicating Jack.

Riley is the one who answers, “Not unless something happens to Mac.”

The Doctor looks concerned, but lets it go and nods his head. “Very well. Do you have any questions for me at this point?”

“How can he hear us?.” Asks Jack, turning to face Mac again.

“With an induced coma, generally no. Most remember absolutely nothing. At most he may have a vague impression that you have been here, but specific words won’t matter. However, looking at the monitor, his heart rate and respiration are not as fast as they have been since he arrived here. Your presence does seem to have calmed him somewhat.”

“Thank you very much, Doc.”

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

The days seem to drag, but true to his word, Jack never leaves Mac’s side. The only exception is when Riley forces him to go to the hotel and take a shower….he’s starting to stink.

By day three, Jack is getting frustrated and antsy. Dr. Lewis decides Mac’s wounds have healed enough to put him onto his back to help with his breathing. Jack knows it’s better for Mac to stay in the coma so he’s not in any pain, but he really wants to see him open his eyes, hear his voice. Finally on day six, Dr. Lewis informs him that she has decided to wake Mac up.

“It’ll take some time for the sedatives to leave his system. So, be patient.” She disconnects the sedatives from Mac’s IV. “Let me know when he wakes please. There are some questions I’ll need to ask him. I’ll be at the nurses desk. Just press the call button.”

“You got it, Doc.” Jack says as he sends a quick text to Riley and Bozer. Unlike Jack, they couldn’t bear to see Mac so vulnerable and they’ve spent most of the time at the hotel, taking turns checking on both Mac and Jack several times a day.
After about an hour, Jack feels a slight squeeze from Mac’s hand. “Mac??”

Bozer and Riley jump up from the couch and hurry over to the bed while Jack continues excitedly coaxing Mac to open his eyes. “Mac? Can you hear me, man? Mac, squeeze my hand again, brother. Come on back to us Mac.”

A soft hum comes from Mac and his eyes flutter, but don’t open. He squeezes Jack’s hand. “That’s it Mac! Come on buddy, you can do this. Open your eyes for me.” Mac’s eyes close tighter and his brow furrows.

“Ja--, Jack?”

“Yeah, baby! It’s me, it’s Jack! Open your eyes man, let me see them baby blues.”

Mac’s face dissolves into pain -eyes crushed closed, tears falling and he’s shaking his head. “Can’t be. Can’t be Jack. Stop. Please don’t.”

Jack is stunned. Riley pipes up taking his other hand. “Mac, it’s us. It’s okay. You’re safe now. You’re in the hospital.”

Mac’s reaction to her voice is immediate. He freezes and then turns in her direction, his face changing to an expression of shock as he slowly opens his eyes to look at her. He starts to quietly laugh with relief as his eyes flicker over to Bozer who smiles and says “Welcome back, Mac. We’ve missed you.”

“Hey guys.” Whispers Mac. Jack’s hand on his head draws Mac’s attention back to him. Again, his face screws up in pain. “Jack?”

“Yeah, man. It’s me, of course it’s me. You think anything could keep me away from you, man?”

“But...you shot yourself...you died.”
Jack goes white and his smile fades. “She told you…”

“She read me your obituary.” Mac falls apart again as he continues. “She told me you were dead.”

Jack leans forward and puts his forehead to Mac’s. “She lied, Mac. She lied.”

They cry softly together for a minute before Jack straightens up and reaches for the call button. “Almost forgot. Doc said she needs to talk to you.” Jack notices how Mac clings to his hand like a lifeline. “I ain’t going anywhere, man. Hell, I’m not letting you out of my sight for a good long while. You’re gonna get so sick of me.”

“How long have I been here?” Mac asks quietly.

“You’ve been at this hospital in Paris for six days, but you spent over a day in the field hospital before being transferred here.” He finishes answering just as Dr. Lewis enters.

“Well, good afternoon, Mac.”

“Hey, Janet. I didn’t know you were here.”

“Where else would I be?” She chuckles at his smile before continuing. “We had you in a medically induced coma for almost a week, you were in hypovolemic shock.”

Mac nods. “I figured.” At the questioning look from her, Mac elaborates. “The last day or so there my mind felt...slow. My thoughts were kind of disjointed. Things I should have known, should have thought of - I just didn’t. Basic things, like the possibility of cameras in the halls. And I don’t think I’ve ever been that dizzy in my life.”

“Yeah. The dehydration and malnutrition certainly didn’t help either. The rest of your injuries are healing well. How’s your pain?”

Mac moves slightly as if to find out. There’s only a small wince, but it’s enough to tip off Jack. Mac answers. “Manageable.”
But Jack jumps in. “No. You need to up the dose on that, Doc.”

Mac rolls his eyes. “I’m fine, Jack.”

“You might be able to fool her, Mac, but I can always tell when you’re in more pain than you’re letting on.”

“I hate being drugged Jack, you know that too. I’d rather deal with the pain than not be able to think clearly.”

“Mac, you’re safe now. Ain’t nothing and nobody getting anywhere near you without going through me. And you’ve been through more than enough pain for a while. Let her help you.”

“How about a compromise.” Suggests Dr. Lewis. “I’ll increase it half as much as I was thinking.” And she moves to the machine beside the bed to do just that.

The next few days pass as expected -Mac argues with everyone about the pain meds he wants reduced and/or turned off all together. He still hasn’t talked about what happened and they don’t push him, it’ll happen soon enough. Matty calls on a video chat to talk to him.

“Hi Matty.” Mac answers with a smile.

“Hey blondie. It is unbelievably good to hear your voice.”

“Likewise. When do I get to come home? Not that everyone here hasn’t been great but…”

“Soon. Janet wants to wait a little bit longer, but probably no more than a week. In the meantime, you just rest and do what she tells you for once, got it?”

“Yes, ma’am.”
It turns out to be only three days later that Mac finds himself on the Phoenix jet heading to LA with his family. Dr. Laurent is starting to marvel at how fast Mac’s wounds are healing and Janet wants to avoid any further questioning. The flight home is not without its problems either. As Jack helps Mac into a seat, Mac sees him wince in pain.

“What’s wrong Jack? You weren’t even using you left arm.”

Jack looks at Riley who just lifts her eyebrows and says. “He’s going to find out sooner or later, Jack and it really should come from you.” Then she moves up front to sit with Bozer and Dr. Lewis and give them some privacy.

“What is she talking about, Jack? I’m going to find out what?”

Jack shakes his head and looks down. “Oh god, Mac. I’m sorry.” He attempts a brave smile at Mac which fails quickly. “We thought you were dead. I...I didn’t really handle it very well.” Jack leans back and lifts his shirt, showing the bandage on his chest, just off center.

Mac starts shaking his head in disbelief. “No...Jack, you didn’t. Please tell me you didn’t.”

“I’m not even sure what I was thinking. I wasn’t thinking... obviously.” He lowers his shirt back down. “I missed my heart by half an inch.”

Mac is on the verge of tears again. His emotions are still so raw he can’t fight it. Jack moves and sits next to him, putting an arm around his shoulders and gently pulling the younger man towards him, hoping he’ll allow it. Mac hesitates briefly, then relaxes into him.

“I’m sorry, Mac.”

“Me too, Jack.”

Bozer and Riley watch their friends and smile. It’s going to be okay now. Mac still has a lot of pain to face as he processes what happened to him, but they’ll get him through it.
Chapter Notes

Here it is, the final chapter of This Can't Be Happening! Overall, the re-write adds almost 4200 words to the original Masteritsa. The original chapter 7 was just a 2 page epilogue, now it's a full 9 pages! I hope you like where I leave this!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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

Chapter 7

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

Mac has been home for just over four months. His wounds have healed and, as required, he’s been through his captive training again. That was rough. Jack had demanded to be there when they did it and it turned out to be a very good call. The first time they tied him up, he panicked and started screaming. They had to untie him quickly and it was several minutes before Jack could calm him down. It had taken a long time before he could remain level-headed. It was the biggest hurdle in his recovery.

The mandatory psychological counseling was also a hurdle, though a smaller one. Mac never really talks about his feelings except occasionally to Jack. He didn’t even know Dr. Curtis and he’d been required to tell him in detail every moment of his captivity that he could remember, which, thanks to the virus means every single moment.

However, only after he’d told Jack -and spent more than a week listening to Jack tell him it wasn’t his fault and that it was psychological torture like all the rest -did he tell the shrink about Masteritsa and then Vadim getting him off. That had been the most humiliating part, admitting to not being able to control his own body -feeling any amount of pleasure at their hands.

Now here he is, at what’s supposed to be his last session with Dr. Curtis and they’re arguing.

“There’s no need for that MacGyver. You’re ready to go back into the field. Why do you want to risk going backwards?”

“If it makes me go backwards, then I’m not actually ready to be in the field. I need to know I can do this. Find a way to make it happen.”
It took some doing, but between Dr. Curtis and Matty, Mac and Jack are on the way to Midwest Joint Regional Correctional Facility in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Jack is not entirely happy. “You really sure you want to do this, man? You don’t have to.” He asks for something around the tenth time.

“I don’t have to for Phoenix, Jack. But I have to do it for me.”

“Jesus, Mac. This woman tortured you. What do you think she’s going to tell you now? Why she did it?”

“It’s not about what I want her to say to me. It’s what I need to say to her.” Jack starts to say something else but Mac cuts him off. “Just stop, Jack. I get it okay? You’re worried this will do me more harm than good, and maybe you’re right—but it’s something I have to do.”

They enter the prison and go through all the security without issue. They’re escorted to an interrogation room and Mac turns to Jack, knowing the older man is not going to be happy with what he says next. “Wait here?”

“No way, man. I’m not leaving you alone with her!”

“First of all, she’s handcuffed to a desk. Second, I won’t be alone, there’ll be a soldier in there with us the whole time. And most importantly, you’ll kill her and she’s not worth you getting in trouble over. I’ll be fine, Jack. She can’t hurt me anymore.”

Jack looks closely at his friend and sees determination in his eyes. “You just make sure you remember that last part. I’ll be watching through the mirror. She makes the smallest wrong move and it’s game on.”

“I’ll be fine.” Mac repeats. He waits as Jack goes into the observation room next door and then takes a deep breath before nodding to the soldier guarding the interrogation room.

As he enters the room, her eyes go wide and she smiles. “Oooo, hello beautiful boy. I didn’t think I’d ever get to see you again.” She glances at the soldier standing by the door. “If only we were alone, hmmm?”
Mac looks at the soldier and gives him a quick nod towards the door. The soldier smirks at Mac, reaches up, unplugs the camera then steps out of the room. Mac can feel Jack glaring at him through the glass.

Mac looks back at her and raises his eyebrows. “You were saying?”

She smiles even wider. “I see. So now it is your turn to hurt me?”

He smiles back at her. “If I choose to.” He lets that statement hang in the air for a beat before continuing “But here’s the difference between you and me...I would never do something so cowardly. You’ve lost Miss Dernova. You didn’t break me. You didn’t turn me into you. You didn’t ruin my life and you failed to kill me as you promised.”

She flinches slightly at the word failed. Just a half blink of her eyes, but it’s there and he seizes on it. “Yeah, you failed.” He leans towards her, hands on the table for added emphasis and proceeds. “I’m going to walk out of here now, and I’m going to do whatever I want to do in all the world. And you?” He stands up straight again and releases a breathy laugh.

“You’re going to stay here in a cell or another prison like this -or worse -probably for the rest of your life. And every time they come for you in the middle of the night, you will know what you did to me and others like me. Maybe -someday- you’ll even come to regret what you did. If that day ever comes, have them call me.” Mac turns and walks to the door.

As he knocks, she says. “Now you’ll never forget me, beautiful boy.”

He turns to look back at her. “No, I won’t. And you’ll never forget that I put you in here. Goodbye, Miss Dernova.”

He leaves, closing the door behind him. The moment the door seals he stops, confusion clear on his face as Jack comes out to meet him.

“You okay, Mac?”

It takes a moment for the words to register. “What? Yeah, I’m fine.”
“That lady is seriously creepy, man. That sugary, sweet smile, knowing the kind of person she is, the things she’s done? She seriously damages my calm, man.”

Mac smiles at the Firefly reference that only Jack could really pull off.

Jack smiles in return, clapping a hand on his friend’s shoulder. “There’s my man! Come on, let’s get outta here, yeah?”

They leave the prison, get in the rental car and pull out onto the highway heading back to the little airstrip where the Phoenix jet is waiting. Jack allows Mac to sit in silence with a scowl on his face for about 10 minutes before he can’t stand it anymore.

“You sure you’re alright, brother?”

“Now you’ll never forget me. That’s what she said. Now...I’ll never forget her. Why ‘now’? It implies I’ve forgotten her before. And the first time she walked into the room after she bought me, she asked me if I knew her. I just figured some of the soldiers in the area would have heard about her and she was asking if I had.”

“I can’t imagine you’d know her from somewhere and not be able to remember. That virus means you haven’t forgotten much of anything since you were 3 years old, right?”

“That’s the thing. She does seem familiar somehow. And that name she keeps calling me -beautiful boy. I swear I’ve heard it before in that same voice with that same accent, I just can’t place it.”

“Maybe you knew her before you were infected then.”

“If that were the case, I don’t think I’d remember her at all, even….vaguely.” Mac’s eyes go wide and his breathing quickens. “Oh my god.” He whispers. “Jack…”

“What’s wrong?”
“Turn around.” He says, starting to look frantic.

“What?”

“TURN AROUND, NOW!!

“Okay! Okay!” Jack has to drive another quarter of a mile on the divided highway until he reaches a turn around for emergency vehicles only. Thankfully, there are no police officers around to witness his illegal U-turn and he guns the engine.

“What’s going on, Mac?”

“It was her. That’s why I partially remember her, but not really. Her voice, her hair, that long dark hair, Jack. And her calling me beautiful boy. I remember it now. It was her!”

“What was her?”

Mac is reeling with the realization of all this woman did to him, everything she took from him.

“Mac, talk to me!”

“She’s the one who infected me.”

Jack feels like he’s been punched in the gut. He knows his face has gone pale. His knuckles white on the steering wheel, he puts the gas pedal to the floor. They barrel down the highway at who-knows-what speed, Mac struggles to calm himself in the passenger seat as other drivers lay on their horns angrily as Jack swerves around them.

In no time, they’re back at the prison. Pulling up, they can tell something is wrong… alarms are sounding everywhere.

As they step out of the car, Jack hears Mac whisper “No…” And he’s off like a shot, sprinting (way too fast) across the parking lot to the entrance. Jack catches up as quickly as he can, but Mac
is already arguing with the guard, who doesn’t want to let anyone in—they’re in lockdown.

“Just tell me where Dernova is!” Mac is saying, none too calmly, as Jack finally reaches him.

“She escaped while being transferred back to her cell after talking to you. As far as we know, she’s still in the facility somewhere, but we already have two dead guards and three more wounded. We’re conducting a thorough search now, but that means we are not opening any doors we don’t have to.”

“Do you have a helicopter to search the grounds and surrounding area?”

“I’m telling you, she’s still here. There’s no way she could have gotten out of the prison building.”

“Do not underestimate this woman!” Mac yells before turning on his heal and heading back outside, pulling out his phone.

Once in the parking lot he hits speed-dial and only has to listen to it ring once before Matty answers. “What happened?”

“She escaped. Is there a helicopter in the area we can get a hold of?”

“I’ll make some calls. How long of a headstart does she have?”

“Less than 20 minutes, but Matty…Can anyone else hear me?”

There’s a click on the line before she responds. “Not anymore.”

Mac gets right to the point. “She’s the one who infected me. She’s a vampire.”

The silence on the other end is deafening, then “You’re sure?”
“Absolutely. The guards are positive she’s still inside the prison hiding somewhere, but they don’t know what one of us can do. If there’s even the slightest chance she’s gotten outside the building, she’ll be gone, fast.”

“I’m on it.” She hangs up without another word.

Luck is on their side for once and three Chinook helicopter teams have been running training exercises out of Fort Riley and they’re refueling at Sherman Army Airfield less than ten minutes away. They’re back in the air with new orders within minutes of Matty’s call informing the base commander of the escape.

But that’s where their luck runs out. After hours of searching, prison officials and military personnel assisting in the search are forced to admit the truth….Masteritsa is gone.

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

Mac is quiet the whole drive to the airport and the flight back to LA. Jack tries to get him to talk to him, but only gets several versions of “I’m fine,” and “I know we’ll find her.” All of which come out sounding more like he’s trying to convince himself rather than Jack. He also gets a lot of distracted “mm hmm”s that have him wondering if Mac is even registering anything he says.

The drive from LAX to the Phoenix earns Jack just one small glimpse of the chaos undoubtedly spinning around in Mac’s head. He’s all but given up trying to get him to open up for the time being, when into the silence Mac suddenly says, “I just can’t help wondering where she’s going to set up shop next and how long it’ll take her.” Then he lapses into silence again.

Walking into the War Room behind Mac, Jack sees Matty is alone. She looks first at the blonde and then Jack, who shakes his head slightly to let her know that the young man is not okay. She gets the message, and doesn’t seem surprised. Mac drops into the couch without a word and Jack sits next to him -close, but not too close. Mac shifts his leg so it’s barely touching Jack’s.

Jack takes the hint and moves a few inches closer, feeling Mac react by leaning into him almost imperceptibly. Matty frosts the glass and walks over to Mac.

“We’ve put out an alert with all local, state and federal agencies. We’ll find her, Mac.”
“I know.” He responds automatically, looking just over her left shoulder.

“No.” His eyes snap to her. “We will find her. I promise you. And when we do, she will pay for what she did to you.”

He stares at her for a moment before nodding slowly, “Okay. Thank you, Matty.” He relaxes a little as he sighs and leans heavier into his partner. Jack throws caution to the wind and lifts his arm, draping it over Mac’s shoulders and drawing him close. He half expects Mac to tense up at the obvious show of affection in front of a witness, even Matty, but he’s pleasantly surprised when Mac leans into the embrace, even dropping his head onto Jack’s shoulder and closing his eyes.

“Matty’s right, hoss.” He says comfortingly into Mac’s hair. “We’ll find her. We won’t stop until we do.”

Matty takes a deep breath. “There are a few things we need to discuss.” Mac opens his eyes to look at her, but otherwise doesn’t move. “I contacted the prison hospital to ask a few questions. Due to privacy laws, they were reluctant to speak to me, but after being reminded that national security outweighs personal privacy, I got them to confirm that she told them she has a blood disorder and that she was given a transfusion of blood every week. So, that seems to confirm at least part of what you said Mac. She does have the vampire anemia virus. As for whether or not she’s the one that infected you as a toddler, we’re having trouble verifying that.”

Mac lifts his head looking annoyed and about to argue but she cuts him off. “Not that I don’t believe you when you say she is. But you didn’t even remember her until this morning and we want to be sure, not just make assumptions. The problem is, if she really is the one who attacked you, then she’s far older than she looks.

“She was described as being in her mid to late 20s when you were three years old. If true, that means she’s almost 50 now. Anyone we task with digging into her past is going to notice that and have a lot of questions we won’t be able to answer. So it needs to be someone who knows about the virus and has the computer skills necessary to do the type of searching we’d need. That’s a very short list, maybe non-existent. I’d like your permission to bring Riley in…”

“No!” Mac is up in a blink and pacing away from them both.

“Let me finish, Mac!” He at least stops pacing and glares at her. “I’m not suggesting we tell her about you. I think you should tell her, and Bozer, before they find out another way, but that’s your choice and a conversation for a different day. I just want to tell her about the virus and that Dernova has it. We won’t tell her that she may have attacked you when you were young. We’ll just
have her investigate Dernova and see if she comes up with any kind of link to you or where you were living at the time.”

“Matty, Riley is smart, sometimes too smart. If you tell her about the virus, it won’t take her long to connect the dots and realize that I have all the symptoms. Besides, I’m sure it was her.”

“Mac, buddy. Riley could…” Jack begins before Mac interrupts.

“She can still help, Jack. Even if Dernova wasn’t the one who attacked me.” He starts pacing again. “Don’t you get it? That isn’t the important part. We just need to catch her, stop her from hurting anyone else, then I can just ask her. I got the impression she’s waiting for me to remember her from that day. She won’t be able to resist reacting if I confront her with it.”

“Riley’s going to notice the age Mac. She’s thorough. She’ll look at Dernova’s past in order to predict where she might go.” Matty retorts.

“So? Maybe the woman just looks good for her age.”

“Come on, man. You know Riley better than this. She’s like a dog with a bone when she gets a hold of a mystery. She won’t let it go.” Says Jack.

“Then find someone else!”

“It still won’t matter!” Jack takes a breath to calm himself. He doesn’t want to yell at Mac. “Even if Matty doesn’t assign her to the search, or outright orders Riley not to get involved, you don’t think she’ll go digging on her own in order to find the woman who hurt you? She loves you, man. You’re family to her. She won’t stand aside and trust someone else do it, and you know it.”

Mac freezes. Jack is right. Riley will dig whether they ask her to or not. She probably already is. Jack and Matty stay silent, knowing that he’s lost the argument and needs to process. He slowly walks back over to the couch and sits right next to Jack, but leans forward, elbows on his knees with his face in his hands. Jack puts a reassuring hand on his back.

“You won’t tell her about me?”
“Not without your permission.” Matty replies softly. “But you’re right. She will figure it out sooner or later and you’ll have to tell her. I don’t see any way of stopping that now, just delaying it.”

“I’ve gone my whole life without telling anyone about this, without anyone finding out. Now…”

Jack moves forward and wraps an arm around Mac. “Hey, hey, hey. You heard what I said. Riley loves you. She ain’t gonna turn tail and run any more than I did. Neither would Bozer.”

“I know. Part of me knows that, but I just….even my Dad left. How can I blame someone who isn’t even related to me for not wanting to deal with it?”

Not for the first time, Jack really wants to find Mac’s Dad just so he can punch him in the face. “I don’t know why your Dad left, brother. Neither do you, not really. It may have had nothing to do with the virus, or your Mom. But no matter what the reason was, that’s his problem, his loss.”

“I killed his wife, Jack. That’s a pretty damn good reason. I find it hard to believe it had nothing to do with his decision to leave.”

“It may have been part of it, but even that wouldn’t mean he blamed you for your Mom’s death. I know if I were him, I would have blamed myself, not you. You told me Dernova was punishing your Dad for something he did to her husband, right? That’s why she attacked you?”

Mac nods mutely.

“If my actions, justified or not, deliberate or not, got my son attacked and infected with a virus that later caused the death of my wife? I woulda felt guilty as hell. Shit, I’d have been downright inconsolable. Besides, you were 5 years old, man. You weren’t even old enough to really understand what was going on, much less be responsible for it. If your old man is even half as intelligent as you are, he’d know that and he wouldn’t blame you.”

“I just wish I could ask him.”

“I know, hoss. Maybe you will someday.”
“Mac,” Matty begins hesitantly, “After all that’s happened today, I want you to talk to Toby at least one more…”

“No. Matty, come on. I hate talking to Dr.Curtis. I don’t know him, and he doesn’t know me.”

“How about me?” Jack offers, but they both look at him clearly confused.

Looking at Matty, he clarifies. “How about if Mac talks to me?” He turns to Mac and continues. “Really talk to me mind you. Not the placating crap you gave me in the car and on the jet coming back here. You gotta actually talk to me about what’s going on up there.” He ruffles Mac hair for emphasis, earning him a swat. “And I will give Matty my honest opinion of whether or not you’re ready for the field. Deal?”

Mac jumps at the offer. “Deal. Will that be good enough, Matty?”

She looks reluctant. “Fine. But remember Dalton, you’re the one going out in the field with him. Don’t clear him unless you’re sure. I’d rather wait a little longer than have you be wrong.”

“I can do that.”

“Okay, then. Riley is on her way up. You still okay with this plan, Mac?”

“Just don’t tell her about me. If she figures it out, I’ll deal with it then. I just...I’d rather not if I don’t have to.”

“If she figures it out at some point and asks, do I confirm it, or tell her to talk to you about it?”

Mac hesitates. Having Matty tell her would certainly be easier for him, but it’s the cowards way out and Riley deserves better. “Have her talk to me.”

“Alright. You two get going, get some rest. I’ll brief her on my own.”

Jack nods. “Probably a good idea. Let’s go, man.”
They leave the War Room just as Riley comes around the corner in the hall. She immediately walks up to Mac and hugs him, holding on as she talks. “I’m so sorry, Mac. We’ll get her, we will. I’ll turn over every digital rock in the world until she’s either behind bars or dead. And honestly, I’m not picky about which. I won’t stop, Mac. I swear.”

Mac holds her tighter, glances at Jack’s soft smile and laughs sadly. “I know, Ri. I know.”

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

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed it!! Let me know what you think of the ending!! And if you've read the original Masteritsa, I'd *love* to hear which one you like better and why!

(I've started the next two installments of the series and have several pages of each already done, just need some polishing and finishing.)

For those interested (I added this to the end of chapter 2 as well, you have to copy and paste the link) this is the woman I picture as Masteritsa: https://www.pinterest.ch/pin/298926493989840875/

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!