Blazing Soul

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Summary

Spirit!AU, in which the Shimadas aren't the only ones to have animal spirits. In fact Hanzo's a bit surprised to find out that McCree has one, and more surprised that the cowboy has no idea how to use it.

Notes

I'm gonna start by apologizing for this fic format because I just sort of started writing it and it turned out this way. Basically I broke it into parts? but those parts have sections (hence the 1-1 thing like mario levels). It's just kind of how I wrote them out and and some are longer than others.

On the plus side with this I can hopefully update one section a day unless life happens, hope
it's not too confusing *sweats*

Again this fic is full of personal hcs, if you aren't fond of them that's fine.

Also if you want to make a variation of this AU feel free. I just ask that you mention me somewhere (and link me I wanna see that stuff)
There was something strange about Jesse McCree.

No, not the fact that he dressed like b-list actor wandering around the set of a western, which is the first thing Hanzo noticed when they met.

It had nothing to do with the fact he drank coffee at random hours of the day or insisted a “tomato sandwich” qualified as lunch.

Every day Hanzo would find himself shaking his head at some new information he learned about this man. It baffled him that his brother was so close with this cowboy but, then again, knowing Genji’s personality, it made complete sense.

And Hanzo tried to ignore it, until he noticed something very strange.

When it first happened the archer insisted he must be seeing things. After all he saw McCree fumbling around for a lighter and never seemed to find one. Only a few seconds later his cigar was lit and the cowboy watched the smoke rise into the night air like he was dreaming.

The second time was during training, the pair of them practicing their aim on targets. McCree liked to make a contest out of it but it was a rare day the cowboy would come out on top. Hanzo’s instinct was to mock him but he was certain McCree wasn’t taking it seriously.

“Damn, my coffee got cold.” McCree had mumbled into the mug of what might as well have been sludge. Hanzo shook his head and fired a few more arrows, his concentration broken by the awful slurping noise coming from his left. He turned to glare at McCree who gave him a sheepish smile and shrugged.

It wasn’t until later, as Hanzo was leaving, that he realized there had been steam coming out of the mug.

After that Hanzo decided to pay much closer attention to the cowboy. Most times he didn’t notice anything stranger than normal—honestly who rolls up pizza like a tortilla—but on rare occasions he got lucky.

McCree got injured on a mission, no surprise there. It wasn’t anything dangerous but the cut on his arm was still bleeding by the time he got back. He insisted he was fine and by some miracle managed to dodge Angela on the way back to his room.

Hanzo followed after, insisting it was for his curiosity and not concern, and lightly knocked on the door.

McCree opened it, his hand over the where the wound was, looking a bit surprised.

“Ey there darlin’” He smiled. “What’s up?”

“I... wanted to check if you were all right.”

“Who me? I’m fine.” He lowered his hand. The cut had vanished although the bloodstains hadn’t.
“Angela fixed me up quick as a button.”

Hanzo frowned. “I know for a fact she has not seen you since you got back.”

McCree paled for a few moments, eyes wide. He didn’t say anything.

The archer considered pressing the issue, trying to read what McCree was thinking, but eventually sighed. “At least you got it treated instead of leaving it there like last time.”

His posture relaxed as he laughed. “Ah yeah, Angela had my head for that infection, didn’t she.”

Hanzo crossed his arms. “Taking your head would be of no consequence, since you hardly use it anyway.”

“What? Hey.” McCree snapped back at him but Hanzo simply turned and walked away.

Hanzo’s sharp eye eventually rewarded him. Yet another night where McCree forgot his lighter and this time the archer never removed his gaze. Eventually McCree sighed, long and empty, before snapping his fingers. A small flame danced on his finger tips, and as soon as his cigar was lit it was gone.

Hanzo’s surprise almost had him snapping out a question but he bit it back. If McCree was good at anything it was dodging the subject. Hanzo quickly learned that on day one. He needed to wait until the cowboy had no lies to fall back on.

Even then his curiosity chipped away in the back of his mind.

“Does McCree have a form of fire magic?” Hanzo asked his brother as the two of them watched the horizon.

Genji looked at him, a slight tilt of the head before he said, “What do you mean?”

“I swear I have seen him summon fire. Did he know such tricks when you first met him?”

Genji hummed, looking back at the sky. “I think that is a question you should ask him yourself.”

“As if he would tell me.”

“You haven’t even tried.”

Without an excuse the conversation ended there. Hanzo tried to push the subject out of his mind but it refused. He thumbed over possibilities, wondering that if the cowboy did have fire powers, why did he not use them on the battlefield? Perhaps it was yet another foolish decision.

All of these unanswered questions were giving him a headache.

He tried to clear his head, waiting in the training room. With his eyes closed and his breathing steady he became aware of the dragons drifting around him. Eventually they came into his vision, circling him like they always do. On some occasions they would speak, but on most days he was greeted with nothing more than a low growl.

He heard the door open, a jangle of spurs giving away the person’s identity. Hanzo didn’t bother
opening his eyes yet, watching as the dragons both turned their heads.

Then he saw something else. His mind’s eye squinted and honed in on something strange, a bright red and orange glow. The glow slowly faded out as it took shape. A bird, with a long neck and longer tail feathers sat perched on something. The tips of it’s feathers burned and curled and slowly it turned it’s head in Hanzo’s direction.

A phoenix.

Hanzo’s eyes snapped open. McCree wasn’t look at him, tapping his boots against the floor before taking a long sip of coffee. The archer figured the cowboy must love the sounds of his own spurs with how often he shook them around.

Then he spotted something else. His eyes narrowed again as he focused on something on Jesse’s forearm. Something red on his skin was peeking out from under his rolled up sleeve.


Hanzo was on his feet in seconds. He didn’t intend to stomp over the way he did but McCree threw his hands up and took a few steps back.

Not quick enough. Hanzo snatched his arm with one hand and jerked the sleeve up with the other.

“Ow, hey Shimada, what’s the deal?”

The archer didn’t respond. He studied the orange and red feathers tattooed on the man’s skin. Something about it felt familiar and he traced his thumb over one of them.

“Phoenix,” he mumbled.

Suddenly McCree shoved him away. His eyes were still laced with confusion but his eyebrows pressed into a glare.

“Pardon?” The question sounded threatening.

With McCree’s tone and expression Hanzo considered for a few moments he might have made a mistake, but he wasn’t backing down now.

“You have a spirit.” He crossed his arms. “That’s how you’ve been performing those tricks.”

“What are you talkin’ about?”

Hanzo snorted. “Do not try and deny it. I saw a phoenix sitting on your shoulder.”

McCree froze up for a second but his expression softened. “How?”

“When I meditate to speak with my dragons I can see other spirits as well. Perhaps if you took some time to be quiet you would know this.”

He frowned and looked away.
“Where did you get it?” Hanzo asked.

“Rather not talk about that.”

Now it was Hanzo’s turn to frown. “Why not? Did something happen to your parents?”

“Parents?” McCree’s head whipped back. “No, no, my parents didn’t give this to me. I mean not really, I guess. Maybe.” His voice shifted to a mumble as he rubbed the back of his neck.

“All right? You are not making any sense. If your parents did not give it to you then who did?”

McCree bit his lip. His hand moved from his neck to run over his face. He let out a sigh, the same one he made those nights when he lit the cigar with his fingers.

Then he crossed his arms and tapped his heel against the floor a couple of times.

“You ever heard of a man named Gabriel Reyes?”
Strange Things 1-2

Chapter Notes

I’m a bit overwhelmed by the positive response already. I’m glad you guys are so into it. Hope you enjoy the rest.

Also realizing this section is super short so?? I’ll probably post the next bit tonight before bed.

Gabriel Reyes, yes Hanzo knew the name very well. The man had carried a spirit with him?

“I have heard of him.” Hanzo tried to consider his words but they came stumbling out. “One of the overwatch founders who turned his back when he did not get what he wanted.”

McCree flinched. “That’s not all he was, you know.”

“Were you close to him?”

He huffed, eyes fixed on the wall as he returned to rubbing his neck. “Rather not talk about that either.”

Hanzo bit the inside of his cheek. This conversation was getting nowhere. “But he gave you this spirit?”

“Yeah. Not sure why. I’m still not sure what the hell I’m supposed to do with it.”

“Have you tried talking to it?”

McCree turned his head back. “Pardon?”

Hanzo sighed, inwardly cursing Gabriel for no other reason than dumping a spirit on someone without instructing them. “Anyone with a spirit has the ability to speak with them. Have you honestly never tried?”

“No? I mean I didn’t think I’d need to. Gabe just said she’d protect me, whatever that means.”

She. Hanzo considered the pronoun and concluded Gabriel must have spoken to the phoenix. Why he never told McCree to do the same remained a mystery.

“You are rather reckless,” the archer mumbled. “The phoenix is known for it’s healing abilities. I suppose he didn’t want you getting yourself killed.”

He expected an expression of annoyance or a muttered insult in return for that comment. Instead McCree laughed, his hand moving back down to his side.

“Yeah, he used to say the same thing. ‘I don’t know why you have such a death wish kid, but you need to be more careful. You’re wasting us money on medical supplies.’”
There was a pause. Hanzo almost smiled at McCree’s fond expression but all too soon it fell. His spurs clacked against the floor as he shoved his hands in his pockets.

“Still wish he hadn’t though.” He mumbled.

“Hm?”

“Ah, nothin’,” McCree ducked and took a step back. “So uh, you were saying I can talk to this thing? How do you do that?”

“I speak to mine by meditating, however,” Hanzo tilted his head and smirked. “I imagine that would be hard for you to manage.”

The cowboy glared but grinned. “I bet I could figure something out. What do they sound like anyway? Your dragons.”

“Perhaps if you practice enough you can speak to them yourself.”

McCree was looking at the wall again when he straightened up. His fingers fiddled at his belt for a cigar that wasn’t there. “Dunno if that’s gonna happen.”

Hanzo raised an eyebrow. “Why not?”

“Not sure I want to talk to it. Not really fond of this thing.”

“Why not?” He repeated the question.

“Because I shouldn’t have it.” McCree’s voice became firm.

Hanzo kept himself from asking a third time. Right now the cowboy’s body language mimicked his behavior on the battlefield. The archer toyed with the idea of starting a fight, but not over something like this.

McCree sighed, hands running over his face. “Look Shimada, gotta be honest, I don’t like talkin’ about this. I try and keep most of the team from knowing it’s there.”

“Then you should be more careful around the eyes of an assassin.”

“Eh, got me there.” He smiled. “But seriously, can we just... practice?”

“You don’t have your gun.”

McCree jerked, his hands flying to his belt. He spun around a few times before muttering a Spanish word. “Ah hell, must have left it cause of the paintball fight. I’ll be right back.”

Spurs jangled about as the cowboy ran out of the room. Hanzo watched him, his shoulders relaxing. He’d have to goloat to Genji later that he was right. McCree didn’t tell him anything.

He glanced at the floor, noticing a few scorch marks.

The archer sighed and pulled out his bow. It was time to focus on something else.
The phoenix wasn’t really any of his business.
It had been two weeks since Hanzo first discovered the reason behind McCree’s strange abilities. He decided against bringing it up and McCree avoided the topic either way. The only additional discovery Hanzo had made was that the wing tattoos started between McCree’s shoulder blades and ran onto his arms.

They were actually rather lovely.

Still, Hanzo couldn’t deny his curiosity forever. Another night outside had McCree reaching for a cigar and, once again, a missing lighter.

“I need to quit forgettin’ that damn thing.”

“You could just quit that filthy habit.”

“Whatever Shimada, you’re the one carrying around a sake bottle.” The cowboy snapped his fingers and brought up a flame. Yet again that long, lonely sigh escaped his lips before he inhaled the smoke.

Hanzo stared up from his seat on the balcony. “Why do you sigh like that when you use your ability?”

“Huh? Sigh?” McCree gazed up at the sky for a moment. “Oh, that. I dunno. Using fire just reminds me of him I guess.”

Hanzo didn’t reply but he stood up and moved closer to McCree, leaning against the wall. His eyes never left the cowboy.

McCree glanced up and down before he exhaled a cloud of smoke. “The first trick I ever saw him do was this one, lightin’ his own cigarette. I was amazed, beggin’ him to show me how he did it. At first he bullshitted me.” He paused to laugh. “He made up a fake trick just to see if I’d do it. I tried at it for a week before he fessed up. Said he had a number of tricks that only he could do.”

“He didn’t tell you about the phoenix?”

“Nah, not then anyway. He probably had his reasons.” McCree paused to puff on his cigar. “But when I got this thing I demanded he show me how to do this at least.”

“He showed you nothing else?”

“Didn’t have the time. Things... started getting nasty after that.”
Hanzo waited for the cowboy to elaborate, but he didn’t. The subject was clearly still untouchable, but the archer refused to leave it there.

“You can not just ignore it, McCree.”

“Pardon?”

“The phoenix. Unless you plan on giving it to someone else you can not ignore it. Spirits are a part of their hosts. You are only endangering yourself.”

McCree leaned away. “I ain’t a kid you know.”

“Then quit acting like one.”

He huffed, “Don’t wanna hear that from someone who’s constantly brooding about family drama.”

All of Hanzo’s muscles tensed as he turned to glare at McCree. The cowboy wasn’t looking at him, rolling the cigar between his gritted teeth. The archer was half tempted to jam it down his throat but took a deep breath instead.

“I am beginning to wonder if it would benefit you to speak with Zenyatta.”

“The omnic? Thought you hated him.”

Hated him? No. Hanzo’s feelings toward his brother’s friend were more complicated than that.

“My avoidance of him is... personal.” He loosened his grip on his arms. “But Genji speaks highly of him. Perhaps he can aid you.”

“Hm, I should tell him you said that.”

“Say what you like.” Hanzo turned away to hide his frown. “If you refuse to discuss this with me you should discuss it with someone.”

“Augh, fine, whatever. If I didn’t you wouldn’t quit bringing it up, would you?”

Hanzo simply answered that with a smirk.
McCree agreed to speak with the omnic, and intended to follow up on that, but that required finding him. It seemed the monk was only hovering around when you didn’t need to speak to him.

Not that McCree had a problem with that, but for once he was at a loss with how to start a conversation.

*Maybe with a metaphor.* He thought to himself as he wandered the halls, glancing through doors. *Or a poem? Nah, can’t remember any of those except the nursery rhymes mom taught me.*

Even those were hazy in his memory, and he was fairly sure the omnic would question why a baby was in the tree tops.

“Good morning, Jesse.”

McCree snapped out of his thoughts to see Genji standing in front of him. His arms were crossed and, strangely, covered in some kind of bubbly substance. It ranged in colors from blue to yellow, trying to mimic the pattern of a flame.

“Uh Genji? The hell is that?” McCree pointed at the cyborg’s shoulder.

He glanced before letting off a quiet laugh. “Ah, that. Lúcio and Hana won it at an arcade. They found out it sticks very well to my armor.”

The cowboy grinned and poked at it. It felt rather solid. “Nice, easy tattoos. I hope it comes off though.”

“So do I.”

“This all they got?”

Genji shook his head. “Of course not. You should see the giant monkey Hana’s been dragging around. She keeps calling it ‘Winston Jr.’”

McCree couldn’t hold back his laughter. He tried to imagine the gorilla’s reaction and lost his ability to compose himself.

“Has he seen it yet?” He managed to ask between breaths.

“Not yet.”
“I’d keep it hidden.” He laughed a few more times. “If he finds that he’s gonna use it as a training dummy.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Genji hummed. “Where were you headed to this morning?”

“Actually,” McCree shook off the rest of his laughter. “I was looking for your master. You know where he is?”

There was silence for a moment. The light in Genji’s visor flashed a few times. “He’s still out by the cliff. Do you want me to call him here?”

“Nah, I’ll go meet him. Must be useful having that instant messenger in your head.” McCree tapped his finger against his temple.

“You could always get a visor and join us.”

He snorted. “I’ll stay out of you and Lúcio’s little conversations.”

Genji’s lights glowed and the vents on his shoulder popped. The joints in his shoulders squeaked and he rolled them around before looking away.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Sure you don’t.”

“And this is rich coming from the man who spends an unbelievable amount of time ‘training’ with my brother.”

McCree ignored the heat rising in his neck by thinking about how nosy the archer had been for the past few days. “That relationship is purely professional.”

“Sometimes you’re a surprisingly bad liar, Jesse.”

“Ain’t you got anything better to do?” McCree tapped his spurs against the floor.

Genji gestured to the colors decorating his arm. “No.”

“Well find something before I tell Winston to give you something.” The cowboy brushed past the ninja.

“Okay dad.”

McCree smirked and spun around, trapping Genji in a headlock. “Watch it you little shit. I ain’t that much older than you.”

The cyborg laughed and held McCree’s arm. “What? You mean you’re not going on sixty?”

“Little shit.”

McCree knew the ninja could easily break out of the headlock, but he never did.
Strange Things 1-5

Chapter Notes

Last section of this part oh boy the next one is a trip....

Also before this fic I hadn't considered McCree and Zenyatta interactions but I love it

McCree hadn’t bothered to go out to the cliffs since he first scouted out the base. He had completely forgotten how high up they got, offering a brilliant view of the land. The morning sun hovering close to the mountains reminded him a bit of when he was young.

His eyes were so fixed on the purple clouds darting the blue horizon he walked straight past Zenyatta. The omnic cut into his view, hovering near the edge. A couple of birds had perched themselves on his knees, offering a chirp when they spotted McCree.

He smiled.

“Good morning, Jesse.” Zenyatta said.

McCree felt a bit startled hearing his first name. To most of the new recruits he was either McCree or ‘Eastwood’.

“Mornin,” he was already fiddling for a cigar. “Mind if I sit?”

“Not at all.”

McCree figured he wouldn’t, but felt like he had to ask.

He sat next to the omnic, letting his legs dangle over the cliff. His spurs tapped against the rock and he continued the sound, glancing to see if it bothered Zenyatta.

When the omnic made no response he put the cigar between his teeth. Without thinking he lit a fire between his fingers.

“Uh, you mind if I smoke?”

Zenyatta chuckled. “Not at all.”

He tried to ignore how young he felt as he burned the end of the cigar. The smell of smoke relaxed the rest of his nerves and he put his focus back on the horizon.

“Genji said you wanted to speak to me?”

“Ah yeah, Hanzo sent me if you’d believe it.”

“Oh? That’s a relief.” Zenyatta let his shoulders rest on his knees. “I’ve been hoping the tension between us wouldn’t last.”
“Eh, keep trying. He said it was personal.”

“I am aware. But we are not here to speak about Hanzo.”

Right. McCree chewed on the cigar, trying to figure out how to start a conversation he didn’t want to have.

“Hanzo found out I have a spirit animal.”

“Do you really?” Zenyatta put his hands together. “What kind?”

“A phoenix.”

“Phoenix...” the omnic echoed. “Interesting. Does it bother you that he knows?”

He gnawed into his cigar before pulling it out of his mouth. “Nah, it’s more like I wish I didn’t have it in the first place.”

“Why not?”

“If I didn’t, the man who gave it to me would still be alive.”

Zenyatta floated closer to the ground. McCree waited for another question but it never came. He focused on watching the breeze twirl the smoke from his cigar into a thread.

“Tell me about him.”

“Huh?” McCree glanced back up at the omnic whose hands were now folded in his lap.

“This man, tell me about him.”

The cowboy breathed out another cloud of smoke. “I’m sure even you’ve already heard of Gabriel Reyes.”

“Pretend I have not.” Zenyatta scooted closer. “I would like to hear how you saw him.”

No one had asked him that way before. It put him at ease, but seeing the monk’s orbs flash a few times he wondered if that was the only reason.

He watched the tip of his cigar burn away for a few moments, comparing the glow to the sunlight. “‘Parently he was the one who told the higher ups it’d be better to hire me than throw me in the trash. I felt cornered at the time, and I hated him for a little while but... I suppose that was just the first time he saved my life.”

“The first time?”

McCree let himself laugh. “Yeah, didn’t Genji tell you how reckless I was? He was always havin’ to drag my ass out of trouble. If not him it was Ana or Jack, but mostly him.”

“What sort of trouble?”
“Hm, well,” McCree let himself fall back to lie on the ground. His legs still dangled over the edge, spurs tapping on the rocks. “This one happened only a few weeks after I joined up. It was a quick intel gathering job, at least I think. Back then they didn’t give me the raw details.”

He shoved the hat over his eyes. “For me, it went south really fast.”
“Be the watch guy,” McCree muttered to himself as he cowered inside the shed. “Had to tell him it was a lame job, didn’t I?”

And it did seem lame for a while. Security seemed thin in the area and McCree occupied himself with twirling his gun. When he saw a guard headed his way he made the impulsive decision to shoot. The guy went down. McCree smirked.

Then ten more showed up.

He wasn’t used to doing this without being surrounded by other goons. Right now he was the only thing keeping his team from having their cover blown.

“This isn’t Deadlock, kid.” Gabriel’s voice rang in his head when he sprinted from his point down the street. All of the men trailed after him.

“We can’t kick up dust. As far as the world is concerned we don’t exist. You got that?”

Old habits died hard he supposed.

He locked the shed door when he came inside but he could hear the men’s footsteps just outside. It was hard to tell how many hung around looking for him. He prayed the team had gotten out when the gunshot went off.

If not, he was a dead man either way.

He tightened his grip on his gun as he stood, keeping his back against the wall. With a glance out the window he could only spot three men standing there, backs to him.

McCree lifted his revolver. If he could take them all out he could make another run for it. Maybe he could make it back before the team left.

Fat chance.

From his position he didn’t see the men outside the door. One thud was his only warning before the wood splintered off it’s hinges.

McCree aimed his gun, fired a shot, but one shoulder wound couldn’t slow down two men.
He cursed and cocked his gun again. The window shattered. McCree only got a glance of the hand before it grabbed his collar. It jerked him off his feet, smashing his face against the glass. Cuts burned across his cheek.

McCree kept his grip on his weapon when he hit the ground. It wouldn’t do him much good now, however. He glanced up to see two barrels pointed at his eye.

The men were talking to him in french, a language he barely understood. All he could do in response was stare back at them, waiting for an opportunity to run for it.

It wasn’t the first time he’d been caught. It wasn’t the first time a job went sour for him. Surrendering was sometimes easier. Let them drag you away, ask a few questions and you could snag the keys when they weren’t looking. He’d consider running away, finding a new line of work, but it all just lead back to the same place.

“Get left behind again, McCree?” Their voices seemed to all taunt him at once. “It’s a good thing you’re not a squealer.”

The click of a gun drew his attention back to the present. Three men now stood in front of him, talking to each other.

McCree gripped his gun, ready to at least take out the one with the bleeding arm.

Another gun clicked to his right from outside the window. Two more men watched him from behind the broken glass. One of them pointed to the back wall before speaking. McCree tried to pick out key words but his thoughts were cut off with another jerk to his collar.

One of the men dragged him across the floor before throwing him into the back wall. His head thudded against the wood, increasing the flaring pain on the right side of his face.

A third gun clicked.

“Whoa, guys, hang on.” He held up his hands, hoping he could either reason with them or stall for time. No such luck. The furrowed brows confirmed they didn’t speak a lick of english. Maybe spanish?

No more time to think. He could see fingers tightening around the triggers.

He went for his gun but he knew he wouldn’t be quick enough. Three bullets in his head would be the last thing left to his name.

A voice echoed in the back of his mind. “Told you to be careful. You get your ass caught, we ain’t coming back.”

A gunshot rang out. McCree flinched, expecting pain, shortness of breath, or even that light at the end of the tunnel.

Then there was another one, three, four. The three men in front of him had turned around.

“Hate when jobs like this turn sour.”

Somehow Gabriel’s voice, which had been grating on his nerves the past few weeks, sliced into
his train of thought. Everything felt numb for a moment. He tried to focus on the fight but all he could remember were gun shots and one man getting thrown out the window.

“Boy do you look like shit.”

Gabriel’s voice grounded him for a moment and he tried to collect his thoughts.

Something brushed against his cheek and he jerked, catching his commander’s wrist.

“Hold still kid, you’re bleeding all over the place.”

McCree let go. “What are you doing here?”

“Shouldn’t I be asking you that? You picked a hell of a place to hide out. Makes it harder to recover you out here.” Gabriel kept a cloth pressed against McCree’s cheek while pulling the young man to his feet.

Recover? What was he talking about?

“My fault I got caught.” McCree mumbled.

“Got that right. I think we need to go over again what a stealth mission really means. Here, keep this on your face.”

McCree did as he was told, stumbling in a haze over the unconscious men.

“You were just supposed to alert us, not shoot someone.” Gabriel continued before leading them down a side street.

“Habit.”

“Just cause you have good aim kid doesn’t mean you always need to fire.”

He thought he mumbled out an apology but there was no response for a while. Instead Gabriel had him sit down behind a group of trashcans while he called back to the team. McCree couldn’t hear what he was saying.

“We ain’t coming back.” The phrase bounced around in his head.

“Focus kid.”

Before the voice fully registered Gabriel pushed one of his eyes open, shining a light in it. McCree flinched and groaned only to have his commander grab his jaw and tilt his head around.

“You hurt anywhere else?”

McCree tore free. “Did you guys get what you came for?”

Gabriel’s eyes fixed on him. “Answer the question, soldier.”

“No,” McCree spat back. “Did you guys get what you came here for.”
“Of course we did.”

More light in his eyes. “Then what are you doing here?”

Gabriel paused and clicked the light off. “Saving your dumb ass, it seems.”

“Why?”

“The hell do you mean ‘why’?”

“You got what you came for. Why didn’t you just leave? Why did you come back?”

Gabriel’s eyes stayed fixed on him, glancing up and down. Then he sighed and shoved McCree’s head to the side to study the cuts. “This isn’t Deadlock, kid.”

“So?”

“There’s no reason to lose a soldier if I can help it. Even if you got yourself into this mess.”

McCree quit fighting back, despite how much it stung when Gabriel’s gloved fingers brushed against the wounds.

“Speaking of which we’re getting back on that shooting practice when we get back. Good aim isn’t getting you a free pass.”

Gabriel kept talking but his voice faded out. McCree stared at the patterns in the wall and pondered if he was in some kind of dream.

He was alive. Gabriel helped him. Gabriel came back.

“This isn’t Deadlock, kid.”

“Oye, you listening?” Gabriel snapped his fingers.

McCree just stared back at him. I tried to focus on the words, on the wall, on something, but his mind kept fogging up. Pressure lingered in his throat and no matter how many times he swallowed it wouldn’t go away.

Was he about to cry?

No, no way in hell was he going to do that. Gabriel was probably questioning the decision to bring him on board enough as it was. The last thing McCree needed was useless tears.

He was so focused on suppressing the feeling he didn’t notice the truck until Gabriel hauled him to his feet. He sat down in the back, Gabriel checking his eyes yet again. The driver said something, possibly cracking a joke, but McCree couldn’t recall what it was.

“Wake up.”

Gabriel smacked his ear and McCree jerked in his seat, eyes wide. The pressure shot back to his throat.
“I need you to talk to me, kid. Are you okay? You’re zoning out pretty bad.”

“You came back.” McCree muttered without thinking.

His commander frowned then sighed. “Kid, listen to me.” He held McCree’s face between his hands. “I need to you to listen to me. Are you listening?”

McCree had to narrow his eyes for a few moments but nodded.

“This isn’t Deadlock. I wouldn’t leave your ass behind. I brought you on this ship and you’re my responsibility.”

“But that whole mess was my fault.”

“You’re my responsibility. I brought you out here and it’s my job to make sure you get back. If I can’t manage that then I’m not fit to be in my position, do you understand?”

McCree nodded again.

“Good, now perk up before the doctor forces you to stay an extra two hours in the infirmary.”

He wanted to laugh at that but the pressure in his chest made it hard to breath. Every time he tried his lips shook and the corners of his eyes burned. He gritted his teeth as a distraction.

Gabriel let off a short hum before he sat next to McCree. A slap to his back forced him to breath in.

“Let if out if you want. The mission’s done.”

“Don’t know what you’re talking about.” McCree sputtered, clinging to his dignity.

“You’re not the first crybaby we’ve hired.”

“I ain’t a crybaby.” His jaw hurt. His throat hurt. He squeezed his eyes shut as one last defense.

The first sob escaped his throat and it all fell apart after that. He curled up with his hand over his mouth to try and muffle the sound. Tears spilled out of his eyes, the salt stinging the cuts on his cheek.

Gabriel’s hand grabbed his shoulder and squeezed. “I’ve got you, kid.”

For the first time in years, McCree let himself cry.

Chapter End Notes

Oh btw if any of you wanna hmu on tumblr my url is ceata88, probably should have posted that earlier but ey
“Run it again.”
“Come on, old man. We’ve been at this for three hours.”
“What did you just call me, brat? That’s no way to address your superiors.”
“Ow, let go old man.”
“Just for that you can run it five more times.”
“Can’t I at least take a break?”
“Not until you get it right. Now run it again.”

-x-
“Right, I haven’t introduced you yet. Kid, meet Ana Amari.”
“Well howdy ma’am. Sure is a pleasure.”
“Oh? You must be Jesse McCree. Gabe’s already told me a lot about you.”
McCree snorted. “Gabe?”
“Don’t even think of calling me that, brat.”
“Sure thing, Gabe.”
“Great, thanks Ana.”
The woman’s rich laughter filled the room and Gabriel couldn’t manage to hide his smile.

-x-
“No practice today?”
“Thought you’d like a break. We were all going to play the Transformers drinking game.”
“Eh?”
“Every time there’s an explosion you take a shot.”

“Hah! We’re going to be so f*cked up tomorrow.”

“That’s the idea.”

-x-

“Jesus Gabe, what did you do to the boy?”

“Come on Ana, not so loud.”

“He’s only eighteen!”

“I’m fine.” McCree tried to laugh from his position on the floor.

“You just puked on my shoes.”

“Sorry ‘bout that.”

-x-

“Hey Gabe.”

“How many times do I need to tell you to quit calling me that?”

“Fine then, I’m going back to old man.”

“What do you want kid?”

“Why’s such a highly praised organization like Overwatch need a division like this?”

“Not wimping out now, are you?”

“Nah, hell nah, just wondered.”

Gabriel took out cigarette and passed it to McCree. “Because you can’t change the world if you always play by the rules it’s created.”

“Suppose that’s true.”

-x-

“F*cking hell, Jesse. What were you thinking?”

“That’d I’d be a faster shot than him?”

“What have I told you about gambling on the battlefield.”

“Sorry Dad.”
“We’re not going to arrive for a few more hours, go back to sleep.”

“Why are you awake?”

“Planning.”

“You work too hard, old man.”

“And you don’t work at all.”

“You just told me to go back to sleep.”

“If you’re going to do nothing you should be well rested for later.”

“Did you want me to help?”

“No, go back to sleep.”

“Stuffy as always.” McCree propped himself against Gabriel’s shoulder.

“Good night kiddo.”

He was already drifting off when he mumbled, “night, dad.”

-Agent McCree, what’s your location?”

“Spotted a straggler.” He spoke into the com as he leaned next to the stairway of an abandoned office building. “Figured I’d keep him from getting away. He headed into that ugly building with the pony statue out front.”

He could hear Gabriel snort into the line. “Just stay put and keep an eye out. We’re headed to your location.”

“Aw, come on pops, I can take him.”

“Don’t call me that on the job, McCree.”

He just laughed to himself and could hear a few other chuckles over the line. “Fine, staying put, anyone got a visual on the roof? He might try and escape.”

“I’ve got visual.” Their sniper confirmed. “Make our jobs easier if he jumped off though.”

McCree peaked into the stairway and glanced up. He could no longer hear the man’s panicked footsteps and headed up after him. He stuck close to the walls, peering through windows but saw nothing.

“Oh man, he’s on the roof. Looks like he’s gonna jump. Should I let him?”
“Negative, he could survive the fall.”

McCree quickened his pace up the stairs. The top floor was an open space full of office desks. Nothing about it look out of the norm, from the dull grey carpets to the potted plants in the corner. He poked at one, confirmed it was plastic.

“Agent McCree, where are you?” Gabriel nagged.

“Upstairs,” he started going through desk drawers. “Hey this one guy doodles all over his calendar.”

“Quit messing around and get down here.”

“Fine, fine,” he shut the drawer and headed back to the stairs but then stopped. A faint beeping clicked away in his ear. He stepped around for a few seconds, trying to hone in on the source of the sound.

“I don’t hear you coming down those stairs.”

McCree had a response to that but instead he pulled the com away from his ear, listening closer. It got loud and louder as he approached the desk in the corner. His heart sped up in his chest when he realized what the sound probably was.

Glancing under the desk and seeing the digital numbers glowing back at him, his fear was confirmed.

00:15.

McCree snapped the com back on his ear and burst towards the stairs. “Bomb!”

“What?” Three men shouted at once.

“There’s a bomb in the building.” He almost stumbled down the steps. “Ten seconds left. Get out now!”

“McCree where are you?” Gabriel shouted.

“Just get out.” He practically leapt down the last few steps.

“Damn it kid, where are you?”

“Just get-” McCree was going to make a dive to hide under the stairs. Instead he saw Gabriel standing there in the doorway.

No. There wasn’t enough time to run now.

No.

00:05. The mental clocked ticked away in his head.

00:04. Gabriel ran towards him, hand reaching out.
00:03. Against his better judgement, he took it. Just get under the stairs. It was their best shot.

00:02. He couldn’t move anywhere. Gabriel held him close in a grip tight enough to bruise his arms.

00:01. Suddenly his vision was filled by an orange light. Perhaps he imagined that.

00:00.
Memories 2-3

Chapter Notes

Lmao this is a long one oops, but worth it

I glad that the most common response to the previous chapter was "at least I know they don't die". For those who might know my previous fics, don't trust me with characters lives. (no one dies in this one though don't worry)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He heard his name being called from somewhere. All he could see was black. Every bone in his body ached and it felt like his muscles were being pulled into the floor. Something sharp dug into his left side.

Static buzzed in his ear. Words would come up every now and then, strained and desperate.

“McCree...injuries...contacting HQ.”

Bit by bit he could focus on more words.

“The authorities are trying to launch a rescue. We either need the overwatch team here or we have to go undercover.”

“Should have known guys like that would have had a backup. Sorry boss.”

McCree became aware of how slowly he was breathing. Each inhale made the pain in his side worse.

“Come on kid, wake up.”

Something pressed against the side of his face, something warm. The sensation bloomed in his cheek and crawled down his neck. The feeling of stepping out of the shade directly into the sun’s rays.

Slowly the weight left his muscles. He forced his eyes open but everything was a blur. Orange light seemed to move around whenever he traced it. In fact it was the only light in the room, glowing bright behind the figure in front of him.

“Jesse?”

He tried to respond, tried to focus, but it was no good.

He blacked out.

-x-

When consciousness returned to him again the pain seemed even worse. It echoed in his right leg
and the sharp sensations in his side intensified with every beat of his heart. When he tried to move, to sit up, his muscles screamed.

“Don’t move,” Gabriel’s voice cut in.

McCree forced his eyes open, images still blurring though there wasn’t much to see. Gabriel had a light resting on the floor which showed the harsh lines of rubble that surrounded them. McCree guessed they were under the stairs, a large piece of roof covering their only exit. Chunks of cement and metal reinforcements littered the space around them.

“The hell–” he tried to speak, but the pain in his chest cut him off.

“I said don’t move.” Gabriel held his shoulder.

McCree glanced down at his side to see the shadow of a metal rod sticking out of his ribs.

“Hell,” he mumbled. “That doesn’t look good.”

“You should see your face.” Gabriel made the joke.

McCree wanted to retort, squinting in the dark to study the other man’s injuries. There was hardly any blood though. The scars on his face seemed to be the same. The only thing that seemed to take any damage was his clothing.

“How the hell did you get so lucky?”

“I’ll explain later. For now just try and stay awake for me. The team convinced the locals to allow Overwatch to recover us, but they haven’t arrived yet.”

McCree lay back in silence for a moment, trying to gauge his injuries from feeling alone. “I fucked up again, huh?”

“What are you talking about? You gave the rest of the team enough warning to get out of range of the blast.”

“Shouldn’t’ve gone upstairs.”

“Then you wouldn’t have found the bomb.”

“Now you’re stuck in here with me.”

Gabriel turned and glared. “Oye, unless you tell me this self loathing crap is what keeps you awake you’d better knock it off.”

“Why didn’t you run?”

It was silent for a while. The sound of a leaking pipe echoed in the closed space. Gabriel snapped his fingers, flames igniting in his palm. The orange glow lit up his features, revealing a new scar on his cheek.

“Because I knew I could protect you from the blast.”
“How?”

His commander smirked before putting out the flames. “If you survive this, I’ll tell you.”

“Come on, it’s my dying wish.”

“You aren’t dying, not today, got it?”

McCree nodded but his chest tightened. He coughed to relieve the pressure, tasting blood on his tongue.

“Unfortunately,” Gabriel kicked at a block of cement. “I couldn’t do much about the debris. Beat both of us up pretty good.”

“Says the guy sitting up properly.”

“I heal faster than you.”

“Let me guess, same secret?”

“Yup.”

“Yeesh, a lighter, a bomb shield, and a first aid kid. What can’t you do?”

“Disintegrate rubble.”

McCree chuckled, “guess that’s fair.”

Gabriel offered a warm smile and put his hand on top of McCree’s head. That same warm sensation flowed down his skin, reminding him of short naps on the beach. Wet sand pressed against his arms and cool salt water licked at his ankles.

The sensation made him drowsy.

“No, no, stay awake.” Gabriel shook his head side to side.

“Ow, hey,” McCree cringed at the pain in his neck. “Damn it old man, that hurts.”

“Oh yeah that’s right,” Gabriel continued to lightly roll his head side to side. “What’s the idea of calling me ‘pops’.”

“Aw, didn’t like that?” The muscles in his neck still hurt, but with each motion they loosened up more and more.

“Not on the job, you little shit.”

McCree’s eyebrows shot up. “So what about off the job?”

His commander paused and turned his head away. “I guess.”

He grinned so wide he could feel the injuries on his face flaring up. “Uh oh, dad’s a huge softie.”
Gabriel looked back at him. “Can it, you little shit.”

McCree couldn’t keep himself from laughing. His lungs protested but the emotion bubbled too close to the surface.

Then his lungs seized up again. What started as a quick cough caused pain to tear through his chest. Suddenly he was very aware of the metal rod, feeling it scrap against his ribs. Blood slipped past his lips and he covered his mouth to try and make it stop.

Gabriel held him down, trying to keep him from opening the wound. “Shit, Jesse, you okay?”

McCree smirked. “I’ve got a metal pole in my lungs. What do you think?”

“Yeah, and I’m damn sure you just made it worse.”

“Cool.”

“Just stay awake, all right? That’s an order.”

He nodded but could feel his heart rate pick up. His vision faded in and out of focus.

Stay awake. He told himself. Talk about something.

“Been takin’ Fareeha to these belly dancing classes.”

“That so?” Gabriel kept a hand next to the injury. “That explains where you’ve been running off to.”

“She wanted to. Was scared her mom would say no. Don’t tell Ana.”

“I’m not making that kind of promise. You’ve seen what she’s like when she wants to know something.”

“She’s getting pretty good at it, Fareeha. Sometimes she makes me practice with her.”

“Now that I would pay to see.”

McCree smirked. “You’ll be jealous, I can almost move my hips as good as you.”

Gabriel laughed, “when the hell have you seen that?”

“I’ve seen you and Jack dancing.” McCree’s vision got hazier. “Maybe I should drag him to lessons sometimes.”

“Wouldn’t do much good. I think he’s tone deaf.”

“Doesn’t seem to stop him.”

“Nah,” Gabriel put his hand over his mouth to hide his smile. “Keeps insisting he’ll figure it out eventually, because I enjoy it.”

“You two are so gay. Tell me I can be the best man at your wedding.”
“Sorry, Reinhardt already claimed that.”

“Damn,” McCree smacked the floor and chuckled a bit. The pressure on his muscles was gone, but he was fairly certain the floating sensation wasn’t good. His thoughts drifted back and forth like ocean waves.

“Ey, if this goes sour, tell Ana to keep taking her to lessons, woulda?”

“You’re not dying today. Just stay awake. They’re on their way here now.”

“Sorry, might just fuck this up too.”

“Jesse-”

“Like I fuck up everything-”

Gabriel’s fist slammed into the rock next to his head. The sound jerked him out of his trance.

“I told you to stop talking like that. You need to stay alive. I’m not listening to this final speech crap. I’m not burying my kid, you got it?”

My kid. The words echoed in his head and he clung onto them like a lifeline.

“You’re going to take Fareeha to her next lesson. You’re going to attend my wedding whenever it happens. You need to stay alive for that.”

Was Gabriel’s voice shaking? No, that was impossible. Not that he could tell, the sounds in the room sounded like they were getting farther and farther away. The edges of his vision turned black and he panicked.

No. He had to stay alive. He had to stay alive.

Gabriel was saying his name, maybe shouting it. McCree tried to respond but a cold sensation trickled across his skin.

Stay awake. He told himself. Stay awake.

No good. His vision faded out and the chill of death crepted down his shoulders.

Then something hot pressed against his chest. The heat was far more intense than earlier, burning through his skin and into his core. The fire tore through his nerves, banishing the numbness. It was hot, so hot, yet somehow it didn’t hurt.

“Stay.” A feminine voice echoed in his skull. “You must stay.”

Flames erupted behind his eyelids, but all too soon it faded back into nothing.

-x-

McCree couldn’t remember much about when he woke up in the infirmary. The beep of a heart monitor, the mask making his lips sweaty, the stiff feeling in his right leg, those were just a few
things he could pick out.

Then there was Gabriel, sitting in the chair next to his bed. His eyes were tired, but became wide and alert when he met McCree’s gaze.

The hug hurt, bringing up the same dull pain in his side, but McCree couldn’t protest. He didn’t really want to either. He just focused on the sensation of Gabriel holding him, shaking. Maybe he was crying.

First time for everything.

He thinks he mumbled out a few apologies. Gabriel hissed something in his ear but it was too hazy. At some point, when the rest of the team swarmed into the room, he passed out again.

The next time he woke up things were more clear, but he was left with a headache. Gabriel was still there, reading something on a tablet. He glanced at McCree, studying his face.

“Go back to sleep, kid.”

“Think I’ve done enough of that.”

“No you haven’t, you still look like hell. Go back to sleep.”

“Still look better than you, old man.”

Gabriel just smiled and reached over, resting his hand on McCree’s forehead. “We can talk later.”

McCree tried to protest but warmth spread over his skin again. This time it reminded him of an old fire place in a mountain cabin. The scent of pine and hot chocolate flooded his senses before he drifted off once again.

Chapter End Notes

I blame Giro for the belly dancing hcs but HEY
you know idk if I should say anything here

Quick thank you to everyone reading this, I have a bad habit of not replying to every comment but they all make my day, glad you’re still enjoying this mess

“You’re supposed to share the cake.” Fareeha complained as she reached for the dish.

“Who says? It’s my birthday.” McCree waved it up out of her reach.

“I made it.”

“Then make another one.”

She puffed up her cheeks and jumped. She wrapped her hands around his arm and tried climbing.

“Children please,” Ana scolded. “You’re going to drop it at this rate.”

“Fine, mom,” they said at the same time. Fareeha let go and McCree put the plate back on the table. His honorary younger sister had insisted on making him one this year, asking what kinds of cake he liked. He challenged her to make a pound cake and couldn’t quite tell how it turned out. Typically they weren’t iced but this cake was layered in white frosting and covered in horse shaped sprinkles.

Still, she had put her all into it. That alone made McCree determined to eat every bite.

“You better not eat all of it,” Angela scorned from the side. “Or I’m not helping you when you get sick.”

“As if I would with this iron stomach.” McCree struck a pose.

“You had to lay down for three hours after trying to eat eight pancakes.” Gabriel said.


“In my defense those were the densest pancakes I’ve had in my life.” McCree muttered.

“Excuse me?” Ana grabbed his ear. “Not insulting my cooking, are we?”

“N-no ma’am.”

-McCree let everyone have some cake, but the moment they were done he snatched the rest and hoarded it away in his bunk. Admittedly the icing made it too sweet, and like her mom’s pancakes-
the cake was too dense, but in his opinion it was still the best damn cake he ever had.

A knock on the door made him jump.

“Not eating your weight in sugar in there, are you?” Gabriel said.

“I was going to come back,” McCree opened the door. “Besides, I’m eager beat you old men in another round of poker.”

“You’ve got too many give aways kid,” Gabriel smiled and smacked the brim of his hat. “I know you too well by now.”

“I’ve been practicing.”

“Hah, sure, we’ll see about that. But first, follow me.”

McCree pushed back his grin as he followed his commander down the hall. “Oh? Surprise present?”

“Something like that. You sound excited.”

He kept his voice level. “Not that excited.”

“Your spurs,” Gabriel turned around and pointed, “keep jingling between steps. Gives you away every time.”

Damn. McCree hadn’t even thought about that. The sounds of his spurs became such common background noise to him now.

When he looked back up Gabriel had gone on ahead. He broke into a jog to catch up.

Gabriel lead them into the shooting range. He left the lights off and McCree felt a bit of unease move up his spine. He began to wonder if this was some kind of prank.

“Bit worried about what you’re gonna give me in a shooting range.” McCree mumbled.

“They won’t come looking for us in here.” Gabriel turned and gestured for him to sit on the floor. “This is something only Jack and Ana know about, and it’s going to stay that way, got it?”

McCree swallowed but nodded. Sweat formed on the back of his neck as he sat on the floor.

“Now,” Gabriel sat across from him. “You’ve been asking for a while about these magic tricks.” Flames ignited in his palm, curling around his fingers.

“Yeah,” McCree crossed his arms. “What happened to telling me after I survived that explosion.”

“And ruin the surprise?” His commander smirked. “Just try not to ask too many questions at once.”

He already had one, but the words never escaped. The flames suddenly pulsed and spiked into the air. Orange light flooded the room and a familiar heat hit McCree’s cheeks. The flames twisted and shot through the air, circling around the room. On it’s path it took on a more solid shape. A bird’s
face with a long neck sprouted from the front. Broad wings burst out of the side and the trail of light behind it curled into long tail feathers.

The bird’s colors faded into a darker red as it’s flight slowed down. Gabriel held out his arm and it landed.

Looking closer at it now, it’s shape reminded McCree of a peacock. Three small flaming feathers stuck out the top of it’s head before curling back down.

McCree stuttered for a few moments, glad he was sitting down. “What the hell is that?”

The bird shook her head at him.

“She’s a phoenix, a spirit.”

“How long have you had that?”

“Since I left home.”

“How do you keep something like that under wraps?”

“Easy, I don’t use her abilities around just anyone.” Gabriel pointed to McCree’s left arm.

McCree glanced at it for a while before he figured out what his commander was asking. He lifted his arm, trying to ignore how it was shaking.

Without hesitating the phoenix leapt over to him, sticking her face close.

“Uh, howdy,” he said.

The feathers around her neck puffed out before she nibbled at his cheek. The sensation tickled and made his whole face heat up.

“Rather affectionate, ain’t she?”

“She already knows you pretty well.”

McCree opened his mouth to ask for clarity on that statement.

“I’m glad she likes you, because I’m giving her to you.”

His jaw dropped open.

“Wh-what?” McCree glanced between his commander and the bird. “You’re giving her to me? What for?”

“She’s a healing spirit. She can keep you safe.”

His excitement was suddenly drenched. McCree pressed his lips together before he frowned. “I can take care of myself you know.”

Gabriel blinked and crossed his arms. “Ignoring how wrong that statement is, that’s not what I
meant."

“It is,” McCree lifted his arm, trying to throw the bird off him. Instead she just hopped onto his hat. “If she’s around you won’t have to be worried about me on the job, right?”

“Kid,” Gabriel growled.

“Bet it takes a load off your shoulders so you can focus on something else.”

“That’s not it, you dumb ass.”

“I know I’m reckless but-”

“That’s not it!” Gabriel shouted. “You are reckless. You’re a dumb kid who follows his feelings instead of his head. But I don’t think you should be punished for that.”

“Huh?”

Gabriel groaned and ran a hand over his face. “You’re gonna make me say it, aren’t you?”

McCree didn’t reply to that, feeling even more confused than before. The phoenix pecked at the brim of his hat.

Gabriel opened his mouth a few times before he turned his head away. “Normally, a spirit is passed on through a family line. You... you’re my kid. You know that right?”

Heat crawled up McCree’s cheeks and he knew he couldn’t blame the bird sitting on his head.

“I want you to stay safe, even if I’m not around.” Gabriel turned his gaze back. His eyes glittered with affection. “Think you can manage that with her?”

McCree looked up to see the bird peering at him. He watched the colors on her feathers glow and fade.

“Only if you teach me how to do that trick where you light your fingers on fire.” He smiled.

Gabriel laughed and held out his hand. “Angela’s going to be pissed with all the extra smoking you’ll be doing.”

McCree took it. “Yeah, well now stealing my lighter won’t do her any good.”

“I really hope you use her for more than that.”

“Then teach me.”

“Sure thing, but first thing’s first.”

The phoenix flew down from her perch and landed on Gabriel’s shoulder. She nipped at his cheek before nuzzling the same spot. The man tried to hold back his laughter as he used his free hand to rub her neck.

“Take care of him, señorita.”
The bird chirped at him before it’s flames erupted. It morphed into a stream that curled under his shoulders and spiraled down his arm.

McCree’s eyes widened as it came towards him. The heat grew more and more intense. He tried to keep an eye on it but it flew past his shoulder and into the air.

Suddenly something hit his back. Fire exploded from his chest and covered his skin. It tingled and itched, sweat forming on his forehead.

“Hell,” McCree mumbled, trying to catch his breath. The heat made the entire room feel stuffy. “Damn, is this supposed to happen?”

“You get used to it.” Gabriel kept his grip on McCree’s hand as he stood up. “I’ll let you borrow the fan for a little while.”

“Thanks,” he took off his hat and started waving it up and down.

“Happy birthday, kiddo.”

McCree met his gaze, wondering what he should say. Underneath the heat burning at his skin a familiar warmth stirred around in his chest. Morning sun rays, soft warm sand, old fireplaces, the sensations swirled around and the tension completely left his muscles.

Too much, in fact, he started falling backwards until Gabriel caught him.

“Stood up too fast, huh?”

McCree just groaned and let himself fall forward instead. His forehead rested on Gabriel’s shoulder and he felt like a kid again, but right now he couldn’t give a damn.

“You going to be okay?”

McCree groaned again, “it’s hot.”

Gabriel snorted and then laughed, loud and rich.

McCree couldn’t help but follow along.
Y’all love dad! Gabe so much and I do too. Too bad I gotta go and ruin it

Also you guys can tell when I don’t work because I update this a lot earlier

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“He loved you.”

McCree jerked his gaze away from the sky to the omnic who still floated in the same spot.

“Well,” he scratched at his cheek. “I don’t know if-”

“You loved him too.”

McCree had never been good at admitting that, but he knew it was true. Gabriel became the parental figure he hadn’t had in eons. Between him, Ana, Jack and Fareeha it felt like a whole family again.

But that had fallen apart, in the worst way possible. It was a miracle Fareeha still saw him the same way after all these years.

“It seemed nice then,” McCree considered pulling out a second cigar as he studied the cloud. “But it didn’t last.”

“You mean the explosion?” Zenyatta said.

“No, before that. See, only about a month after I got this thing Ana died.” His gritted his teeth for a moment. “It was chaos for a while. Jack and Gabe were a wreck. Then there were the promotions and Gabe... I barely recognized him anymore to be honest. Seemed weird for him to be so bitter about it. I tried to help, to do something but...”

Zenyatta waited in silence.

“There was a fight,” McCree did his best to pretend his voice wasn’t shaking. “A nasty one, in terms of words anyway.”

He planned to continue but Gabriel’s voice cut into his head. Most of it was just mindless shouting, telling McCree to mind his own damn business. That he didn’t understand the situation.

“She was my mom.”

“Will you quit telling yourself that? Were you such a lonely kid that you’d cling to any authority figure like that?”

That had pissed him off, maybe because it was true, but it wasn’t. He didn’t cling to them because
of authority. He did it because they loved him. He loved them.

It got worse, more heated. It wasn’t like Gabriel was the only one who had ammo. They picked and pried at each other weak points, calling each other gutless, insensitive, cowardly.

McCree felt the pain in his cheek all over again when he remembered how it ended, one sharp slap to the face. The sound echoed in the room and for a few moments everything froze.

And it hurt, worse than any of the punches he’d gotten from interrogations or fist fights. Worse than glass shards sticking to the side of his face. Worse than a rusty pole cutting through his lungs.

He would have cried if anger didn’t suddenly rise up in his throat. He gritted his teeth, ready to say something, ready to fight back even.

“Don’t let anyone talk to you that way.” Gabe had told him once. At that moment McCree decided that “anyone” meant Gabe as well.

But he didn’t get the chance, the next blow finished it.

“Get out of my sight, McCree.”

McCree? When in the hell had he been McCree outside of a job? He had been called kid, kiddo, brat, little shit. Hell on some occasions there was something new like loser, dead weight, idiot, cowboy, wiley coyote. Most of the time though it was just Jesse.

Not McCree. Never McCree.

He should have said something, anything. Instead he bolted out of the door and didn’t look back.

That was the last time he saw Gabriel alive.

Zenyatta’s hand on his shoulder snapped him out of the memory. He blinked and only now realized the tears in his eyes. He sat up and hurried to brush them away, hoping the omnic hadn’t noticed.

“It is all right to cry.”

Damn. “No it ain’t. It happened years ago.”

“That does not meant it cannot hurt you.”

“Just wish that wasn’t my last memory of him.”

“Ah,” Zenyatta hummed. “I see your dilemma now.”

“Huh?”

“You associate this spirit, this phoenix, with a bad memory.”

McCree blinked. He knew the omnic wasn’t wrong, but it couldn’t be that simple.

“If he didn’t give it to me he’d still be alive.” He light a flame in his palm and lifted it up,
comparing it to the sun. “With this he coulda survived that explosion.”

“He loved you.”

McCree frowned and turned his gaze, glaring at the omnic. “If that’s the case why did it turn out like that?”

“I do not know.” Zenyatta folded his hands before tilting them down. “I cannot say what he was thinking back then. Perhaps there was a lot on his mind.” He turned his head and stared back at McCree. “But that spirit is proof.”

McCree gritted his teeth. A part of him didn’t want to hear this, but he stayed put.

“That creature contains his feelings for you. The warmth, laughter, protection, those were all things he wanted you to be able to hang onto. He wanted to keep you safe. Did he ever ask for it back?”

The cowboy blinked. He pondered that thought for a moment, but couldn’t come up with anything.

“Eh, I don’t think he did.” He lightly scratched at his cheek.

“Then,” Zenyatta looked back at the view. “It is my belief he did not regret his decision, not even when things seemed grim.”

McCree paused, his vision going blurry again. He fell back on the ground and covered his face to hide the tears. Somehow he didn’t want to think about it that way. He didn’t want to think about Gabe looking for him the next morning to apologize.

“He never even called.” He mumbled.

“Hm?”

“He never tried calling me. I left my communicator on ‘cause I knew people would ask. He never called. If he cared why didn’t he-” The lump in his throat cut him off and he let off a frustrated shout. “Ah, damn it. Fuck this. Now I feel shitty about running away.”

Zenyatta chuckled. “It does you no good to bury emotion.”

McCree just lay there for a while, letting the loose tears fall slide down his face.

“I ain’t a crybaby.”

“You cannot view this spirit as a bad memory.” Zenyatta distracted him. “The memory when she was given to you is a good one, yes?”

“Yeah,” he muttered.

“You agree that Gabriel gave her to you because he wanted to protect you?”

“Sure.”
“Then you must try and see her that way. Not as a reminder of mistakes but as a symbol of the bond you shared. Gabriel is gone but she is not. He left that part of himself with you. Cherish it.”

McCree looked up at the omnic for a few moments, his metal body gleaming in the sun.

“Damn,” he covered his face with his arm. “When you’re right, you’re right. No wonder Genji talks about you all the time.”

“Oh?” Zenyatta almost sounded embarrassed.

“Yeah, just as much as he talks about Lúcio.”

The electronic laughter lifted a weight on his soul. “Believe me, I have noticed.”

“Welp,” McCree forced himself back up and took a deep breath. “If you’re right I guess I should try talking to her. Don’t have any meditation tips, do you?”

Zenyatta hummed for a moment. “I am not sure you need deep meditation, simply something to remove distractions from your mind. Perhaps listening to some calming music?”

“Eh, sounds like a plan.” McCree stood up, brushing the dust off his pants. “Thanks again partner.” He tipped his hat.

“Anytime you need, Jesse. It is what I am here for.”

“You gonna hang around out here? Or would you like to head back with me.”

The omnic paused for a while, tapping his index fingers together. “Perhaps it is time to head back, before Genji comes looking for me.”

McCree chuckled, “yeah, you’ve turned him into quite the mother hen.”

“He was not always like that?” Zenyatta floated to catch up with him.

“Not really, ‘cept with Angela. Wondered if he had a crush for a while there.”

McCree mindlessly chatted away about his former teammate. His laughter felt lighter now, without that added weight on his shoulders.

It was nice.

Chapter End Notes

ALSO HOLY SHIT FIRST FANART I’M STILL CRYIN. By walkingsaltpile on tumblr.
Chapter Notes

Time to meet the birb!

The opportunity to talk to his spirit didn’t present itself until late that night. Between two meetings, Hanzo actually pestering him to come practice and Hana decorating his prosthetic arm in that weird bubbly gunk, his day was packed.

But now he’d locked himself in his bunk, settling down on his bed with a pair of headphones. Gentle guitar tunes drifted between his ears and he left his hat covering his eyes.

Getting rid of distractions seemed easy at first, but his mind was too used to wandering in silence. If it wasn’t memories or going over his to do list, his mind would generate jokes or new ideas for flirting with a certain archer.

The hell was that about?

But he kept at it, trying to focus instead on the cords of song. He tapped his fingers to the music, wondering if he could learn to play this himself. It’d been a long time since he tried to properly play a song. It was another activity that reminded him of Gabriel.

He lightly hummed the tune, trying to drown in the music. He focused less on memories and more on colors and shapes. With each note he tried to picture them dancing on swirling. The tune picked up it’s pace, and the reds and oranges swirled around faster and faster.

Suddenly the colors sped past him. He blinked a few time at the realization he was no longer in his bunk.

McCree spun around as he took in the vast dessert that surrounded him. It was covered in course sand that tumbled across the ground with the wind. Red mountains surrounded the horizon, jagged shapes.

“The hell?” He breathed in and noticed the scent of smoke and redwood.

“You finally made it.”

He whirled around at the sound of a feminine voice. It sounded familiar, too familiar.

No more than twenty feet from him stood a tree. It’s jagged branches held no leaves and the bark was charred pitch black.

There she sat, the phoenix, her burning feathers glowing against the dark tree.

“Where am I?” McCree watched his steps as he moved forward. The sand shifted under his feet, but it was strangely easy to walk on.
“Your mind, in a sense. It is much easier to chat in a visual space.” She jumped off the branch and flew over to him, circling around his head.

It took McCree a moment to figure out what she wanted. He held out his left arm.

She landed on his prosthetic, cooing before she pecked at the metal. “It is nice to properly meet you, Young McCree.”

Her voice still bothered him, still familiar.

“Nice to meet you too, uh? Do you have a name?”

“You must give me one. That’s how you take true ownership of me.”

“You tellin’ me you’ve been bouncing around in my noggin for years doing whatever you want?”

Her feathers on her neck rose up as she laughed. “That is correct. It seems Master Reyes never found the time to give you any detailed instructions.”

“Then how come I can do the fire thing?”

“I was humoring you.” She jumped onto his hat. “You are rather easy to amuse, Young McCree.”

He blew at some hair that had fallen in his face. “Ey, I’m hardly young you know.”

“I am eight thousand years old. You are young.”

“Fair enough.”

The bird went quiet for a moment and he kept trying to place where he’d heard her voice before. Warm, inviting, almost anchoring him into the ground.

“The explosion,” he burst out.

“Pardon?” Her head peeked out from the brim of his hat.

“That’s where I heard your voice before. When I kept passing out after getting caught in that explosion.”

“Ah yes, when Master Reyes was saving your life.”

McCree paused. He wondered a lot over the years exactly what occurred to keep him alive, but no one had any details. Gabriel had always avoided the subject.

He looked the bird in the eye. “Say what?”

“The flames of a phoenix depend entirely on the emotions of the wielder.” She hopped onto his shoulder. “They can be used to heal or hurt. Tell me, does this feel familiar.” She pressed her face against his cheek.

The sensations of warm fire place in winter hit him again. “Yeah, I used to get that-”
“When he touched your forehead.”

“That was you?”

“My powers, his emotions.”

A dull pain rose up in McCree’s chest.

“When that metal rod in your chest was killing you, Master Reyes was running out of options.” The phoenix flew up into the air for a moment. Her flames grew and swirled around her before shifting into a pillar. Bit by bit it vanished, leaving a more human like form. Her body was still covered in flaming feathers, shifting around her legs like a dress. Her eyes glowed almost a shade of white and her long nose almost curled down like her beak.

“Whoa,” McCree put his hand on his hat. “You can shape shift?”

“In here, of course.” She put a finger to her lips. “Let me finish explaining.”

“Ah, right, sorry ma’am.”

“I am the spirit of healing and rebirth.” Her hand reached toward him. “Master Reyes used my flames to keep your heart beating until help could arrive.”

She placed her hand on his chest and a searing heat tore through his nerves. He jerked back, covering the spot where her hand had been, gasping for air.

“Sounds tiring,” he said as he recalled how worn out Hanzo looked when he summoned the dragons.

“It was.”

“How long did he do that for?”

She pressed her lips together for a moment. “An hour and a half.”

McCree could do nothing but stare back at her. No wonder Gabriel looked so damn tired in the hospital room.

“I understand your confusion.” Her body burst into flames as she shifted back into her original form. “And I cannot say what he was thinking during that fight, but he did love you.”

“So I’ve heard,” McCree mumbled.

“Let’s talk of something else.” She flew back onto his shoulder. “I’m sure you have plenty of questions.”

“Sure,” He turned to look at her. “Like what the hell am I supposed to name you?”
Hey it's me ruinin everything again...

“I’m sure you can think of a name.” The phoenix picked at his sleeve.

“I suppose, but do you have any standards? Do I need to pull out my limited french to think of somethin’?” He swatted her beak away.

“As long as it’s not something completely childish like ‘Clucky’ or ‘Polly’ anything is fine.”

“Aw, there goes my idea then.” He laughed.

She gave him a sharp peck to the cheek. “Do not toy with me.”

“Ow, hey, all right. Fine.” He rubbed the spot as he tried to think of something suitable. He supposed ‘Betsy’ was out of the question. Way too cliche. What did you name an ancient phoenix?

“What did Gabe call you?”

The feathers on her back stood up. “I would not recommend using the same name as a former owner. As a note, anyone who knows my name can call me out. That is not a power you want to give out lightly.”

“Fine, I won’t use it, but I still want to know.”

Her feathers turned yellow. “Marigold. To him the flowers symbolized rebirth.”

“No kidding? That’s so pretty. Wouldn’t have expected that from him.”

“Oh please, you saw how affectionate he could be.” The phoenix hopped down his arm. “I was no exception.”

“You liked him, huh?”

“Well, he certainly had more wit than you.”

“Ouch,” McCree put a hand over his chest. “Now you’re just hurting my feelings.”

She laughed at him, but didn’t reply.

He paced around on the sand with the bird on his arm, still pondering over a name. He thought about myths, super heroes, and even relatives. In the end his mind settled on one name.
“Clementine,” He said it with a grin.

“How about Clementine, it suits your orange shade I’d think.”

For a moment, there was no reaction. “I believe you have more reasons than that for such a choice.”

“Well, you do live in my head.” McCree thought about his mother clearly for the first time in ages. She died when he was young, only leaving behind a handful of memories. Still, something about the way the bird carried herself reminded him of her.

“Clementine it is,” she chirped and bowed her head. “It would be my honor to serve you, Master McCree.”

“Oh, so it’s master now?”

“Don’t let it go to your head. You have much to learn.”

“Like what? What sort of fancy tricks can you do?”

“Healing fire, medicinal ashes, perhaps if you practice hard enough you can grow wings.”

“Whoa,” McCree eyes widened as he put a hand on his hat. “Really? Can I fly?”

“If you practice.”

“Damn, think of how much I could be doing right now if I had talked to you sooner.”

“I’ll say, then perhaps this,” she pecked at his prosthetic, “could have been avoided.”

The memory flashed into his head like the bullet that took his limb. The sand under him shifted and the winds picked up. The phoenix seemed to flinch.

“Oh,” she hopped back to his shoulder. “I’m sorry. That was... rather crass of me.”

McCree wasn’t sure how to respond. She wasn’t wrong, but the bitterness settled in the back of his throat. The awful taste was directed more at himself than anything.

He could have done something.

“I am sorry,” she repeated. “Perhaps it is best if we continue this conversation another day.” Clementine leapt down before soaring back over to the tree. “Try and get some sleep.”

He wasn’t entirely sure how to snap out of this trance. He tried the reverse of how he got in, think of distractions.

McCree’s eyes flew open to see the dark underside of his hat. The music in his ear was a fast an aggressive string of electric guitar.

He groaned as he sat up, checking the clock. Only ten minutes had passed. Time in the mindscape
sSure was wonky.

With a sigh he adjusted his hat back on his head, wondering what to do. The bird told him to get some sleep but there was no way that was happening now. Nightmares would be the only thing waiting for him at this point.

In the end he decided to take a walk. Head out to the deck and take a quick smoke. As long as he stayed away from the alcohol he’d be fine.

He considered looking for Zenyatta but didn’t want to bother the monk at this hour, not over this. He didn’t want to talk to anyone about this.

Let them keep thinking he lost his arm over something heroic, a worthy sacrifice.

Yeah right.

McCree went ahead and put the cigar in his mouth, chewing on the end of it. Somehow it tasted sweeter than the flavor that still lingered in his throat.

He let out a long sigh as he stepped out on to the deck. The night air was cool, and eased a bit of the tension. He snapped his fingers, the flames erupting in his palm. The sudden heat surprised him and he took a moment to dull it down.

“The flames of a phoenix depend entirely on the emotions of the wielder."

Right, that. He needed to keep it under control.

Only after he lit his cigar did he bother to look around. It almost fell out of his mouth when he realized he wasn’t alone.

Hanzo’s gaze was fixed on him, a slight tilt to his head.

“Good evening, McCree.”

Chapter End Notes

If anyone would like I doodled Clem over here
“Howdy,” McCree forced on his best smile. “What are you doing out here?”

What a bad time to run into Hanzo. McCree never thought he’d say that but the archer was nosy enough as it was, for some reason.

Hanzo studied him for a few moments before he looked at the sky. “Meditating before I sleep keeps away nightmares.”

“Why not just meditate in your room?”

“Lúcio is next door.”

McCree tried to stifle his laugh. Without a thought he leaned against the wall and slid down to sit next to Hanzo. “He can’t be that noisy, can he?”

Hanzo slid his jaw back and forth. “Not always, but sometimes Hana stays up in his room. There were also a few times my brother and I had a fight. I am fairly certain he pointed the speakers directly at my wall.”

McCree’s laughter got louder. “Well, that kid does fight dirty.” He took a moment to calm down. “You and Genji didn’t fight again today, did you?”

“No,” Hanzo snorted. “Although I did question the decorations to his arm.” He glanced down. “I see you decided to try it as well.”

McCree looked at the red colored bubbles that filled the skull mark on his arm. “What can I say, Hana is a convincing stylist.”

The archer just snorted.

Silence fell between them as McCree focused on burning through his cigar. The fingers on his left hand tapped against the floor. He tried to mimic the notes of a song, but eventually the clinks faded into back ground noise. The stars provided a distraction for a while, until his mind pictured them more like sky scrapers.

“Will you cease that noise?”

McCree glanced at Hanzo and then at his hand. “Ah, sorry.”

“If it is not your spurs or your belt it is your hand. Is there a part of you that doesn’t jingle?”
McCree laughed and found himself staring at the archer. “You shoulda heard it when I messed up a repair job. There was a bolt stuck in there that clanged around when I walked. I didn’t bother fixing it until I realized how bad it messed up my stealth.” He shook his arm around, far too aware of the gentle whirring it made when he turned his wrist. “I was thinking of doing it on purpose for the holidays. Personal jingle bell.”

Hanzo snorted, “that would be more akin to ‘The Nightmare before Christmas’.”

McCree didn’t mean to laugh as loud as he did. His head fell back against the wall and he put a hand to his forehead to keep himself from shaking. It didn’t stop until his cigar fell from his mouth. In his attempt to catch it the embers snuffed out.

Just as well, it was almost done anyways.

“I did not think it was that funny.” Hanzo smiled.

“You have a knack for timing, that’s what it is.”

He tried to relax in his newfound position but the light feeling faded too fast. Without the smoke to distract him he was left staring at the sky again. The stars seemed to grow closer, like the black, open space was trying to swallow him.

His hand tapped against the floor again. He considered smoking another one but that would just make Hanzo suspicious.

“Is something wrong?” Nevermind, McCree forgot the guy could read minds.

“Ah, no,” he sniffed.

“You are not a very good liar, McCree.”

“Funny, your brother said the same thing. I’m beginnin’ to think you Shimada’s just have eyes that can burn into a man’s soul.”

“Hardly,” Hanzo crossed his arms. “Your body language is simply easy to read.”

“I have to save it all for poker.”

“McCree,” the archer’s tone lowered. The way his eyes stared at McCree made the cowboy decide that his earlier statement held true. “What are you doing out here?”

He sighed and held up his hands. “Managed to talk to the phoenix.”

“Oh?” Hanzo’s eyebrows shot up. “Did you learn anything?”

“Few things, kind of ended on a sour note, so I came out here.”

“You do not get along with her?”

“It’s not that, she just has a habit of speaking her mind.” He couldn’t keep himself from looking at his hand that tapped away against the floor again. “Makin’ me realize if I had spoken to her before I could have avoided a lot of mistakes.”
Hanzo didn’t respond to that. McCree let out a sigh of relief.

“Damn,” he muttered and ground his teeth together. “Kinda wish I had a drink right now.”

No response to that either. McCree leaned back against the wall, trying to focus on the cool night air. The stars seemed to glare at him again so he shut his eyes.

The sound of a cork had him opening them back up. He glanced to the side to see Hanzo holding out his sake bottle.

“Eh?” McCree sat up. “What’s this partner? You supportin’ my filthy habits?”

Hanzo frowned at him, almost pouting. “It is... a filthy habit I share. I would have no right to stop you.”

“Doesn’t mean you should encourage it.”

“Did you want a drink or not?”

“Hey, if you’re offering.” McCree reached for the bottle only for it to be jerked away from his grip. “What? Change your mind?”

“No,” Hanzo lowered his arm. “I decided, instead, to make it into a game.”

“That’s dangerous.”

“For every sip you take, you are required to tell me something I do not know about you.”

McCree felt irritation prick at his neck. “You diggin’ for secrets again?”

“Perhaps, but it does not need to be anything personal.” Hanzo swirled the alcohol around. “I do not know much about you.”

“Fine, but same goes for you.” McCree pointed. “You take a sip, I get a secret. We keep going until the bottle’s empty.”

“You’ll be drunk.”

“I ain’t takin’ the risk unless you do.”

Hanzo glared at him for a moment, grip tightening on the bottle.

“Fine,” he shoved it against McCree’s chest. “You first.”
Everyone's so looking forward to this and I quietly laugh to myself

Well it's still pretty entertaining I suppose

For a while the exchange of “secrets” was easy. McCree tried to distance the facts as far away from his past as he could, talking about favorite foods, funny stories, and muttering “actually I’ve never had the chance to ride a horse”. Hanzo followed the same idea, bringing up a few petty contests he and Genji used to have, and adding “that's a shame, because I have”.

“Have to teach me sometime,” McCree gave a lopsided grin. He knew in a few moments he wouldn’t be able to walk back into the building, but he was determined now.

“There is not much to teach.” Hanzo didn’t seem nearly as affected by the alcohol, but shades of pink covered his cheeks.

“Could you like, fire your bow on it?” McCree giggled. “Hit targets while it ran?”

“It is not my turn to drink.”

McCree groaned and took a sip, wondering what else he could say in the haze. By now the stars looked far less intimidating, a smeared mess on a black canvas.

“Did you know I can belly dance?” He giggled again at the memory. “Not really well but I can.”

“Where did you learn that?”

“Uh uh,” McCree handed the bottle over. “Your turn.”

Hanzo glared, “you’re insufferable.”

“I’m perfect,” McCree slid down the wall, his hat falling onto his face. “And I’m doing the same thing you did.”

The archer snatched the bottle and took a quick sip. “Yes, I can aim my bow while riding a horse.”

“Boy I would pay to see that,” McCree mumbled, letting his eyes fall shut. “Bet you’d look lovely.”

“I believe you are beyond reason at this point.”

He just smiled. Let Hanzo believe that.

“Last sip,” the archer nudged the bottle against his shoulder.
It took McCree a moment to grab it, forcing himself to sit back up. His head pounded a bit from the motion but he ignored it.

“Hey, that ain’t fair. It started with me.”

“Perhaps if you had taken smaller sips earlier, as I suggested, it would not have happened.”

“Whatever Hanzo, you’re just...” He lost the insult. Instead he focused on the bottle in his hand. Fair was fair.

Then somehow, the fog in his brain produced an idea.

“Final round,” he shouted, stomping his foot on the ground.

Hanzo flinched, “excuse me?”

“I’ll make another deal with you. After this sip I’ll tell you a big secret, if you agree to tell me one to match.”

The archer glared at him. “McCree, it is clear neither of us like discussing such things.”

“So?”

“You are intoxicated.”

“So are you,” McCree leaned over and poked Hanzo on the cheek. “Less you gonna tell me you started doing blush as well as eyeliner.”

Hanzo swatted his hand away. “You would only regret this tomorrow.”

“So what?” He mumbled. “I regret a lot of things. Maybe it’s time I got them off my mind.”

“That is not something you should do while drunk.”

“Ugh, stop being such a mom Hanzo.” McCree pushed against his shoulder and almost fell over. “That’s why you wanted to play this game in the first place, ain’t it?”

The archer stiffened under his grip.

“You’re nosy and you wanted to know what was botherin’ me. I know you think I’m stupid but I’m not.” McCree pushed himself back up, almost falling in the other direction. “Might be drunk enough to tell you, but not for free.”

Hanzo sighed, “I should not have given you that sake. I am sorry, McCree.”

“Nah, nah, don’t feel guilty for that.” McCree poked him. “You don’t even have to take the deal, was just an idea.”

“Fine.”

He blinked a few times, his vision not clearing up at all. “Huh?”
“It is probably an intoxicated decision, but fine.” Hanzo rubbed his eye before he rubbed his forehead. “If you tell me what it is, I shall tell you something as equally personal.”

McCree flashed a smile, but it vanished when he looked back at the bottle.

Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea.

His mechanical fingers tapped on the sides of it before he took a deep breath and took the last sip.

The alcohol didn’t burn as much as it did at first, but he tried to savor the sensation. Right now it’d be the only thing keeping him together.

Play it off as a joke, that always works right?

“Did you know,” he put the bottle down and held up his left hand, “where I got this?”

“I may have asked a few of the members,” Hanzo was squinting at him again. “But they all told different stories.”

“I never even told anyone, they made those up.” McCree laughed. “Was Reinhardt’s the one about the bear fight?”

“Yes.”

He laughed louder, clinging to the bubbly sensation in his stomach. “They asked, I told them to make up their own story. They always come up with something better than how it was.”

“To be honest,” Hanzo rubbed at the side of his face. “I figured it was a result of your own foolishness.”

“Kinda was,” he muttered. “After I left Overwatch things were kind of aimless, but people still knew my name. Lot of them wanted to hire me for stuff. Took some jobs, rejected others, I tried to at least keep my name clean but my bounty says otherwise.”

“Most of it due to the government, no doubt.”

McCree shrugged, his back sliding further and further down the wall until his chin pressed against his chest. “It was good pay usually. Even if folks couldn’t give me money, a place to stay and free food was enough to satisfy me, but then...”

He trailed off. Hanzo didn’t say anything.

He wished he had saved that sip.

“There was a kid, couldn’t have been more than fourteen. He just happens to find me on a street, beggin’ me to hide him. I didn’t catch everything he said, but someone had taken his parents away. Was scared he’d be next. Tried to give me all the money in his pocket for it.

“I took the job. Couldn’t turn a desperate kid away. For a while we were just moving, lookin’ for a safe house. I found out the guys after him were Talon, but I couldn’t engage them, not with him in the way.”
“I feel...” Hanzo breathed in. “That this adventure does not have a happy ending.”

“Got that right,” McCree forced a smile. “Talon jumped up. There were bullets everywhere. My priority was getting him somewhere safe but I didn’t know the streets well enough. He didn’t either. Stuck in a dead in.”

As the words slurred out of his mouth the setting shifted into his vision. The walls looked higher than ever and seemed to get closer and closer. At the end of the alley, their light at the end of the tunnel, stood three armed men. McCree had his gun, he pretended to grip it. Line them up, shoot, it’d be easy.

Too late.

“Tried to push him back.” His skin felt numb. “Guy in front fired. Bullet tore clean through my arm and hit him square in the chest. He was down in a second.”

Even now he could feel it. The dead weight on his arm was far worse than the pain. There was no time to check on him. McCree knew he’d be next if he didn’t do something.

There was no other option. After taking the three out with his dead eye he ran out of the alley and hadn’t looked back.

“By the time I got to a doctor there wouldn’t have been much point in fixing my arm. Might as well replace it with something more badass.” McCree poked at the gunk decorating the metal. The bumpy texture under his finger helped him relax.

Then he chuckled, pressing his palm against his forehead. “Guess you could say I got dealt a poor hand.” Laughter erupted from his throat, a welcome distraction from the oncoming tears.

“McCree, that is not funny.” Hanzo said.

“Aw, come on, it’s hilarious. Get it?” McCree tried to point as his palm. Instead he just rolled over on the ground, staring at the empty bottle.

“I think,” the archer sighed and stood up, wobbling on his legs for a moment. “You should get some sleep.”

“Told you to stop being a mom,” McCree rolled over again so his face pressed against the floor. “Besides, you ain’t weaseling your way out of this deal. You promised to tell me something.”

“Perhaps when we are both of sound mind.” Hanzo grabbed his right arm and tried to pull him up. He got about halfway, but his balance was too wonky.

“Don’t screw with me. You better not back out.”

“I will not,” Hanzo snapped and rolled McCree onto his back. “I give you my word.”

“Genji used to say that a lot too.”

“You must enjoy,” Hanzo slid his arms under McCree’s shoulders and pulled him up, “bringing my brother up around me.”
“Hey, don’t hate you as much as I used to.” He let his head lean back against the archer’s chest. “But I’m still a little bitter about that.”

“About what?” Hanzo dragged him off the balcony and into the hallway.

“Bout what you did to him.” His head rolled to the side and he could make out the sound of Hanzo’s heartbeat. “You didn’t see what he was like back then.”

Hanzo paused for a brief moment before he continued his path. “No, I did not, and for the time being I would rather you not tell me of it.”

McCree felt his vision going hazy. “Why? You scared?”

The archer’s grip tightened. “Stop, please.”

Any guilt that appeared was soon washed away in a wave of exhaustion. “Sorry. You’re right. I should probably sleep.”

“Then assist me by walking to your room by yourself.”

McCree hummed and pressed his cheek against Hanzo’s chest. “Maybe I like you carryin’ me.”

Suddenly the grip on his shoulders was gone. McCree hit the floor with a thud. The haze in his mind vanished but yet again the room was spinning. He pushed himself up only to see Hanzo stomping away.

“Aw, come on darlin’ I was joking.” McCree called after him but the archer didn’t turn around.

He let himself fall back onto the floor again, not in the mood to get up and walk around. Maybe he’d just sleep in the hall, wouldn’t be the first time.

It took him far too long to register the footsteps. He squinted for a long time at a pair of bare feet before his gaze trailed up blue pajama pants to see Fareeha leaning over him.

“You look like shit.” Her eyes looked too much like her mothers.

“Shut up, bed head.” McCree groaned and reached up. “Care to help me up?”

“What happened to you?” She gripped his wrist and jerked on his arm.

McCree yelped and stumbled a few times. The room was spinning fast, too fast, everything went gray for a moment.

“Nevermind,” she gripped his shoulder to hold him steady. “I don’t want to know.”

“Just help me to my room.”

Fareeha hummed for a moment. “Maybe if you give me those debbie cakes you’ve been hiding.”

He glared at her and considered walking by himself until he started teetering to the side. “Fine, you rat.”
She stuck out her tongue and shoved him towards his room.
Chapter Notes

In unsurprising news: McCree is a pouty child

When McCree blacked out on his bed he didn’t expect to wake up in his desert of a mind. Looking at the expanse of empty sand he wasn’t sure if it should bother him or not. Maybe they all looked something like this.

“There’s ruins nearby if you like.” Clementine spoke, standing on his chest.

“Quit reading my mind,” he mumbled and covered his eyes from the glaring sun.

“I live in it.” She nudged his hand with her beak. “A rather unfortunate occasion when you are drunk.”

“Why am I in here?” He pushed her head back. “Or is this just dreaming for me now.”

“I thought you’d prefer to be in here than having a nightmare.” She hopped closer to his face. “If you walk around, mind your step. There is quicksand that could pull you back into them.”

McCree tried to push her away again, but she landed on his hand instead, staring at him. He glared back.

“You think I deserve to deal with your drunk mind after what I said.” She made herself comfortable on her perch. “I do not blame you for being angry, Master McCree, but do not be childish.”

“I don’t want mom lectures from you too.” He threw his arm to the side, forcing her to fly off. “Damn, shit, I can take care of myself.”

“You couldn’t walk to your room by yourself.”

“So? Could have just left me on the floor. Maybe I would have learned something.”

“Cease that self loathing at once.”

McCree covered his ears and rolled over, letting his face rest against the warm sand.

Even then he could hear the phoenix sigh, the sound echoing in his skull.

“I am sorry for bringing up such memories, Master McCree.” Clementine landed on the sand next to him. “But there is no sense in punishing yourself.”

He snorted and rolled over again.
“Ugh,” her voice got deeper. “You’re just as bad as he is. Stubborn, unruly,” she jumped onto his head and pecked his ear, “listening far too much to your emotions.”

He almost swatted at her again. She bit his finger.

“Ow,” McCree shouted and shot off the ground. The phoenix hovered in front of him, her feathers ruffled and glaring red.

“You listen to me, Master McCree.” She landed on his leg and craned her neck toward him. “I will not tolerate such an attitude in here. I will not tolerate my companions wallowing in self pity. You are doing nothing but hurting yourself.”

“I don’t need a lecture from you too.” He cradled his burning finger.

“I understand I carry a lot of things you’d like to forget.” Clementine continued on, her feathers fading back to orange. “But I was given to you with the order to protect you, and if that includes protecting you from yourself then so be it.”

McCree sighed and fell back against the soft sand. As much as he wanted to be alone right now there was no avoiding this.

“Just talk about something else.” He muttered.

“Like what?” She jumped back onto his chest and settled down. Warmth from her feathers spread over his skin.

McCree pondered for a moment. “Back when he gave you to me, he said you already knew me. How?”

“He spoke of you very often, as he did with most of the people he cared for. He spent a lot of time in the mindscape at night, mostly avoiding nightmares.” Clementine tapped her beak against his chest. “There was nothing to do but talk.”

“That,” she continued on, “and with the bond shared by spirits and their hosts, if he cared for someone I did as well.”

“Don’t turn sappy on me.” He rested his left hand on her back, letting the metal fingers run through her feathers.

“Mmm, you should have seen him when he was younger.” Her flames gently wrapped around McCree’s hand. “Always asking me advice about what to do with his newfound crush.”

McCree stopped petting her, his eyebrows shooting up. “Wait, you mean Jack?”

“Yes,” the phoenix laughed. “Oh every night he was practically swooning. ‘You should have seen him today Marigold’. Jack’s spirit and I began to place bets on when they would finally fess up.”

He couldn’t keep himself from chuckling at the image of his commander with a crush.

Then he paused. “Wait, Jack’s spirit?”

“Indeed,” she nuzzled his wrist, insisting he keep petting her. “Jack had a wolf spirit with him.”
“What was his name?”

“I cannot tell you what Jack named him.” Her eyes fixed on him as her feathers flattened. “And it’s better if you never call a spirit by their real name.”

“That sounds like a threat.”

“It is,” she leaned her head closer to him. “Names are sacred things to spirits. They are a mark of ownership. To call a spirit by it’s real name offers it the chance to control you.”

“Whoa, whoa,” he sat up, knocking her back. “You tellin’ me this thing could work both ways?”

“Not for us.” Clementine shook her feathers. “I allowed you name me first.”

“You ever gonna give me your real name?”

“No need, to you I am Clementine and that is all.”

McCree sighed, letting his fingers brush against the feathers on her cheek. She seemed to smile that, nuzzling against his hand.

“Must have been lonely in here with no one to talk to.” He said.

She paused. “It was strange for a while. Master Reyes spoke with me as often as he could. His mother was very much the same. I could not blame you.” She stared up at him for a few moments before flying onto his head. “And it does not matter, you are here now. We should do our best to look ahead.”

“Huh, this thing is full of fortunes.” McCree smirked and took a risk, plucking the bird off his head. “If I shake it enough does it spill money.”

“Master McCree,” she huffed. “You put me down this instant.”

“That doesn’t sound like money.”

“You insufferable child,” she squawked. “Put me down.” Her flames burned hotter but McCree didn’t let go.

“Wow, feels warm.” It took everything McCree had to hold back his laughter . “Maybe I can use it as a footrest.”

“Insolent, foolish, childish,” each insult came with a burst of flame. “This is not funny. Put me down. Ooooh you really are his son aren’t you?”

His grin just widened as he released his grip. “You got that right.”
Oops a little late on this one sorry!

Actually speaking of I got bad news, my buffer's almost ran out, life happened ORZ
Basically until I can build it back up daily updates might be over

SO I wanna ask you guys if you have a preference. Would you rather I just post stuff as it gets done? Or would you rather I finish an entire part and upload it one section a day. Lemme know on that. As for part 4 imma just post as it gets done, it is halfway through at least.

Other update: I'm on a trip this weekend and us having wi-fi is up in the air, imma upload the parts I have done before I leave but I might be out until Monday (hopefully I can catch up on some writing tho)

Okay I'm rambling now tho, have fun with this section

The trouble with sleeping in the mindscape–McCree discovered–was that waking up went a lot less smoothly than usual. There was no drifting out of surreal dreams. It felt more like jolting out of a nightmare as a sandstorm tore at his skin and he shot up in bed.

A terrible idea, his head pounding from the alcohol he drank last night. He wasn’t quite hung over, but it was enough to make him collapse against the mattress. He debated if he should stay in bed or get up and grab some coffee.

It was soon decided for him when someone knocked on the door.

“Who is it?” McCree called out into his pillow. When there was no response he forced himself out of the bed. His head spun and he paused, feeling the dried sweat on his forehead.

Damn he needed a shower.

“Honestly, get a hold of yourself.” Clementine’s voice rung in his head.

“Easy for you to say. Bet you’ve never been drunk in your life.” McCree wandered over to the door.

“I can feel the effects from you. Why you humans do it is beyond me.”

“Whatever, Clem.”

“What did you just call me?”

McCree didn’t respond when he opened the door. Hanzo stood on the other side of it, arms crossed, gaze fixed on him. Looking closer, McCree could see the shadows under his eyes.
“Good morning,” Hanzo glanced up and down before looking to the side.

“Mornin’ Hanzo.”

The archer seemed to flinch. “Are you feeling alright?”

“Uh, tired, got a headache, the usual after that I guess.”

There was a pause. “You need a shower.”

“Don’t I know it, but I need some coffee first.”

“No,” Hanzo narrowed his eyes and shoved McCree back into his bunk. “Take a shower. I will get your coffee.”

“I told you to quit being a mom.” McCree complained. “And do you even know how to make coffee?”

“It cannot be that hard.”

He cringed. “At least promise me you’ll ask Mei to help you.”

“I doubt she is up at this hour.”

McCree blinked. “Wait, what time is it?”

“Six.”

“Hell, why am I up this early?” McCree ran his hands over this face. The cool metal of his prosthetic made him jump. “I’m going back to sleep.”

“No,” Hanzo pushed him again. “Wash up, wake up, and when you are done we are going to practice.”

“You really think I should be shootin’ today?”

“I did not say that,” the archer rolled his eyes. “I was going to help you practice seeing these spirits.”

McCree felt his vision clear up as he blinked. “Oh, well, I guess that’d be fine.”

“Then hurry up.” Hanzo stepped out of the room. “Your coffee will be in the kitchen.”

There was a retort on the tip of his tongue, something about it not being real coffee, but the door was closed. McCree stared at the blank slate with a frown before heading to the bathroom.

Then he paused at the realization he called the Shimada by his first name.

-x-

“You know something, Hanzo?” McCree smirked against the mug as he leaned on the counter.
“What?”

“You can’t make a real cup of coffee.”

Hanzo’s eyes narrowed into a glare and he actually put a hand on his hip. “You,” he pointed, “do not drink real coffee. You drink some kind of thick sludge that is more akin to the mud in a rice field than a proper drink.”

McCree snorted and took another sip. “Poetry.”

“Excuse me?”

“That sounded poetic. You’ve got a knack for that.” Another sip. “I’m just kidding with you, anyway. It’s drinkable at least.”

“Of course it is,” Hanzo crossed his arms. “Coffee is not that hard to make.”

“Trying to tell me that your plain leaf water is?”

“To get the proper flavor? Yes.”

“All right then,” McCree waved his mug in fake toast. “Next time I’ll try making tea then.”

“A disaster in the making.”

“We’ll see about that.”

McCree swore he could see Hanzo smile.

A few moments passed in silence. McCree let the weak coffee sit in his mouth, craving the sensation of caffeine burning his throat. Eventually, he added four spoonfuls of sugar to it, which earned him a glare from Hanzo. McCree just shrugged. Had to get his energy from somewhere.

There were another few beats before Hanzo spoke. “I am sorry about last night.”

McCree made sure to slurp his coffee. “What part? Giving me alcohol, being nosy, or dropping me in the hallway.”

Hanzo closed his eyes, “the first two.”

“Well I told you already that it’s not necessary. I knew what you were doing from the start.” He pointed at the archer with his mug. “I’m just as nosy as you.”

“About what?”

“What you were thinking back then.”

McCree didn’t specify that statement. He didn’t need to. He could see Hanzo tense up, staring at the floor.

“Forget about that right now.” He took his last sip and slammed the mug on the counter. “Let’s
talk to some ghost animals.”

Hanzo snorted at the joke.

He led McCree into the rec room, the pair of them settleing down on the sofa. The soft cushions almost had McCree falling asleep, if Hanzo didn’t smack him.

“Focus,” the archer glared.

“That’s easy to say Hanzo, but I don’t know what I’m trying to focus on here.”

“Take a deep breath. Close your eyes. Focus on what you feel around you. And try to stay awake.”

McCree muttered the last few words to himself before he did as he was told. Deep breath, eyes closed, focused on... what? All he could feel was soft cushions and an itch forming on his eyebrow. He tried to ignore that and his mind drifted to the metal of his prosthetic gliding against his skin. His arm felt like it was burning before he forced in another distraction. The smell of coffee, that was a good one. He hadn’t eaten breakfast yet. What should he make later? Eggs and tomatoes sounded-

“McCree.”

His eyes snapped open at the archer’s voice.

“You are tapping your fingers again.”

He glanced down at his metal hand before curling it into a fist. “Sorry, is that distracting you?”

“No, it is telling me you are not focused.”

“How do you figure that?”

Hanzo rolled his eyes. “You tap the fingers on that hand when you’re trying to avoid thinking about that event.”

McCree flinched. “How could you-”

“You did not start displaying that habit until last night.”

He muttered a few curses to himself and pulled his hat over his eyes. Just how observant was this damn archer? “Any other habits you’ve taken note of?”

Hanzo seemed to ponder it for a moment, tapping his thumbs together. “You rub the back of your neck when you’re trying to avoid a subject. You ease your anxiety with cigars and when you have none you grind your teeth. It is a dreadful sound.”

McCree felt his jaw tighten from irritation but he didn’t want to give Hanzo the satisfaction. “You know, Hanzo, if I didn’t know you any better I’d be mighty suspicious of why you keep such a close eye on me.”

Hanzo just raised his eyebrow, likely not understanding what McCree was implying. Then he sighed. “Never mind that right now. You need to focus.”
“Easier said than done.” McCree flopped back against the sofa. He still had no clue what he was trying to focus on. It wasn’t like shooting. There was no visible target. Right now there was nothing but empty black space and a heavy feeling on his left arm.

“You need to clear your head.”

McCree didn’t realize Hanzo had gotten up from the couch until the archer was taking off his hat. Before he could snap out a response, cold fingers pressed against the sides of his head. He froze.

“Deep breath. Close your eyes.”

“Uh, Hanzo?” He glanced up at the archer. Hanzo just glared back. “Eyes closed.”

McCree took a deep breath and gave it another shot. How the hell was he supposed to focus now? With his eyes shut all he could think about was why Hanzo’s fingers were so damn cold. He was far too conscious of them lightly curling into his hair. Suddenly the scent of saltwater flooded his senses. He could feel it drift over his cheeks, a stark contrast to the mid-day, beach sun.

“Focus,” the archer’s voice felt like a whisper now. “I know you can. I have seen you do it. Sense their presence around you. Hone in on it. That is your target, now aim.”

Focus. McCree told himself, even with the sensations slowly drowning him. He let the salt water drift over his head, imagined the silence of the ocean.

Focus. He repeated. What sort of presence was he looking for? Something warm, had to be, Clementine was made of fire after all.

Focus. Another deep breath. There it was, trailing up from his arm to his shoulder. It flittered away from him but he followed it.

Hey Clem, you in there? His thoughts seemed to echo in the empty, dark space.

“I always am.”

Good, keep talking to me.

“About what?”

Whatever you want, darlin’

She snorted. “Why bother giving me a name if you’re going to use nicknames, honestly.”

He could actually see it now. Something orange flickered in front of him.

It means I like you. He smiled to himself and tried to pick out shapes from the light.

“Oh? If that’s the case then shouldn’t you have a dozen of them for the dragon child?”
That comment almost threw him off, almost, but he had his target now.

A moment later there she sat, on a table. He could see vague shapes in the room, although most of them remained black. Clementine just stared at him, her fire moving more slowly and ghost like.

“Hey,” McCree shouted. “It’s workin’.”

“You see her?”

Hanzo’s voice made the image flash, but it stayed in place.

“Yeah she’s over there on the-” Something blue overwhelmed his vision. “Whoa.”

“What is it?”

McCree didn’t respond for a moment as the blue light took shape. He could make out the scale patterns now and followed them up to see one of the dragons hovering around him. When he met its eyes the creature drifted closer to him. The beast—while not as large as it was during Hanzo’s attack—still made McCree feel tiny. It’s eye alone covered his vision, dancing with electricity.

“Your dragon is staring at me.” McCree said. Just then he could feel something cold rush against the back of his neck and figured it must be the other one.

“They... do that a lot.” Hanzo sighed and let go of McCree.

The dragon remained in place, it’s sparking eye fixed on him.

“Howdy?” McCree offered.

The dragon snorted and drifted away.

“They aren’t much for conversation.” Clementine picked at her feathers. “Just like their Master, I suppose.”

“I can hear you.” Hanzo said.

She just laughed and flew over to McCree’s shoulder.
Chapter Notes

OH GOD I ALMOST FORGOT TO UPLOAD THIS..... my bartender kinda put too much moonshine in my mule OOPS......... I'm sorry.......

Thanks for all the comments on the last bit tho guys like whoa

Hanzo insisted that McCree keep practicing. Something about being able to do it without thinking too hard. While the cowboy wanted to do nothing but nap, he agreed, as long as they got some breakfast first.

Surprisingly there was no argument about making omelettes, but there was one when Hanzo went to make the coffee again. McCree tried to wrestle the pot from his grip and didn’t stop until Winston came into the kitchen, shouting at them both.

“I’m not replacing another one.” He growled.

“Sorry sir.” McCree grinned and occupied himself with the hot pan. “I’ll let Hanzo make his dirt water.”

The archer glared, “I am certain that dirt water is better than sewage.”

Winston just muttered to himself as he grabbed a jar of peanut butter. Something about “it’s too early for this” before he headed out of the kitchen.

There was another argument about what to put in the omelettes. While Hanzo grabbed a few ingredients from the fridge, McCree grabbed two more handfuls.

“You cannot fit all of that into an omelette, McCree.”

“Watch me.”

“And we do not need this much bacon.”

“I disagree.”

Hanzo growled and ran a hand over his face. “Give me the pan.”

“Hell no, I’m making breakfast. Sit your picky ass down.”

“Aw man,” a chipper voice cut into the conversation. “Eastwood is making breakfast.”

Lúcio sat down at the bar, swiveling around in the stool before leaning against the counter. “Mmm yeah I think I’ll have five strips of burnt bacon.”

“That only happened once,” McCree snapped. “And what are you doing up this early?”
The musician yawned. “Genji wanted to go see the sunrise.”

McCree couldn’t keep himself from smirking. “Oh? Is that it?”

In his drowsy state it took Lúcio a few moments to catch his tone. “Hey, you can’t talk. I mean look at you two.” He held up his hands in a mock picture frame. “All that’s missing is one of those goofy aprons that say ‘Kiss the cook’.”

Hanzo frowned. “What do you mean?”

Lúcio just laughed to himself but didn’t explain. “Seriously though, what are you making? I’m starving.”

“He better be making pancakes.” Lena practically sprung into the kitchen. She hadn’t changed out of her pjs yet, her hair in a bigger mess than usual.

“No, I’m makin’ omelettes.”

“I demand pancakes.” She slammed her fists on the counter and grinned. “Or at least whip me up some beans and toast.”

“Gross,” Lúcio rubbed his nose.

“If you want pancakes you’re making the batter yourself, little miss.” McCree turned his attention back to the pan.

“Fine,” she lifted herself up and swung her legs over the counter. “Best pancakes ever, coming right up.”

McCree hummed while he fried up mushrooms, peppers and onions. He could hear Hanzo fretting over whatever Lena was doing with the flour and smiled to himself.

In about ten minutes the smell drew more faces into the kitchen. Hana was first, trying to join Lena on making pancakes. Hanzo almost seemed relieved until the young lady pulled the chocolate chips out of cupboard and dumped half the bag into the batter.

Reinhardt was next, starting his own batch of coffee to which McCree loudly thanked God for. Hanzo might have run him through if Genji and Zenyatta didn’t show up.

Torbjörn and Zarya only seemed interested in Reinhardt’s coffee until McCree offered them their own omelettes. Next thing he knew everyone in the room was making orders for eggs and hashbrowns to go with the extra chocolatey pancakes. McCree glanced over at Lena and Hana to see the mess of batter next to the stove.

His memory flashed back to the multiple diner jobs he took when he was on the road. Keeping up with orders was easy. Making them all with limited stove space was another matter.

“You guys don’t need two pans to make pancakes.” McCree tried to shove Lena to the side. She just blinked to his opposite side.

“Did you see how much batter we made, love?”
“That’s your problem not mine.”

When he began plating what he made Angela and Fareeha wandered in, arms linked. Angela seemed to be muttering something about how noisy they all were.

“Mornin’ ladies, can I get you anything.”

“Sure,” Fareeha took one of the spare stools. “Debbie cakes.”

McCree glared at her.

“What?” Hana spun around, sending a spoonful of batter flying. “We have those?”

“Jesse does.” Fareeha grinned.

“Eastwood’s holding out on us.” Lúcio said.

“Hana,” Hanzo interrupted the conversation, a hand on Hana’s wrist. Pancake batter was splattered across his chest. “Please be more careful with that.”

The whole room erupted into laughter.

-x-

McCree swore he’d fall back asleep, resting on the sofa after breakfast. The noise, the laughter, Winston snapping at them to make sure to clean up after, it left a blissful nostalgic feeling buzzing around in his brain.

But if Hanzo came back to find him napping he was sure he’d regret it.

With his eyes closed he took a deep breath and tried to visualize Clementine. The only other people in the room right now were Genji and Zenyatta, their voices hushed on the other side of the room.

It took a bit of effort to focus long enough but she came into view, sitting on his lap.

“Seems like you had fun.”

You know it, sweetheart.

He smiled to himself.

“Sweetheart huh? What’s next, honey bunches?”

Don’t tempt me. He thought before a faint green glow caught his attention. He followed the trail of light as it shifted into the form of another dragon, must be Genji’s. The creature hovered around in a circle, seemingly focused on the task before it’s head suddenly shot up. It flew over to a doorway, circling around something else.

“Hey Genji,” Lúcio’s voice cut in. “Hana is rallying for a few rounds of Mario Kart, you in?”

“That sounds like fun. Would you care to join us, master?”
“Not today.” The omnic spoke. “I may come by to watch later.”

“All right, I call Luigi.” Lúcio said.

“You’re always Luigi.” Genji scoffed.

“And you’re always Yoshi, dragon boy.”

McCree smiled to himself as he watched the dragon’s circle grow bigger. Then it stopped, speaking to something. McCree focused his vision long enough to catch a glimpse of a small green parrot.

Did Lúcio have a spirit too?

“Are you alright, Jesse?”

Zenyatta’s voice surprised him and he opened his eyes to see the monk hovering in front of him.

“Yeah,” he rubbed his cheek with his left hand. “Just practicing this spirit vision stuff.”

“So you spoke with your spirit then?”

McCree nodded, “Sure did. I suppose it could have gone better but...”

“Something is troubling you.”

“Nah, don’t worry about it.” The cowboy offered a smile. “Not right now at least, I’ll be fine.”

The sound of throat clearing interrupted them. Hanzo stood there by the entrance, arms crossed.

“Hello Hanzo.” The omnic sounded cheerful but McCree could tell there was an edge to his voice.

Hanzo kept his stance, hand gripping his sleeve as he shifted on his feet. “Greetings.”

The silence was almost unbearable. Even McCree sat up, ready to make a quick escape if he needed to.

But it wasn’t necessary. Zenyatta folded his hands together as he headed for the day. “I shall see you later, Jesse.”

“Uh yeah,” he tipped his hat out of habit.

Hanzo’s eyes didn’t leave the omnic, even after he left. It took another few moments for his stance to relax as he headed for the sofa.

McCree thought about mentioning it, but thought better of it. Change the subject, he was good at that.

“Didn’t know Lúcio had a spirit,” he spat out the first thought in his brain.

“Does he?”
“Thought I saw a little green bird on his shoulder. I guess it gets hidden a lot by Genji’s dragon.”

Hanzo snorted and actually smiled. “Indeed. My brother may be discreet but his dragon is not.”

McCree knew any responses he had to that comment wouldn’t be well received. “So who else here has a spirit?”

“Why not find out for yourself?”

“Aw, come on, give me one.”

Hanzo rolled his eyes. “Very well, Fareeha has one.”

McCree froze for a moment. A few thoughts swirled around in his head. He wondered if she already knew about the phoenix. He wondered if she knew where it came from.

He wondered if her spirit had come from her mother.

He shut his eyes, bringing his focus back to Clementine to ask for clarification.

The bird just nodded at him.

Damn. Fareeha was probably dealing with the same shit he was and he hadn’t even noticed.

Footsteps had his vision moving back to the door. A bright white light practically paralyzed him for a moment. As it shifted into shape the first thing he noticed was a horn that hovered in the air like a sword. It lead down to a horse’s face. The shape of it’s body seemed more like that of a deer with a long tail dragging behind it.

A unicorn.

His eyes flew open to see Angela standing there, giving him a strange look.

“Whoa, Angie.”

She frowned. “What?”

“Nice unicorn,” he pointed at her with a smirk.

She rolled her eyes before they widened in surprise. “Wait, you can see her now?”

“Sure can.”

“Thank goodness,” Angela sighed. “I wondered when you’d figure it out. I didn’t want to bring it up since... well never mind. Now isn’t the time to discuss that.”

McCree agreed with that statement. “So, what can she do?”

“Healing, mostly, I can use her to check people’s vitals too. Even if they’re almost dead.”

McCree didn’t miss the pointed stare in Hanzo’s direction. He didn’t miss the archer tense up, keeping his gaze away from her. He certainly didn’t miss another layer of tension falling over the
“Anyway,” she chimed, putting on a smile. “I’ll see you around, got things to do. Mission prep, I’m sure you know.” Her gaze moved over to him. “I’m glad you’re getting the hang of it though.”

“Yeah, thanks Angie.” McCree rubbed at his neck as he watched her leave.

Hanzo let out a long breath.

“Didn’t know you and her were butting heads.” He muttered.

“I believe she doesn’t take kindly to what happened between my brother and I.”

Oh, right, that. If McCree was honest with himself he forgot about it most of the time. When Hanzo first arrived here Genji made a point to McCree not to bring it up. The cowboy wanted to, sure, but he knew it wasn’t any of his business.

But Angela, she probably had more personal feelings toward it. She practically built Genji from the bottom up. She knew the extent of the damage better than anyone.

That, and she had a bad habit of holding grudges.

“Eh, don’t worry about it.” McCree leaned back against the sofa. “She’ll come around eventually. She used to hate me too, you know.”

“I imagine everyone hated you at some point.”

“Hey now,” McCree shoved him. “You’re no ray of sunshine either.”

Hanzo just gave him a knowing smile.

“By the way, when do you plan on holding up your end of the deal?”

His smile fell, “Later. Not in here.”

“Fine, I get that, but I’m not going to stop pestering you.”

Hanzo didn’t reply to that. McCree didn’t push. He let his eyes fall shut and watched a pair of blue lights swirl around above him. They danced in a perfect circle, a smooth rhythm that reminded him of ocean waves.
Aaaand putting this up before I leave just in case there's no wifi

So far it seems people would prefer I just finish a whole group and then upload the sections once a day. I feel like this might work better too, gives me some time to build a buffer. (I'm gonna post this group as I finish it tho)

Either way good morning everyone, hope ur ready for a nice bowl of honey nut feelios.
I didn't even plan on this section but HERE IT IS...

McCree figured Fareeha would be in one of the training rooms. If she wasn’t on a mission or spending time with her girlfriend, that’s where she always was, working herself to the bone.

He’d tried for a while after the recall to get her to loosen up, but it just wasn’t as easy as it used to be. She wasn’t young anymore, and he knew most of her optimism vanished after losing all three of her parents.

She had kept in touch with him after he ran off. For a while, she kept asking when he’d go back. She missed him. It wasn’t easy with her mom gone. Then Gabriel and Jack both went up in flames. He stayed with her for a little while after that, offering support, but she kept drowning herself in work. Eventually he moved on and the calls stopped.

She was excited to see him after the recall, making jokes like they were kids again, but he could tell she had changed.

He was a bit surprised to find her in the shooting range, firing away at a series of moving targets. It wasn’t often she trained without her armor.

He announced his arrival by shooting one of the targets right off its hanger.

Fareeha spun around and glared. “Show off.”

“What? Not a fan of a little competition?”

“You’re not here to compete.” She pulled off her goggles. “You’re here to show off.”

“No,” he held out a package of brownies. “I’m here to deliver a snack. I’m sure you could use a break.”

She glanced at it before snatching it out of his hand. “Where’s the rest of them? You owe me a whole box.”

“Later, I wanted to talk to you.”

Fareeha ripped open the packaging and shoved one of brownies into her mouth. Crumbs
decorated her lips and a few fell out when she tried to mumble, “talk about what?”

“Finish your food first, you slob.”

She huffed at him but chewed away while loading another clip into the handgun. The second brownie followed the same fate as the first, leaving her cheeks puffed out like a chipmunk.

McCree almost chuckled but it was cut off when she fired another shot.

Fareeha swallowed. “So, what is it?”

He stared at the weapon for a while, questioning if now was the best time to have this conversation. He took a moment to close his eyes, immediately spotting the gold light on her shoulders. It shifted into the shape of a falcon that seemed to be chattering away.

“So,” he opened his eyes again. “A falcon from your mom, huh?”

The shot that rang out echoed in the room, making the silence feel even longer.

“So,” she breathed out and lowered the gun. “A phoenix from your dad, huh?”

Something burned at the back of his neck and he rubbed the sensation away. “How did you know that?”

“I asked him.” She put the gun down rather fast, letting it clatter on the shelf. “After I got him, when I saw yours, I asked him. He’s really noisy you know, he never shuts up.” She spun around, glaring at him. “I knew it came from Gabe, I just couldn’t figure out why you never mentioned it.”

“Hey,” McCree held his hands up and took a step back. “I didn’t even know how to talk to her until now. I never knew your mom had one.”

“What? She didn’t tell you that? Gabe didn’t tell you that? They told you everything else.”

The edge of her voice cut into his chest and McCree could feel himself shrink. Somehow he forgot what a touchy subject this was.

Fareeha sighed and rubbed at her cheek. “Sorry, I just... I hate this thing. I wish I never got it.”

“Same here,” McCree mumbled. “And I figured you felt the same way, and I was too dumb to notice it.”

“No,” She picked the gun back up, firing three more shots. “I’m just a much better actor than you are. You’re still shit at using a poker face outside of a fight.”

McCree frowned, studying where her shots landed. Off target.

“Well if I’m so obvious and you knew I had this, why didn’t you ever mention it?”

“Because I know how you are,” she rolled her eyes and lowered the gun again. “Try and drag up something like this and it’s a game to you. ‘Let’s see how many ways I can avoid the subject’. I mean, for pity’s sake, Jesse, how much have you told people about what happened to you after Blackwatch? I barely know anything. Even with the minimal contact we had back then.”
Fareeha stepped over to him and motioned to his left arm. “And where did you get that? I mean really? Telling everyone to make it up? Like it doesn’t matter?” She leaned forward until her forehead bumped against the brim of his hat. “You still haven’t told me.”

Ah, so that was it. A familiar, bitter tang ran over his tongue as he gritted his teeth together.

But her gaze softened as she took a step back. “Never mind, I guess I haven’t really earned it, huh?”

“Huh? What, no that’s not it.”

“Don’t worry about it.” She turned back to the window.

“Do you want to know? Is that it? If you really do then-”

“No,” she spun back around, her hair flying over her shoulders. “I want you to tell me because you want to, not just because I want to know. I want to be someone worthy of your trust again.”

McCree froze at the sudden pressure on his chest. Worthy, worthy, worthy, that was the only damn word she used anymore. He had honestly never seen Fareeha interact with her mother on her own. He never understood what kind of legacy she must have left behind.

But now it was getting into the small things, even something like this. Just when the hell had he made her feel unworthy?

“I’m still not sure why you left in the first place.”

“Look, don’t worry yourself with it right now. Sounds like you have enough on your mind.”

McCree made a note to ask Hanzo to kick him later.

Fareeha took aim again. He could see her hand shaking, hesitating on the trigger.

With a sigh he stepped over and put his left hand over hers, steadying her grip. “You focus too hard sometimes. Widen your vision a bit before you narrow it. Not everything in life is built as a challenge.”

Her grip relaxed and she fired, hitting the center of the target. “I know that.”

“Fareeha, do you want me to tell you what happened?”

“I already told you I-”

“Because I ain’t been fair to you. It’s not about trusting you or not, it’s about me being too much of a coward.”

“You are anything but.” She turned and stared at him.

“Thanks for the vote of confidence.” He smiled as he took the gun, dropping the empty clip on the floor. “But we both know that ain’t true. So I’m gonna ask again, do you want to know or not?”
Fareeha narrowed her gaze. “I want to help you.”

“I appreciate that.” He reloaded the gun and handed it back to her. “So do me a favor and keep practicing while I talk.”

McCree didn’t want to discuss this story twice in two days, but it was strangely easier when he wasn’t drunk. The gunshots kept him grounded, Fareeha only firing when he went quiet.

He managed to add in even more details this time around, a cute story about a dine and dash they had to commit because they both ran out of cash. Using credit cards was out of the question at the time. Talon could trace everything.

When he got to the ending it fell silent. He studied the joints in his fingers while Fareeha removed the empty clip. At least this time he wasn’t making awful jokes.

Finally, she spoke up. “What was his name?”

“Huh?”

“The kid’s name.”

“Oscar,” McCree mumbled. “Don’t remember his last name. Wish I did. Might have helped me figure out why Talon was after him.” He clenched his fist, wishing he could feel the pressure on his palm. “I never figured it out. I guess he witnessed something but I’ll never know now.”

“You can’t blame yourself, Jesse.”

“Can’t I?” He gritted his teeth as he grinned, resting his other hand against Peacemaker. “If I had just shot faster I could have saved him.”

He whipped the gun out and fired two shots into the target. “If I had just been a faster shot.”

Another bullet left the barrel. “If I had figured this phoenix stuff out sooner.”

Another. “I could have done something. Could have saved him. Could have saved myself.”

“Stop.” Both of her hands wrapped around his. “You can’t do this to yourself.”

“Why not? You never-”

Fareeha shot him a dangerous glare. “I’ve never what? Lost someone in a fight? From my own mistakes? You truly think I haven’t? Why do you think I was promoted to Captain of my team, Jesse?”

His mouth went dry.

She pressed her lips together as her expression softened. “Believe me, I understand your pain.” She pulled the gun out of his grip and set it down. “Then again, I suppose we both have more in common than we’d like.”

McCree could feel his shoulders shaking. The golden facade he built around himself was starting to shatter and he struggled to keep the pieces in place. “Sorry for not bein’ honest with you before.”
She shook her head. “I should have asked.”

“No, I shoulda trusted you. I should have...” His voice cracked. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry ‘manita.”

Fareeha’s eyes widened at the nickname. When had he stopped using it? Why had he stopped using it?

He tried so hard to push back the sob but it came anyway. Any attempts to cover it up were cut off when Fareeha pulled him into a tight hug.

“Don’t worry,” she whispered. “I won’t tell anyone, you crybaby.”

McCree laughed through his tears for a moment at the memory of them staying up and watching Disney films. Sadly, it left just as quick as it came and he was left clinging to her, wishing at least some of the weight would vanish from his shoulders.

After a few minutes he pulled himself away to rub at his eyes, only to notice the tears on her face.

“Whoa, hey,” he brushed at her cheeks. “What is this for?”

“I told you,” she sniffed. “We have more in common than we’d like.”

“We’re a mess,” he sighed.

“Indeed.”

Somehow they both managed to laugh.

“So,” McCree’s smile felt strange. “A falcon from your mom, huh?”

“Yes, he came to me after she died.”

“Ouch, makes him a little hard to look at then.”

“Yes, but it’s the same for you, isn’t it?”

“You got it. If I didn’t have her then he would have survived.”

There was a pause. McCree let his hands fall down to her shoulders, anchoring himself more than her.

“I think,” she took a deep breath. “That I want more of those brownies.”

“You know what? Same here.”

“Quit copying me.” She smiled when she shoved him back.

“Excuse me? Who’s the big brother here? I think it’s you who’s copying me.”

He tried to ruffle her hair but she ducked to the side, snatching up his gun. “Race you.”
McCree grinned as he watched her dart to the door. “You’re on, ‘manita.””
Heeey there's wifi here!

ALSO WARNING: There's talk of suicide attempts and self harm in here, a tad detailed as well, plz be careful

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Bet you can’t even fit it in there.” McCree did his best to speak around the amount of cake and icing pressed against the inside of his mouth. Three zebra cakes at once was pushing it, but he wasn’t about to lose.

Fareeha crammed in a fourth one though, taking a moment to push it against the side of her mouth. “Chubby bunny.” She grinned at him, losing a few crumbs.

He tried to say “show off” but his cheeks hurt far too much. He dug into the box for another two pack.

The pair of them sat on his bedroom floor, which was now littered with empty boxes and plastic packaging. It fit nicely with the array of dirty shirts he left lying there.

“C’m on.” Fareeha clapped. “Your turn.”

“Gimme a sec.”

Before McCree could tear into the package his door slid open. Hanzo stood on the other side, the archer’s eyes going wide.

McCree glanced between the archer’s expression and the mess on the floor. For some reason, embarrassment crept up his shoulders and he forced himself to chew on the pastries. He went too fast, almost choking on one in the process.

“I win.” Fareeha pumped her fist.

“What are you two doing?” Hanzo kept his voice level but his expression said he was horrified.

“Playing chubby bunny.” She lost a few more crumbs and caught them with her hand. “I always win though, which is bad, considering Jesse’s always shoving things in his mouth.”

McCree glared at her as she put the fist up against her mouth. He threw the half filled box of zebra cakes at her.

Thankfully, it seemed the suggestive comment went right over the archer’s head. “I did not meant to interrupt your... contest.”

“Not much of a contest,” Fareeha tried to chew through the cakes in her mouth.
Hanzo furrowed his eyebrows as he glanced at the floor. “How many of those have you eaten?”

McCree swallowed down the last of the crumbs in his mouth, picking at the leftover icing that clung to his teeth. “Uh, well,” he picked up the boxes. “That’s what? Two boxes of cosmic brownies, a box of oatmeal cream pies, a box of red velvet cakes and half a box of zebra cakes.”

“You will make yourselves sick.”

“Already there,” Fareeha raised her hand as she stumbled to her feet. “Speaking of which, I’m going to go before I throw up on all your dirty clothes.”

McCree threw one of the shirts at her. “Hey, use it as an excuse to go see Angie. She’s probably been working non-stop on mission prep today.”

“Aren’t you on that mission as well?” Hanzo narrowed his eyes.

McCree shrugged.

“That’s a good idea.” Fareeha tossed the shirt onto the floor before wandering toward the door. “And I’ll blame it all on you.”

“She’d blame me anyway, ‘manita.”

Fareeha laughed and shouted “true” as she headed into the hall.

Hanzo watched after her for a moment, “‘manita?”

“Hermanita, little sister,” McCree translated as he started to pick up wrappers. Some of them were hard to see on the floor and he relied more on the sounds of crinkling paper. He jammed the plastic into an empty box before throwing the whole thing towards the trashcan. It missed.

“I did not realize the two of you were that close.”

“We had a talk,” McCree could feel the chemicals and sugar stirring around in his stomach and he paused. “But she’s Ana’s daughter. I used to spend a lot of time with her whenever she was on base. Me and Angie were the only people close to her age.”

“I see,” Hanzo shut the door before he turned and surveyed the room. “Do you ever clean this room?” He nudged a shirt away from his legs.

“Not since I got here, unless I need to do laundry.”

“And when did you last do that?”

McCree gathered up the other boxes. “Um, two weeks ago?”

Hanzo curled his lip.

“If it bothers you, why are you in here?”

“You wanted to talk.”
It took McCree a moment to remember what he was talking about. “Oh, well, we don’t have to do that here.”

“No, this is fine.” Hanzo said, but when he stepped into the room his toe caught on a pair of pants. The archer stumbled forward, catching himself before he fell.

McCree couldn’t hold back his laughter. “Don’t think I’ve ever seen you so graceful.”

“Silence,” Hanzo glared.

“Alright, calm down darlin’. Just give me a few minutes.” McCree shoved the boxes in the trash before he went around the room, gathering up clothes. Hanzo’s gaze darted around the floor, as if he considered helping. Instead, he stepped over to the bed and sat down on it. He frowned and picked at the sheets, smoothing them out.

“You want a drink or anything?” McCree decided to fill the silence as he mindlessly tossed clothes into a pile. “Cigar?”

“No,” Hanzo crossed his arms. “Neither of those would be wise.”

“Zebra cakes?” McCree tossed the box at him. Hanzo almost didn’t catch it.

The archer pulled out a package of cakes, the icing now smeared along the sides making it hard to see them. He frowned at it, studying it from different angles before tearing it open.

It was almost strange to watch him take such a small bite after watching Fareeha cram twenty of them in her mouth.

Hanzo cringed. “It tastes like eating a dry sponge covered in a soft layer of sweet paper.”

McCree smiled, “Poetry.”

The archer shot him a look before staring back at the pastry. With a defeated sigh he ate the rest of it.

McCree grinned even wider as he went back to work. He considered at least attempting to organize the clothes but couldn’t be bothered right now. He snatched up a few more wrappers he had missed and stuffed them into the trash.

The crinkling of plastic drew his attention back to Hanzo. The archer was opening a second one.

“What are you doing?”

Hanzo didn’t respond for a moment, his gaze fixed on the pastry. “Drowning myself in this garbage.”

“Aw, that’s the spirit.” McCree headed toward the bed, but paused. “You okay with me joining you? Or would you rather I sit somewhere else.”

“It is your bed.”
“Yeah, but if you want your space-”

“Sit down.”

McCree plopped onto the bed, a little too fast. The mattress sank under his weight and Hanzo almost dropped the cake he was holding.

While trying to think of a way to start this conversation, McCree let his eyes wander over Hanzo’s facial features. Normally, the archer was too sensitive to people looking at him, shooting back a glare, but this time he seemed out of it. He narrowed his eyes at the box, probably reading it, while munching away.

McCree studied the shape of his eyebrows, the beautiful, brown shade of his eyes. The archer had a habit of blinking much more slowly when he was relaxed.

But then Hanzo noticed, his gaze flicking to the side before he narrowed his eyes. “What is it?”

McCree’s instincts snapped into place. “Just admirin’ your beautiful face, darlin’.”

Hanzo frowned at him but said nothing, finishing the rest of the cake in his hand.

“So,” McCree was desperate to change the subject. “What’s your big secret.”

Hanzo stopped trying to rip open a third package. “It is not about my brother, if that’s what you wanted.”

“Eh, I don’t think that would count as equal.” McCree let himself fall back on the bed, fixing his gaze on Hanzo’s exposed shoulder.

Crinkling plastic filled up the lulls in conversation. “When you left Overwatch you spent your time trying to save the lives of others. I spent my time destroying it.”

McCree almost sat up. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I am an assassin. I was trained around weapons from birth. The art of killing my enemies was all I knew, all I was capable of. I especially believed this after what happened to my brother.”

Weight dropped into McCree’s stomach and he was fairly sure it wasn’t the sugar. Hanzo’s voice was level, calm, but something about his tone sounded so... bitter.

“I left the clan, but nothing changed. I performed the same work as the people sent after me. I acted as if I was better than them, but if anything I was worse.”

This time McCree did sit up. His hand reached for Hanzo shoulder but he stopped himself. “What makes you say that?”

Hanzo glanced at him. “Do you need to ask? A man who willingly murdered his own brother?”

More crinkling plastic filled the air as Hanzo tried to crush it in his fist. Was he waiting on a reply?

When there was none, he continued, “With every life I took I could see my greatest mistake laid out before me, vivid and clear.”
“Then why keep doing it?”

“Because why should a killer do anything else?”

McCree frowned and gripped Hanzo’s shoulder this time. “You don’t still think that way, do you?”

The archer dropped the plastic wrap into the box. “I do not know. The circumstances that brought me here were not ideal. I had no intention of joining a foolish mission. Even if I wanted to believe in this fantasy, I did not deserve it. There is no redemption for what I’ve done.”

McCree gritted his teeth, trying to choose his words carefully.

“No,” he spoke honestly. “Maybe there’s not. There was no such thing for me either. Best you can do is make the decision to do better the next time around.”

Hanzo seemed to consider his words, rolling the box around in his hands. His expression stayed unreadable as he gently put it on the floor.

“Tell me about Genji.”

“Huh?” McCree let go of Hanzo’s shoulder.

“You said I had no idea what he was like back then, so tell me.”

“You sure that’s a good idea?”

Hanzo’s gaze flicked to the side. “No.”

McCree held up his hands. “Fine, but you’re getting a summary. If you want details ask him. It’s probably not even my place to talk about it.”

The archer frowned. “How bad was it?”

How bad was it? A part of McCree wanted to laugh at that question like it was a joke. How bad did Hanzo think it was, to be murdered by your older brother and wake up in a body that wasn’t your own? Then again he couldn’t say that, he never experienced that himself.

But he wasn’t sure how to answer that question. He didn’t want to give details, in fact he outright refused.

“Dunno what to tell you,” McCree ground his teeth together. “I know for a fact I barely recognized him when he came back here. He always had a goofy streak, sure, but he’s way happier. Back then he was never social or enthusiastic. Every time he got a new mission you could see him shut down. The only times he loosened up was when he spent time with people on base, specifically me or Angela or Reinhardt. Some days were fine, others were bad. Real bad.”

“How bad?”

“You’ll have to ask him that.” McCree kept his gaze fixed on the wall.
He didn’t want to tell Hanzo about the muttered concerns of Angela as she kept glancing in Genji’s room. “It’s the fifth time I’ve had to repair his arm. He keeps saying it’s accidents during training but I don’t believe that.”

He didn’t want to tell Hanzo that Angela’s suspicions were correct. That not a week later he found Genji in the training room screaming in frustration, clawing at the wires in his wrist. He didn’t want to talk about his attempts to stop the cyborg resulted in a fight that earned him a broken nose.

He didn’t want to tell Hanzo about the times they would return from a job. Genji would sit in the back of the truck, often covered in blood, muttering about what a traitor he was. McCree would do his best to offer a distraction but none of them lasted. The most progress he ever made was letting the cyborg sob into his shoulder.

And he hoped Genji wouldn’t tell Hanzo about the one that happened during a mission. Genji was in shock, damaged from an attack. McCree was doing his best to give him a quick fix so they could both escape but the cyborg kept muttering that McCree should just leave him there.

“Like hell I am, you’re coming back with me.”

“I don’t want to.”

“What?”

“I don’t want to. I don’t want to keep living like this. Just leave me here.”

The argument escalated, McCree ready to drag Genji in spite of the fact he could not lift his metal body.

Then Genji tried to steal McCree’s gun.

It was a desperate fight over the weapon, but Genji’s enhanced body was stronger, far stronger. When he jammed the barrel into his mouth McCree panicked. He grabbed the pliers he had been using and shoved them into Genji’s throat.

There was screaming, static flew into the air until Genji fell over and didn’t move.

McCree had frozen, panicked, he had no where to go. All he could do was wait until someone came looking for him.

And he cried, pleading for Genji to wake back up, too afraid to fiddle with anymore wires. He cried when his team arrived and he begged them to help. He cried when he apologized to Angela, praying she could fix him, saying he had no idea what else to do.

But Genji had recovered. As soon as he was released he went to find McCree, leaning on his shoulder, muttering a dozen apologies.

“McCree?”

Hanzo voice shoved the memory away.

He blinked for a few moments and studied the room to ground himself. His eyes settled on Hanzo who gave him a concerned expression.
“Look,” McCree said. “None of this matters anyway, you know? Genji’s the only one allowed to be angry about this, and he’s not. I got no right being mad at you if he’s not. It’s none of my business.”

Hanzo opened his mouth, but shut it again for a moment. “Even if you decided to not act bitter towards me, that does not explain your insistence on becoming friends.”

“Better than the alternative, isn’t it?” McCree snatched up the box of zebra cakes but only found trash inside. “I knew if I didn’t at least try I’d just get mad at you all over again. Then I find out that being an asshole is just in your nature.”

“As being a fool is in yours.”

“Whatever,” McCree hurled the box at the trashcan. “I’m tired of talking about all this sad bullshit. What do you say we invite people to watch a terrible movie?”

“Why would we do that?”

“Because it’s fun. You never watched a bad movie before?” McCree pulled out his communicator and sent a message to everyone.

“Why would I waste my time on a bad movie?”

“Because it’s fun.” McCree repeated as his communicator buzzed. “Reinhardt’s suggesting Dungeons and Dragons, classic.”

Hanzo made a face before he sighed and stood up. “I suppose it wouldn’t hurt.”

“Damn right,” McCree grinned and hopped up. “Oh man, Lúcio’s never heard of it, he’s in for a treat.”

“Should we take the rest of your cakes?”

“You know what?” McCree kicked out a box from under his bed. Inside were at least three dozen more containers of the pastries. “Good idea, since you seem to like them so much.”

“They are foul.” Hanzo crossed his arms. “Foul, but addicting. Just like you.”

McCree laughed and tried to ignore the fluttering in his chest. He knew it was an insult, but somehow it felt like a compliment.

Right now he’d take any positive attention he could get.

Chapter End Notes

By the way if you haven’t seen Dungeons and Dragons I suggest you look up Nostalgia Critic’s review of it to at least check it out because let me tell you it’s a fucking WONDER
Sadly I won't be writing the scene but I like to imagine Hanzo complaining about... a lot of things
McCree spent his morning sitting in the kitchen, staring at his cup of coffee. Although most people would argue that 11:30 was not morning. He hadn’t intended to sleep in per say, but after waking up from two nightmares during the night he told his alarm to go fuck itself. The only thing that got him out of bed was Clementine’s voice screaming in his head.

Three cups of coffee wasn’t enough.

He probably shouldn’t have stayed up that late, watching movies with everyone. Dungeons and Dragons ended and someone had to bring up Food Fight. Most of the people in the room were in tears at the quality of that one. Hana kept pointing at the weird characters at the screen and comparing them to people.

But McCree appreciated the distraction. Even Hanzo seemed to enjoy himself, smiling when Genji fell into a laughing fit next to him.

Those good feelings vanished when he tore out of a nightmare he could barely remember. Getting back to sleep was a miracle, only to let another one taunt him. He wasn’t sure how Clementine did that mindscape trick, but she seemed to be avoiding it now.

“It’s not as simple as just plucking you out.” Her voice felt muddled in his tired brain. “For me, I have to dig into the sand and drag you out. You were always in too deep before I could get to you.”

“Didn’t mean you needed to wake me up.” His eyes drifted closed.

“You cannot stay in bed all day. And do not drink anymore coffee. It is bad for you.”

McCree took an extra long sip just to spite her.

“Childish.”

Only Hana had been in and out of the kitchen since he had woken up, snatching up a snack. She tried to tease him, but his tired responses made her give up. Instead she slid an extra pack of swiss rolls onto the table and gave him a quick hug around the neck.

It cheered him up, but it didn’t wake him up.

McCree finally reached the bottom of his mug and debated getting another. Clementine was
muttering something in the back of his mind, but he ignored it.

A few moments later someone else wandered into the kitchen. Mei-Ling stood there, still in her pjs, with her eyes practically closed. Her feet shuffled on the floor and she reached out for any obstacles, bumping into one of the chairs.

It wasn’t unusual for her to be up this late. Most people on base were very used to her not being a morning person. In spite of this, Winston kept scheduling big meetings at 8:00 AM.

“Mornin’.” McCree waved his empty coffee cup at her.

She jumped. “Oh, McCree, I didn’t see you there.” She rubbed her eyes and blinked. “Do you have anymore coffee?”

“Sure, about two cups.”

Mei nodded and headed over to the stove.

After getting a mug full she sat down across from him. For a while she just held the cup close in both hands before taking a long sip.

“What was it this time?” McCree couldn’t hide his smirk. “The girlfriend keep you up?”

Mei’s cheeks turned red but she cleared her throat and shook her head. “She wanted to watch even more bad movies. I... did not understand half of them but...”

“Sounds like fun at least.”

She smiled at him. “It was.”

McCree let the silence fall as Mei continued to sip away at her coffee. He stared at his own mug tapping on it with his metal hand before he let his eyes drift shut again.

Clementine sat on the table next to his arm. Her flames snaked around his fingers and her face was tucked next to her wing.

A flash of silver caught his eye. McCree glanced up to see something huge swimming around the room. The light glittered like snow as it took the shape of a seal.

Without warning it spun around and rushed toward him.

McCree jerked in his chair when his eyes flew open. His mug slipped from his fingers and clattered onto the table.

He was awake now.

“Oh,” Mei-Ling jumped. “Are you okay?”

“Seal,” he sputtered out. “You’ve got a seal.”

Her eyes widened. “Ah? You saw her? Did she frighten you? She can be rather enthusiastic.”
Was that what that was? McCree blinked a few times.

Mei took another sip of coffee and jumped again. “Oh! If you can see her then... do you have one?”

“You haven’t looked?”

“Um, no,” she laughed. “For some reason trying to view spirits gives me a headache, like brain freeze. I tend to avoid it.”

‘Brain freeze’, McCree was sure that was a joke but he was too dizzy to laugh. “Yeah, I got one, a phoenix.”

“Aw, that sounds lovely.” Another sip of coffee, another jump. “Oh!... Ooooh...” A huge smile spread over her face as she held the coffee mug to her nose.

McCree didn’t like the sound of that, or her expression. “What’s that look for?”

“Oh, nothing,” she rolled the mug around but her smile didn’t fade. “In China, we know the phoenix as 凤凰.” She drew the characters on the table. “There is a lot of interesting lore about them, and in modern times they are still used as decorations for weddings.”

“That so?” McCree leaned against his hand.

Her giggling got louder. “Yes, they are often paired with a dragon.”

His hand fell to the side and his chin slammed against the table. He muttered a few curses at his sore jaw, thankful he hadn’t bitten his tongue in the process.

“Now look who’s turning red.” Mei kept up her smile before taking a calm sip of coffee.

“You’re screwing with me.”

“I’m not. I’ll show you myself sometime. The two are associated with blissful relations between husband and wife. Or husband and husband in your case.”

McCree glared. “There’s nothing like that going on.”

Whatever Mei said in response was in Chinese and he didn’t catch it. Finally her smile fell as she lowered the mug. “It’s just legends anyway. You don’t need to take it too seriously. Although,” she shot him a different smile. “If something does happen I would love to help with decorations.”

“Listen, if I did end up with Hanzo I’d let you plan our entire wedding.”

“Are you betting on that?”

“Sure, what do I really have to lose anyway? Just don’t make it snow.”

Mei’s smile softened. “You got it.”

“So, what’s this critter of yours do?”
“Oh, the stuff you’d expect. Water resistance, ice resistance, cold resistance, she also makes me more durable although I prefer to not test that.” Mei shivered and took another sip of coffee. “I’m also a great swimmer, although I have not done that in a while.”

“Shame, bet you look great in a bathing suit.”

She laughed, “I don’t know about that, but it could be fun.”

“We should ask Winston for a beach trip.”

“Some other time,” she finished the coffee and stood up. “We have a mission to prepare for.”

Ah, right, no doubt Hanzo would be nagging him about that later. In fact, it was a bit of a surprise the archer hadn’t come to do so already.

_Hey Clem, care to teach me any new tricks?_

_“I’d recommend working on your fire first.”_

Well, that was a plan. McCree stood up himself and went to rinse out his coffee mug. Mei let out a devastated sigh when there wasn’t quite enough coffee to fill up her mug.

“Want me to make more?”

She shook her head. “I will be fine, thank you. See you later.”

McCree offered her a wave of his hand, before he headed out of the room.

-x-

_“You were focusing too much on size instead of on heat.”_ Clementine nagged away as McCree headed back to his room.

“Does it really matter that much?” He hissed back.

_“Of course it does. The warmer the fire the stronger it heals.”_

“How am I supposed to know any of it’s working?”

_“Trust me, I can tell.”_

McCree rolled his eyes. Apart from a few food breaks, most of his day was spent listening to her, trying to figure out how this fire business worked. He was used to creating small fires in his hands but now she was letting it blaze up the length of his arm. Getting the knack for controlling it was a lot harder than he thought it would be.

He hadn’t seen Hanzo either. He thought about looking for him, but when he couldn’t find the archer at their usual training hall he figured Hanzo didn’t want to be found.

Maybe bad movies weren’t enough of a distraction.

When McCree got to his room, he stared at the pile of laundry in the corner. He needed to take
care of it, should take care of it, but instead he fell back onto his mattress. He studied the ceiling for a while before he lifted up his left hand.

He’d tried igniting them both during practice. Clementine bluntly told him it wouldn’t work. He couldn’t control a flame he couldn’t feel.

She needed to work on her tact.

“I apologized.”

“You ever piss off Gabe with that sharp beak of yours?”

“Plenty of times. He got over it.”

McCree snorted and rolled over.

“I can’t believe you’re pouting this much over the dragon child.”

“I am not.”

“You’re worried about him.”

Sure, of course he was. At this point is was unusual to go an entire day without seeing the archer. Even if McCree tried to skip out on practice, Hanzo would come find him.

McCree rolled over in an attempt to distract himself. When did Hanzo become so important anyway? McCree remembered how it was when he first arrived. An endless stream of passive aggressive southern phrases would slip past his gritted teeth. Play nice for Genji, that’s what he told himself. Target practice started because he wanted to beat the archer at his own game.

When did it slip into such a routine? Why didn’t it bother him?”

Clementine snorted, “You know why.”

“Don’t say it.”

She hummed, “Master McCree is in lo-”

“Am not.” He shot up, wishing he could grab her.

He glanced at the door to see Hanzo standing there, eyes narrowed.

Why didn’t he shut that?

“Talkin’ to the phoenix.” McCree mumbled, trying to ignore the heat in his cheeks.

Hanzo crossed his arms, still holding his judgmental stare. “You are the first person I have seen speaking to their spirit out loud.”

“I’m new at this, cut me some slack.” He rested his arms on his knees as he looked away.

It took a few seconds for it to properly register that Hanzo was standing in his doorway. His gaze
shot back over to the archer who stared at the door frame in a haze.

“You okay, partner?”

Hanzo blinked, but his eyes didn’t move. “I do not know.”

McCree swiveled around so his feet rested on the floor. “Something happen?”

There was a pause before the archer replied. “I spoke to Genji.”

McCree’s throat tightened. “Oh?”

Hanzo opened his mouth but gritted his teeth instead. He glared at the spot on the frame before shaking his head.

“Hey, you don’t gotta talk if you don’t want to.” He stood up and headed over. “Did you wanna come in?”

The archer seemed to curl up, tightening his grip on his sleeve. “For some reason, I never even considered he was dealing with the same things I was.”

McCree froze and his eyes fixed on Hanzo’s sleeve.

“And yet he speaks of it like it does not matter. Like it never really happened.”

“Hanzo-”

“He turned it into a joke.” The archer started shaking. “As if attempting to take your own life is akin to knocking over a table at a ramen-”

“Hanzo.” McCree lifted his hands.

He sucked in a breath, blinking a few times and running his hand over his face. “I... am sorry. I did not come here for that. I came to thank you for saving my brothers life.”

The cowboy couldn’t hide his snort. “I don’t think it qualifies as saving his life if I almost killed him in the process.”

“Because of you he is alive.”

“Nah,” McCree rubbed the back of his neck. “I didn’t do much.” He stared at Hanzo for a moment, his mind swimming with questions, but he wasn’t brave enough to ask any of them. “Look, do you wanna sit down? Talk about something else?”

The archer looked like he was about to argue, shifting on his feet. Then he sighed and nodded. “That sounds better than the alternative.”

“What’s the alternative?” McCree just stood there and watched as Hanzo stepped into the room.

The archer gestured to the bottle of sake that hung around his hip.

“Please don’t play that game again.” Clementine said.
McCree agreed with that. He considered offering something else but Hanzo seemed lost in his thoughts when he sat down on the bed. His gaze fixed on a single wooden frame on the night stand.

“What an odd photo to keep by your bed.” That judgmental stare returned.

The photo in question was an old selfie McCree had taken. He had a huge grin on his face and held a black marker in his hand. Gabriel and Jack were behind him, sleeping and leaning against each other.

McCree shrugged before he sat down next to the bed. “I lost most of them when I ran off. Fareeha gave me this one, said it was among her mom’s things. Couldn’t find the after photos though.”

“You drew on their faces.” Hanzo stated.

“I wrote ‘super’ and ‘gay’ on their foreheads with some hearts.” McCree laughed and let his head press against the sheets. “Took three after. One of my handiwork, one of Gabe waking up, and one of me running like hell.”

Hanzo actually smiled for a moment. “Your face looks so much tamer without that scruffy beard.”

“Whatever Hanzo,” McCree scratched at it. “Not all of us care to trim our face every morning.”

“That would imply you trim at all.”

“Course I do, otherwise it’d be way longer.”

The conversation died down and so did Hanzo’s smile. His gaze stayed fixed on the photo.

McCree tilted his head back and shut his eyes while he searched for a new topic.

“You could try and woo him with a romantic song.” Clementine’s head came into view from her perch on his head.

McCree mentally glared at her as hard as he could.

Then a familiar blue light faded in. One of the dragons was circling above his head, staring at him.

“What are your dragons like?” McCree asked without opening his eyes.

“Why do you ask?”

“Just curious.”

There was a pause and Hanzo shifted on the bed. “They are both rather quiet natured, only speaking when necessary. One tends to be more... aggressive than the other.”

McCree kept eye contact with the one above him. “Why do you have two anyway? Doesn’t seem like a lot of spirits come in pairs.”

“According to family legend, my ancestor wanted to give his spirit to both of his sons, and split a dragon into two.”
“Whoa. How do you go about doing something like that?”

“Such knowledge is lost to us. There is no sense in it anyway. The two separate spirits were unstable and out of control. In the end, they were reunited, as you see now.”

“There’s no Bonnie without Clyde, huh?”

“What?”

McCree opened his eyes and looked back to see Hanzo leaning against the wall. “You know, can’t have one without the other. Like uh, peanut butter and jelly, or steak and potatoes.”

Hanzo snorted, “You can have steak without potatoes.”

“Maybe if you’re a heathen.”

The archer laughed at that, a gentle sound that had McCree shutting his eyes again.

“Can’t have one without the other,” Hanzo seemed to hum. “You cannot have a cowboy without his hat.”

McCree shot up when the article of clothing was snatched from his head. Hanzo turned it around in his hands, studying it. His fingers trailed along the frayed edges.

“Darn right you can’t. Give that back.” McCree reached for it, but Hanzo pulled it away.

“Where did you get this?”

“Acquired it back in Deadlock. Overwatch confiscated it. Gabe returned it.”

“Why did he do that?”

McCree smiled and held out his hand. “What’s a cowboy without his hat?”

Hanzo met his gaze and studied his eyes, as if he was searching for the answer to that question. McCree could feel heat rising up under his collar.

“Merely a fool, I suppose.” The archer dropped the hat back on McCree’s head.

He adjusted it back into position, letting his elbow rest on the mattress. “You know, I also wanted to ask, the phoenix has all the neat fire tricks. The dragons do anything like that?”

“Fire? No.” Hanzo looked at the tattoo on his shoulder. “My dragons align more to a storm. Gusts of wind trail behind them when they fly. One represents the torrent of rain, the other the lightning that strikes the earth. Their roars become thunder that shakes the land.”

McCree ignored the fluttering in his chest as his cheek pressed against his shoulder. “Poetry.”

Hanzo frowned, “Why do you keep saying that?”

“Because that’s what it is darlin’. You could write a book full of stuff like that and I’d read it every
night.” That’s what McCree said, but he much preferred daydreaming about Hanzo reading it to him.

The archer actually seemed to consider it for a moment, but his gaze fell to the bedsheets and focused on the wrinkled corners.

“Hey,” McCree tapped him on the leg. “You gonna be okay?”

Hanzo’s eyes darted back up with their soul searing glare. “Are you?”

The cowboy swallowed and gritted his teeth. “Yeah, sure, eventually. I’ve made it through worse.”

The archer breathed out. “So have I.” He leaned back against the wall again, eyes closed.

“Do you need to get some shut eye?”

“There would be no point.” His eyebrows pressed together. “Sleeping now would only yield more nightmares.”

“Your dragons not pull you out of them?”

Static seemed to crawl up McCree’s spine. The air suddenly felt thicker, but he couldn’t quite place why.

“My dragons do not protect me from nightmares.” Hanzo’s voice was low. “More often than not, they punish me with them.”

“Huh?” McCree’s skin went cold. “Why would they do that?”

“Spirits may be bound to obey their masters, but that does not mean they agree with everything we do.” The archer was gripping his sleeve again. “They find it fitting to remind me of my mistakes.”

“Wow,” McCree sat up and crossed his arms. “‘Scuse me for saying this, but your dragons sound like absolute pricks.”

“They are not wrong.”

“Bullshit, it was years ago. They’re living in your head. They should know better than anyone how you feel about it. Doing something like that is just petty.”

“You do not need to worry about it.” Hanzo pushed himself up. “I apologize for bothering—”

“Wait, hold up,” McCree put his hands out in front of him when he stood. “I got an idea.”

The archer frowned, “about what?”

“How to help you sleep.”

His stare remained the same, judgmental, but he didn’t seem to immediately reject it.

“Hear me out okay? Healing fire right? Gabe used it a few times to put me right out, maybe I could give it a shot.” McCree lit a small fire in his palm.
“Do you actually know how to use that?”

“Barely,” Clementine taunted.

“It might not work, I don’t know. Just let me try it.”

“Absolutely not. I do not feel like getting burned.”

“I’d never burn you Hanzo.” McCree didn’t mean for his tone to sound as serious as it did, but he just went with it. “Just trust me on this.” He held out his palm.

Hanzo studied the fire for a while, constantly glancing back up at McCree’s face. Bit by bit he reached toward it, flinching when it would flicker. His fingers brushed against the flames and his eyes widened.

“Strange,” he mumbled.

“Doesn’t hurt though, right? You gonna let me try?”

Hanzo pulled his hand away and sighed. “Very well.” He leaned back down on the bed. He kept his eyes open, fixed on the ceiling.

Is there a technique to put people to sleep? McCree thought as he sat down.

“The fire reacts to your emotions. Your heat output might need work, but it should not be hard to manage.”

That tells me nothing. He forced himself to take a deep breath, relax. It certainly wouldn’t work if he let his nerves get the better of him.

He reached out with his right hand, watching in amusement as Hanzo cringed. “Relax darlin’. You’re fine.”

The archer didn’t seem convinced, but he let his shoulders drop and forced his eyes shut.

He flinched when McCree put his palm on his forehead, but didn’t protest. McCree did his best to pretend he was brushing Hanzo’s hair back because the more skin contact the better, right? He kept his flame low, the only evidence of it was the soft glow coming from his palm.

“So? How’s that feel?” McCree said.

Hanzo’s muscles slowly relaxed and his expression softened. “Pleasantly warm.”

McCree grinned and felt his heart skip a few times. “See? What did I tell you?”

Hanzo hummed, was that a smile on his face? “It feels... like a cup of tea in the late afternoon. The warmth that spreads into your hands and drifts into your senses.”

The cowboy sighed, his heart picking up speed. “Poetry.”

“That was barely poetic.”
“Makes me almost want to try this tea stuff.”

“You should.”

“You’ll have to show me how to make it.”

“I will…” Hanzo let out a quiet sigh. “Or else you would…” His voice drifted off and his head leaned against McCree’s touch. The cowboy waited for him to finish but it never came. His gaze fixed on Hanzo’s chest, watching the archer breathe.

Out like a light.

McCree smiled but didn’t let go quite yet. Had to make sure the nightmares stayed away, right? He tried not to stare, but that mission was failing fast. He’d never seen Hanzo’s features so soft before, so at ease. It was almost like staring at a whole new person.

McCree’s chest felt like it was floating. The world seemed to slow down for a moment. All he could focus on were the shape of Hanzo’s eyes, his eyelashes. He let his thumb trail over the archer’s brow.

Then reality snapped back into place like a bull whip.

Oh no. His mind started racing and he pulled his hand back before his flames got out of control. No, no, no, no, no. Hell no. He slid off the bed and back onto the floor, rubbing his face to try and get rid of the heat.

Clementine’s humming returned. “Master McCree is in love.”

He pulled his hat down over his face, wishing he could completely sink into the mattress. He didn’t want to toy with that idea, not in the least.

“In love? Hardly,” he mumbled. “But I’m certainly downright screwed.”
Angela sighed as she ran over the data again. Everything was running fine, just like always, but the temptation to run it again hovered in her mind. The job was tomorrow. She refused to let there be a screw up on her part.

“I am here to aid you,” Ramosch, her unicorn, spoke. Her voice was always soft and angelic in nature. Initially it put Angela at ease, but these days it could grate on her nerves.

*Your powers can’t do everything.*

“They can do enough, calm yourself.”

She took a deep breath and forced herself away from the monitor. Perhaps a break would do her some good, time to clear her head. But she needed to focus, she was a key part of this mission.

Metal taps against her office door drew her attention.

McCree stood there, leaning against the door frame. “Knock knock, is the doc on the clock?”

Angela smiled at the rhyme. “What can I help you with, Jesse?”

He sauntered into the room, his right hand behind his back. Narrowing her eyes she could see his life signal, the amber color flashing with every step. It was a relief to see him so full of energy.

“I got something to show you,” his smile widened. “You’re gonna love it.”

She hummed and crossed her arms, thinking of the possibilities. “Unless it’s a bottle of Xellent, me loving it is questionable.”

“Nah, it’s nothing like that. Although if you want some I imagine we could pick it up on the way back from the mission.”

“Absolutely not, now what is it?”

“Been working on fire tricks lately. Figured it might ease your stress if you’re not the only healer
on the field on this next job.”

“It’s not exactly a combat mission, Jesse.”

“Nah but still, check this out.” He pulled his hand out to reveal a clear bottle of whisky. Instead of it’s typical contents, however, it was full of some kind of grey powder. “She’s been teaching me how to making healing ashes.”

Angela frowned and reached toward the bottle. McCree handed it over. “Healing ashes?”

“Yeah, something about burning organic matter makes this stuff. It’s not super potent but it can help seal wounds, prevent infection, hell it can block poison if it’s ingested. That’s what she tells me at least.”

Angela opened the bottle and looked at the contents. The ash seemed to shimmer in the light. It smelled like smoke but there were faint hints of mint and basil.

“Not using stuff in Torb’s garden, are you?”

McCree flinched and rubbed the back of his neck. “Ah, maybe just a little. I’m sure he won’t notice.”

“I’m not saving you if he does.” She shifted the bottle around, watching the ashes fall to the side. “Did you want me to test these?”

“Nah, I already did.”

She snapped her gaze up to him. The cowboy’s eyes were wide, his hand still on his neck.

“What was that?”

“I mean, I, haha,” he put his hands up. “It wasn’t anything big or nothing I just-”

“Jesse, what did you test it on?” She dropped the bottle onto her desk and stepped forward.

“Ah, well I- ow!”

Angela grabbed Jesse’s prosthetic, jerking it towards her. She tossed the serape back over his shoulder, exposing the rest of his arm.

Her fingers ran over the joint where skin shifted into metal. There weren’t any new scars, but Jesse’s expression told her everything.

“You told me you stopped doing this.”

And he had, back when the recall first happened. She asked a lot of questions about his arm, making sure it was up to snuff. She questioned the amount of scars on his skin. After all, unless the person doing the surgery on his arm was that terrible, there shouldn’t have been that many.

Jesse confessed he had been the cause of them, a few months after he first got the new limb. It was hard to deal with, harder to deal with on your own. But he finished the story by insisting he hadn’t tried that in two years.
“It was just a test, I swear.”

“Jesse, please don’t lie to me.” Angela pointed to the machine she had been using earlier. “I have all sorts of equipment for testing the healing effects of a substance. You know this.”

McCree cringed and wiggled under her grip. She could practically see him floundering for an excuse but coming up short.

“Was a nightmare,” he mumbled. “Bad one, didn’t really notice until I snapped out of it. Figured I’d just use it to... sorry, should have come here shouldn’t I?”

She took his metal hands in both of hers. “Jesse, is everything okay?”

He gave her a gentle smile. “Yeah, or I’ll be okay at least. Learning about this phoenix just kicked up a lot of dust.”

She sighed and let go. “Fine, I’ll take your word for it, but I will be asking your phoenix if you don’t talk to me next time.”

“Aw, come on Angie, you don’t-”

She fixed her stare on him.

“Ah, okay, yes ma’am.” He took a step back.

“Anyway,” Angela picked the bottle back up. “Would you like me to test this?”

McCree rubbed his neck. “I was mostly showin’ off, but that wouldn’t be a bad idea. Heck, maybe I should separate them next time. Wonder if some things heal better than others.”

She put the bottle on her desk next to her computer. “We’ll look at it another time. We’ve got a mission tomorrow, or did you forget?”

“No ma’am,” he tipped his hat. “Your body guard is ready to go.”

“You’re hardly that.”

“Ain’t I? My job is to stick with you.”

“As if you need to.”

He shrugged, “Better safe than sorry. Sides, it’ll be me and Genji, your two favorites.”

Angela crossed her arms and smiled. “Fareeha is my favorite.”

“Aw now, that’s cold.” McCree sniffed and put his hat over his chest. “And I’ve been trying so hard.”

She shook her head before nudging him toward the door. “Go and get ready. Would you like something to help you sleep?”
“Nah, Hanzo offered to make me some tea.”

The name made her pause. Her blood turned cold.

“You’ve been getting along with him rather well as of late.”

He went rigid under her palms and pulled out of her reach. “That a problem?”

“You know what he did.”

“Sure,” he put his hat back onto his head. “But I’m also finding out that no one beats him up about it more than himself.”

“That doesn’t mean I’ll forgive him.”

“Sorry, Angie, but it ain’t your place to forgive him.”

Her nostrils flared before she turned her glare to the kitten doctor poster on the wall. She knew he was right.

“You’ve always struggled with grudges.” Her unicorn said.

“I ain’t gonna ask you to like him.” McCree turned to the door. “But you’ll just give your pretty face wrinkles if you stay mad.”

“You’re right,” she smirked. “I wouldn’t want to look like you.”

McCree let out a low whistle. “Cold, so cold.”

She didn’t reply to that. She just watch him wave and head out the door.

Irritation continued to prick at her skin. She’d been lectured three times about her grudge, and tried to correct it, but it came up short. Every time she saw the elder Shimada all she could think of was Genji, dying. He hadn’t even asked for help really, only that she put an end to it.

But she couldn’t do that.

“You’re stubborn in that way too.”

Angela sighed and turned to her computer. She needed a distraction.

“I can think of a better one.” Ramosch hummed.

Fareeha’s face flashed into her mind.

No, she needed to focus. She had a job tomorrow.

A few moments later she pulled out her communicator and headed out the door.

> Hey liebling, got a minute?
“You know,” Fareeha leaned against the wall next to her. “I’m not sure why you invited me down here instead of Jesse.”

Angela frowned at the target as she reloaded her gun. Her initial plan for a pseudo lunch date had been discarded for some practice. During the past few missions she hadn’t used the pistol much, and the bullet holes across the room showed this.

“Because,” she snapped the gun closed. “This way we can spend time together and I feel like I’m still working.”

“You work too hard,” Fareeha touched her arm.

Angela just shot her a look. “Well, so do you.”

That made her girlfriend pause, frowning as she searched the ceiling for an answer. “That’s true. I guess we’re just a couple of workaholics.” She stepped around behind Angela, wrapping her arms around her stomach. “Maybe we should take a few lessons from Jesse.”

Angela cringed. “What, like you did? Give myself a Debbie cake stomach ache?”

Fareeha laughed into her shoulder before her hands came up, holding onto the gun. She helped steady Angela’s grip as they fired three rounds.

“Go over this mission for me again,” she said. “It’s more of a stealth mission, correct?”

“Yes,” Angela fired another shot. “There’s a cure that was invented last year. The public waited for it’s release but it’s still being withheld. Not only that, but it’s likely when it is released, drug companies are going to be charging insane amounts for it.”

“So, we steal it, reproduce it, and release it for free?”

She nodded, “that’s the plan at least. We can’t allow ourselves to be caught.”

“That explains why Genji is on board. What about Mei and Torbjörn?”

“Defense and distraction,” Angela recited as she emptied the clip. “Torbjörn is also there to assist with dealing with the security systems. If things get bad they’re essential to our retreat.”

“And Jesse?”
She snorted and broke out of Fareeha’s grip to find more ammo. “Bodyguard, as if it’s necessary.”

Fareeha bit back her smile. “Better safe than sorry.”

“That’s exactly what he said.” Angela pointed. “Sometimes I wonder if you two really are siblings. I may be out of practice but I’m not defenseless. Besides, when has Jesse ever been one for stealth missions?”

“Did you forget he was on Blackwatch? Or avoided getting arrested for six years?”

Angela didn’t reply. She gritted her teeth as she jammed in the next clip.

“Or maybe something else is bothering you.”

She still didn’t reply, flaring her nostrils as she kept her breathing under control. Her cheeks felt warm.

Fareeha suddenly smirked, a childish, knowing smirk that Angela hadn’t seen in years. “Aw, you wanted me to be your bodyguard, didn’t you?”

“Well,” Angela pointed the gun at the target. “I certainly wouldn’t have complained.”

“Come on, you know my skills lie elsewhere.” Fareeha hugged her from behind again. “We’ll watch each other’s backs on a different mission.”

Angela’s finger hovered over the trigger. Her eyes were focused on the target but her grip wavered.

She lowered the gun, dropping it on the table, before she turned around. Her arms rested on Fareeha’s shoulders.

“You’re right.”

Fareeha smiled. “I often am.”

Angela decided to erase her smugness with a kiss. It was soft, slow, Fareeha’s hands trailing up her back.

“You know,” her girlfriend whispered when she pulled back. “If you truly want to practice, I could set up some simulations for your team.”

Angela considered that. “Not a bad idea. Convincing Jesse to show up might be a challenge.”

Fareeha rolled her eyes. “Oh don’t worry. I’ll get him. You just convince the others.” She pulled away and grabbed her communicator. That sly smirk returned.

Angela followed after, making the group before firing the invitation.

Mei immediately responded, eager to get some training in. Genji’s response was soon after, saying he’d be there in a few minutes. Torbjörn popped up last, requesting another thirty minutes. He was setting up better fencing in his garden. He said something was getting at the herbs.
Angela bit her lip, tempted to tattle on Jesse, but didn’t want the pair arguing before a mission. She’d tell on him after.

“Jesse said he’d be here in ten.” Fareeha put her communicator away.

“How’d you convince him?”

She put a finger to her lips. “I keep my blackmail a secret.”

“You shouldn’t be threatening him.”

“I’m motivating him.”

Angela rolled her eyes and pulled Fareeha back into her arms. “So, we have a few minutes to spare.”

“I should set up the simulations.”

Angela looked up at her. A part of her wanted to comment on how much she sounded like her mother, but knew better. Maybe some other day.

“Two minutes,” she smiled.

“Fine,” Fareeha tugged her into a kiss.
This job hadn’t gone according to plan at all.

Arrival had been smooth at least. They found a nearby safe house to gear up in. Athena kept her eyes on the science building, waiting to report the best moment to move out.

That’s when an explosion rang out from five blocks down.

Angela’s heart stopped. Did Talon know they were here?

Her first instinct was to run out and aid anyone injured by the blast, but Jesse held her back. They had to figure out what was happening.

Athena identified the cause, two rogues on the field she identified as Junkrat and Roadhog. Angela wasn’t unfamiliar with the names, but what were they doing here?

“Got a bad feeling they’re after the same thing we are.” Jesse mumbled.

“But why?” Mei said.

“There could be a number of reasons.” Winston spoke over the comm. “But none of that matters. If they are after that cure we have to get hold of it before they do any damage.”

“It seems our plan has changed.” Genji was perched at one of the windows. “We await your orders, commander.”

Winston mumbled something about the title before he cleared his throat. “The mission hasn’t changed for you Genji. I need you inside that building after our target. The town is calling an evacuation, they may take the medicine with them.”

“Understood.” Without a glance back the ninja slipped from the window and slid down the wall.

Angela tapped on her communicator. “Genji, when you find it let me know. We can’t be careless with how we take it back to the base.”

Genji repeated his acknowledgement.

“Mei, Torbjörn, we have to either contain those two or force them back.”

“I can confirm the authorities have been contacted.” Athena chimed in. “It would be unwise to let our presence be known.”

“We can’t cause too much damage.” Mei shouted after him. “Ah, be careful you two.” She gave them a quick wave.

Angela sighed and glanced out of the window to the plumes of smoke. “Winston, we can’t ignore the people in danger.”

“I figured you’d say that. That’s why I sent Genji on ahead. Stay out of the way of the fight, and if the authorities arrive let them take over. We really can’t afford getting caught right now.”

“Understood,” she gripped her staff and moved to the door. “McCree?”

“Right behind you ma’am.” He tipped his hat.

The pair of them headed out, using back roads to reach the damage site. Angela kept an ear out from any updates from Athena on the situation. It seemed Mei had already drawn the attention of the pair. Torbjörn had them cornered for a time, but it seemed Junkrat was armed to the teeth with explosive devices. Mei was having a bit of trouble pinning him down long enough to freeze him. Every time she thought she had him cornered Roadhog was there.

Angela’s concern for her teammates was set aside when she saw a pair of gentlemen stumbling down the road. They leaned against each other, one bleeding from his shoulder.

“Are you alright?” She spoke in French as she rushed over.

The men stumbled back in surprise. One caught the other and straightened up. “Are you here to help? The wall collapsed. People are still trapped.” He pointed back to the smoking building.

Angela glanced at it, studying the remnants of the explosion. Thankfully most of the surroundings still stood, but the building in question was badly damaged.

“What’s up?” McCree stepped up behind her.

“There are people trapped in there.” She nodded ahead.

“I’m on it. You patch this guy up and meet me there.”

She had no chance to protest. McCree took off down the street, one hand on his hat the other on his gun.

Angela urged the men off the street before tending to the injury. She swiftly cleaned it before using her staff to accelerate the healing.

“Genji?” She tapped her comm. “Where are you?”

“Inside. Most of the people have left it would seem.”

“You’ll likely need a keycard to access the target.”

“Already got one. I put him in a safe location, but he might have a bit of a headache.”
Angela kept herself from laughing as she wrapped the wound to keep it from getting infected.

“I’ve located the target.” Genji reported. “Making sure the area is clear.”

Angela helped the men up and told them to head to safety. The one who spoke earlier wanted to go with her to help but she urged him to flee. They would take care of things until the authorities secured the area.

“McCree, what’s your status?” She spoke up before heading down the street.

“I’ve got a man with a broken leg and a lady with a nasty head injury. Otherwise it’s minimal injuries. Got everyone out.”

She sighed with relief but kept her pace. Things were back under control.

Another explosion shook the ground. Angela lost her footing and pressed against the building next to her, covering her head on instinct.

“The hell was that?” McCree shouted into the line.

“Trap,” Mei shouted back. “Caused a chain reaction. There were people hiding in there.”

Angela looked at the fresh pillar of smoke three blocks to her left. Her mind slipped into a haze before she forced herself to focus. She had no option but to stick to one task at a time.

“I’ve reached the target.” Genji reported, his tone saying he wished to get this over with. “Mercy, how should I handle this?”

“There should be some cases to properly carry it. Put a few samples in one of those, there’s no need to take all of it.”

“Understood.”

When Angela reached the first bomb site, McCree was nowhere to be found. She thought about contacting him but the injured woman demanded her attention first. While healing the head injury she checked for signs of a concussion, thankfully finding none.

The broken leg was more difficult, there was no time to fully heal it. The best she could do was splint it and offer some help with the pain.

“I am taking the target back to our safe house. Should I assist Agent Mei after?” Genji’s voice came back up.

“If we have the target we should retreat.” Winston said, but it was more of a thoughtful mumble.

“We can’t do that. At least not until someone else gets here.” McCree’s voice was muddled with static.

“Yeah,” Mei agreed.

“Genji, help us lure them into a trap.” Torbjörn cut in. “Let the authorities collect them later.”
“I’m on my way.”

Angela helped the injured man up. The lady from earlier offered him support and wasted no time leading them away from the wreckage. Angela took a moment to focus on it, scanning for life signals, just in case anyone was still in it. At least anyone who was still alive.

There was nothing.

Another explosion drew her attention, but the bomb seemed to go off in the air, smoke popping out like a firework. She dashed to the next site, using the back streets in case of loose weapons. They would be much closer to the fighting this time around.

“McCree, where are you?” She said.

“Tryin’ to get these people out. There’s a lot of kids in this building.”

Her heart stopped. “Injuries?”

“Nothing too bad, they were smart and hid under their tables and such. The problem is getting them out.” She heard him grunt over the line. “What I wouldn’t give to have Zarya or Reinhardt around.”

As she drew closer to the damage she tried to count the number of people inside. Right now it looked like at least fourteen remained. Four children were hiding in the back, hands over their ears.

Angela offered them a friendly smile before she headed inside.

Jesse stood there, near a gaping hole in the wall that lead out onto the opposite street. The floor above them was mostly intact, but Angela could see the supports straining underneath the weight. The cowboy was struggling with a piece of concrete that wedged its way between the floor and the ceiling, pinning a pile of debris in place.

“Get this out of the way,” he let out a sharp breath before he let go and backed up. “Maybe we can clear out the rest.”

“But if we move that the entire ceiling could come down.” She frowned as she studied the support. “Try and knock the smaller ones loose. I’m going to see if there’s a faster way out.”

Jesse made a noise that almost sounded like disgust but he didn’t argue.

Angela made her way back out, checking the cracked windows for a view inside. She could see the kids still huddled under the desks but the windows were too small and too high for the kids to climb through. She ran her hands along the brick walls, searching for something lose. Perhaps Jesse could punch a hole into it.

A loud crack made her jump, followed by Jesse whooping and hollering. She rushed back inside to see him gripping his prosthetic, grinning at a broken piece of concrete.

“Okay kids, stand back, this’ll just take-”

“Jesse!” Angela snapped. “Don’t you dare.”
“What?”

“Tremors like that could cause the entire ceiling to collapse.” She pointed. “Do you want to make this situation even worse?”

“Then how else are we supposed to get them out? We don’t have the time to think of another plan.”

She was about to argue that when another bomb went off in the air.

“Agent Mercy is correct,” Athena spoke up. “Aggressive force in the wrong place would only put you in harm’s way.”

“I’m not stupid,” Jesse mumbled as his gaze moved around the room. His eyes fixed on the cement pillar, nudging his foot against it.

“Tell them to get back.” He rolled his left shoulder and clicked the joints in his hand.

“McCree you cannot-”

“It’s just like jenga, it’ll be fine.”

“It is nothing like-”

“Tell them to get back.”

Jesse pulled back for a punch. Angela could only shout to the children in French, hoping they were at a safe distance.

The metal hand collided with the debris. Cement powder exploded into the air with a sickening crack. The children on the other side screamed and Mercy stared at horror at the ceiling.

It didn’t budge.

“Hah, check that out.” Jesse laughed. A head sized hole had formed in the pile of rubble, somehow held up by the objects above it. The cowboy started chipping away below it. “Told you it’d be fine.”

“That was still a risk.” Angela moved over to help him. She called out to the kids, wanting to go ahead and check on them.

“Yeah but it’s fine,” he tugged out a big chunk of concrete. The materials shifted for a moment before holding fast. “Think they can fit through that?”

She was about to protest but the children decided for her. They rushed over to the wall. The first one climbed through with no problems but the second one got stuck at the waist. Jesse helped her with a gentle tug.

As each one climbed out Angela checked them over as she guided them outside. As Jesse had said most of the injuries seemed to be minor. One of the children had a nasty cut on his arm, but it was quickly healed with her staff.
“The authorities are headed to your locations.” Athena reported in. “I suggest you retreat in the next five minutes.”

Angela headed inside as Jesse helped the last kid through. He clung to Jesse’s arm, staring at him with wide eyes.

“No need to thank me kid,” Jesse rubbed the back of his neck. “Just doing my job.”

“Recklessly,” Angela muttered and crossed her arms.

He rolled his eyes as he stepped over to her. “Give it a rest will you? It worked out fine.”

“But it doesn’t always, does it. We’ve been telling you for years to think these things through McCree.”

“Well you ain’t my damn mom. And you certainly ain’t my dad.”

“Both of you knock it off.” Winston growled into the comm. “We can discuss it after the mission.”

Both of them grumbled and McCree added a “yes sir”.

Angela took the little boy’s hand and turned to the door.

“Fire in the hole!” The accented voice rang down the street.

Angela looked out the window, the sound of a roaring engine getting closer and closer.

“Look out!” Mei screamed into the comm.

Something crashed into the floor above them. Cement shattered, something screeched against the floor making the loose ceiling shake and crumble.

Angela didn’t think when she shoved the child out of the door, urging him to run, for the rest of the children to run. A sickening crack rang above her head. She glanced up to see a huge chunk of the ceiling collapse.

Right above Jesse.

She didn’t think. She used her wings to rush towards him, arms outstretched. The force sent him flying back into the cement pillar.

She didn’t think.

Sometimes she was just as bad as he was.

For a brief moment there was a sharp pain in her spine before it slammed full force into her chest. The sound of crumbling stone echoed in her skull before everything faded out.
McCree swore his skull would split open if he moved. Between the possible head injury and the sounds it left him with a violent headache.

What the hell had just happened?

His managed to get his eyes back into focus but it did little to help. Everything was dark save a few tiny streams of light coming from above. It seemed like the whole damn building had collapsed. The cement pillar he was leaning against stood fast though, leaving enough space for him to move around.

Were the kids alright?

No, wait, Angela!

He only aimed to ignite a small flame in his left hand for light, but the whole thing went up in flames. He didn’t take the time to fix it, the more light the better.

His sense of direction was lost, but he scanned the area looking for her, or any sign of her. Maybe she had backed out soon enough. Maybe...

That hope was dashed when he saw her outstretched arm. He followed it down to her shoulder and her head that was covered in dust. A hefty layer of debris covered the rest of her body.

“Angela?” He shouted, the flames on his hand sparking. He rushed over to her, grabbing her wrist. “Hell, Angie, don’t you dare be dead.”

He couldn’t feel a pulse through her uniform. He checked her neck instead, finding a heartbeat. There was a sigh of relief but he didn’t slow down. He tossed blocks of cement, ceiling tiles, and a bit of pipeline to the side. There was no sense in pulling her out until he knew the damage.

Static buzzed in his ear and his hand flew up to his comm. He kept his left hand on the rubble, continuing to roll it away.

“McCree?” Tobjörn was shouting. “Mercy?”

“I’m alive.” He answered, tapping the device a few times to make sure it was working. “Did you catch those troublemakers?”

“Ah, well,” Mei stumbled over her words. “Genji’s dragon had them running off. But they might
McCree couldn’t help but laugh as he struggled with a larger block. “No need to show off when I’m not there, darlin.”

He could hear Genji snort, but the cyborg didn’t get the chance to retort.

“McCree,” Winston cut in. “Where is Mercy?”

“Um well, unconscious.” He tried to hold back on the jokes he used to keep his own anxiety at bay. The others probably wouldn’t appreciate it. “Trying to clear out some of this debris to see how bad-”

A sticky sound cut him off. The scent of blood hit him before he saw the dark red stain on the block in his hand. His gaze followed it to the wound on Angela’s side. Her armor seemed to have caved in from the hit, making the damage all the worse.

“Shit,” he breathed out and rushed to move the rest. He gently tugged on her arm to pull her into the open space. “Shit, Angela? Hey darlin’ can you hear me?”

“What’s going on?” Genji’s voice was lined with fear.

“Blood, lotta blood,” he stumbled out as he tried to figure out how deep the injury was. “Still bleeding, wound in her side, went clean through her armor, damn.” He tugged his serape off his shoulders and pressed it against the wound. There was no telling how much blood she already lost.

“Her staff,” Winston cut in. “Where’s her staff?”

McCree glanced around. “Don’t see it. Not sure I want to look for it right now either.”

“J-just hang on,” Mei said. “It’ll take just a minute but we’ll get you out.”

McCree wasn’t sure he had a minute. Angela’s breathing was shallow. Bruises lined her cheeks and cuts covered her fingers.

He could feel blood against his palm. The bleeding wasn’t slowing down.

“Angie? Come on now,” he snapped out the flames on his hand in order to touch her face. The darkness did nothing to ease his growing anxiety.

“Master McCree,” Clementine hissed. “Your fire.”

He blinked. Shit, damn, right, he could heal.

He tossed his serape to the side, igniting the flames on his right hand this time. The deep red enveloped the room, reminding him of emergency lights.

Clementine’s instructions rang in his head. Focus on the heat, make it burn as hot as possible, don’t worry about burning anyone. As long as your intentions are kind your flames cannot bring harm.

He placed his hand over the wound, keeping his eyes on her face. His left hand cradled it, keeping
it slightly elevated. He wish he could feel her breath against his palm.

“Come on,” McCree whispered. He couldn’t tell if it was working. Was it burning hot enough? Would it even matter at this point? He didn’t know what he was doing.

Should have practiced more. Should have prepared himself. Should have shoved her out of the way, not the other way around. At least if he was the one almost dying she could have fixed it.

“Focus.” Clementine cut in. “Negative thoughts will not aid her right now.”

Damn then, what could he think about? Making himself focus wasn’t working. Doubt was gnawing at the edges of his brain whenever he glanced at her face.

He decided to think about when they reunited. Her analyzing his prosthetic to make sure it was good enough while he asked her where to find the fountain of youth. He thought about the way she smiled at Fareeha, the way her eyes would light up when she talked about her. He thought about how you could always tell when she was drunk, because she couldn’t keep herself from snorting when she laughed. He thought about her soft tone and gentle words as she stitched up a nasty wound, begging him for the hundredth time not to be so reckless.

“I know things are different now.” She had said. “But none of us want to lose you, Jesse.”

He considered telling her that was silly, that one of these days they’d all probably drop dead in the field. That was the fate for people who chose this kind of life, and they all knew it.

McCree knew it.

But right now, at this moment, he refused to let it happen.

“We don’t want to lose you either darlin’.” He gritted his teeth, the flames in his hand growing bigger. “We’d all be lost without you, so wake up damn it.”

With every passing second that there was no response his fear only grew.

“McCree,” Genji said. “This is taking some time to set up. How is Mercy?”

He had to drop the flames to check her pulse with his right hand.

Cold.

Oh God, she was so cold. He tried to tell himself it was because of the flames but he knew that was a lie. Her pulse was slow and dull under his fingers and his breath caught in his throat.

“Angie? Angela? Come on darlin’ don’t do this to me.” The flames were back up against the wound and he pulled her close, letting her head press against his shoulder. “Please, please.”

“McCree? Jesse?” Genji’s voice grew panicked. “What’s going on?”

But he couldn’t respond. He didn’t dare let go of her. He felt like the second she did that final breath would leave her lips.

“Damn it Clem, why isn’t this working?”
“The wound might be too severe.”

“Well Gabe fixed me when I was almost dying, right?”

“He kept you alive, after realizing his flames couldn’t properly fix your wound. But as of right now you... cannot do that.”

“Don’t say that,” his voice cracked. “Don’t say that damn it. There has to be something I can do. Don’t tell me I’m still just as useless as before.”

How many more people did he have to lose for it to stop?

A soft breath hit his neck and his entire body shook. The flames in his hand lowered and flickered.

“Angie please,” his grip tightened. “Don’t leave me. Don’t leave Fareeha. Damn, what is she going to do if she loses you?”

The flames died, leaving him in the dark yet again. He focused on the sounds of his own shaky breathes, his team’s muffled voices from outside. The air was cold, colder. The body in his arms hardly offered any warmth.

He could feel the darkness swallowing him, not even stars to anchor him this time. He shut his eyes and curled over, resting his cheek on her shoulder.

*Please God, grant me one wish.*

The pressure in his chest was too much. His lungs refused to move until the first sob escaped. On instinct he tried to push it back, a futile attempt. Tears rolled down his cheeks, over his nose. He couldn’t stop shaking.

“Jesse?” Genji sounded lost. “Please say something.”

What could he say? I’m sorry? I fucked up again? It should have been me?

Always should have been him. His life wasn’t worth half of theirs.

“You stop that this instant.” Clementine said.

You know it’s true. He managed to shoot back.

“I know no such thing. I dwelled in the mind of a man who thought you were worth every ounce of effort from the day he plucked you from those desert sands. I will not let you taint that.”

His head hurt. He didn’t want to have this conversation now. A sudden boost in self confidence wouldn’t save Angela.

Suddenly she jerked in his arms, her head falling back as she gasped for air.

“The hell-?” he shot up, almost dropping her on the ground.

Angela coughed, her breathing sounded rough and shallow.
“A-Angie?” He ignited his right hand again. Her eyes squeezed shut at the light and she hissed through her teeth. “You okay?”

She muttered something in German. “Don’t know.”

He looked back at the injury to notice it had completely closed.

“The hell,” McCree mumbled. “Did I do that?”

“Tears,” Clementine said. “I often forget about that one. Humans can’t cry on command.”

He didn’t quite understand what she was saying, but he couldn’t care right now. Angela was alive. She was alive.

“Where are we?” She tried to sit up but fell back with a gasp. She reached for her comm, only to frown and pull the broken device from her ear.

McCree ignored the fire in his hand as he tapped his. “Guys? She’s alive. She’s awake.”

“Oh thank goodness,” Mei said. “We’re almost there.”

“Don’t do that, McCree.” Genji hissed. “I thought you were dead as well.”

He smiled a bit at that. “Sorry, had my hands full.” Actually he’d been a sobbing mess, but Genji didn’t need to know that.

“Jesse, where’s my staff?” Angela shifted out of his grip.

“Uh, not sure,” he moved back to the pile of rubble where he found her. “I guess magic tears don’t fix everything, huh?”

“Tears? What are you talking about?”

“I honestly don’t know,” he found himself laughing for some strange reason. The relief was delayed but now it was washing over him from his shoulders to the tips of his fingers. His body felt twenty pounds lighter as he tossed debris to the side. “God damn Angie, I’m so glad you’re okay.”

“I wouldn’t say that just yet.” She mumbled. “Alive, maybe, but I think there’s some severe damage to my spine.”

“Nothing we can’t fix, right?”

“We’ll see.”

He felt the building shake for a moment and could hear the tumble of stones. He stared at the wall, swearing there was more light coming in. He turned and heard his boot clack against something. Shining the light down he saw the handle of Mercy’s staff.

He dislodged it as quick as he could, studying the damage. At least nothing seemed broken as he rushed it back over.
“Found it,” he said. “I’m guessing it’s in working order.”

“Good,” yet again she tried to sit up, only to lean back. “I need you to use it.”

“Uh, okay got you.” He clutched the device in both hands, rolling it around. “How do I do that?”

“Point it towards me, hold down the button. It might take a moment to charge, but it’s simple enough.”

It sounded simple enough. Another crash of rubble distracted him but he regained his focus, finding the buttons before putting out his fire. At least with the better light he could make out faint outlines.

McCree pointed the end of the staff towards her center and held down the button. He could feel the device whirring to life under his fingers, the ends of it sparking before a light shot out.

Angela screamed.

McCree let go, almost tossing the staff across the room in his panic. “Angie? Oh god, what did I do?”

“Fine,” her words were hard to make out. “You just... wrong button... that was,” she took a deep breath through her nose. “Adrenaline.”

He recalled the sensation it gave him when Angela used it on the field. “Shit, damn, sorry. I didn’t make it worse did I?”

“I’ll manage just... top button this time.”

McCree took a deep breath as he tried again, running his fingers over the switches dozens of times to make sure it was the right one.

The light from the staff seemed much less harsh this time around. Angela went stiff for a moment before her body slowly relaxed.

“Better?” McCree didn’t let go of the switch.

“It’s easing the pain.” He saw her eyes open and study him up and down. “Are you alright? Any injuries?”

He laughed at that. “Come on doc, don’t worry about me right now. Let’s get you fixed up first.”

The ground shook again. He let go of the staff and turned just in time to see a wall of ice tossing debris out of the way. His team stood on the other side, Mei’s eyes lighting up as she waved.

When the wall dropped all three of them rushed in, fretting over them both. McCree quickly waved them off, handing Mei the staff as he gathered up his things. They didn’t need to worry about him at the moment.

“Is it safe to carry you, Dr. Zeigler?” Genji offered.

“Authorities showed up,” Torbjörn kicked away some rubble. “Don’t have time to hang around.
Worst comes to worst we let her go in an ambulance and break her out later.”

“That won’t be necessary.” Angela waved a hand. “You can carry me, just support my back.”

“Yes ma’am.” The cyborg was swift but gentle as he plucked her from the ground. “Let’s hurry.”

“Aw, no one going to carry me back?” McCree joked as he bundled up his blood soaked serape. It wasn’t the first time it had happened. Good thing he knew all too well how to handle blood stains.

“You’re walking just fine,” Torbjörn turned to the road.

“I can,” Mei offered with a grin.

“Thanks darlin’, but I was just–whoa!” McCree shouted as he was suddenly tossed backwards. He found himself staring at the back of Mei’s legs, his stomach draped over her shoulder in a fireman’s carry. “This ain’t what I had in mind.”

“Let’s go.” Mei jogged out of the wreckage.

“Mei? Doll? I was kidding. Please put me down.”

She seemed to ignore him as she kept on going. Soon Torbjörn and Genji were laughing and McCree shot them both a glare.

But not Angela. In fact her chuckles and the smile she hid behind her hand were a welcome sight. He thought he’d never see them again.

He supposed he could put up with it just this once.
Hanzo had been unaware when the team returned to the base, meditating out on the deck. Without McCree or his brother around he, strangely, ran out of things to do. Practicing by himself somehow seemed exhausting.

Hana had pestered him about it, and invited him to join her and Lúcio in a few rounds of DDR, but he declined.

His eyes were fixed on the setting sun until he could hear Genji approaching. He turned his head as his brother landed on the platform, a showy entrance as always.

“Hello Hanzo,” Genji sat down next to him.

“Greetings,” he turned his gaze back to the sky. “How did the mission go?”

Genji tapped at his chin and tilted his head. “Ah, well, by the proper definition it was a success.”

“And your definition?”

“An approaching nightmare.”

Hanzo felt his shoulders bristle as he stared at Genji. “What do you mean?”

“Two rogues appeared, possibly after the same thing. One was armed with explosives, many citizens were caught in the mess.”

He frowned, “No doubt you all felt the need to be heroic.”

“Perhaps, but I was told to stay on the mission. Angela and Jesse were in charge of helping civilians.”

The archer had no trouble picturing the doctor aiding the injured people on the street, but paused when it came to McCree.

“They were inside a building when it collapsed.”

That statement cut through his thoughts. Genji’s casual tone only made it all the worse. He almost stood up in surprise.
“Is he alright?”

His brother actually chuckled a bit, “They are both fine. Angela sustained some serious injuries but she alive, although I do not know how. Jesse described a life threatening injury, but it was nowhere to be found.”

“His phoenix, perhaps. It is good he’s learning how to use it.”

“He did not explain.” Genji stood back up. “Perhaps you can get him to tell you.”

“You did not ask?”

“Hmm, no,” he tapped Hanzo’s knee with his foot. “I do not have the same... inquisitive nature that you do, brother.”

Hanzo glared, not missing the insult. Genji’s visor just flickered with amusement as he turned to the door.

“If you go looking for him, I believe he was headed to the laundry room.” He waved a hand before the door shut behind him.

Hanzo snorted. Go looking for him? There was no need, the fool would find him eventually.

Then he paused, considering the state the man had been in lately. An incident like that would undoubtedly make things worse.

Hanzo got to his feet, telling himself over and over again that it was just to get details on the mission. There was no need to worry about McCree.

Even then his feet lead him to the kitchen first.

He should take him some tea.

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Hanzo indeed found McCree in the laundry room. The room had always been eerily silent and strangely small considering the amount of traffic it was supposed to get. There was a row of five washers but only two dryers crammed into a narrow hallway. He could hear three of them humming as they worked.

McCree was at the very end of the room, sitting on the floor with his back to the wall. A cigar rested in his mouth, already halfway through. He still had on his hat but his usual flannel shirt and jeans were replaced by a tank top and a pair of sweats.

It made him seem strangely vulnerable.

Hanzo didn’t think on it as he made his way into the room, a mug of tea in each hand. McCree didn’t look up, either by choice or because he didn’t notice the archer come in.

The answer came when Hanzo lowered the mug and the cowboy almost jumped a foot in the air.

“Oh, howdy,” he offered a grin, rolling the cigar between his teeth. “Didn’t hear you come in.”
Hanzo just snorted.

McCree glanced down at the mug. “What’s this?”

“Tea, I thought... I thought it might help.”

He took it with both hands, resting back against the wall. “Genji tell you what happened?”

“He insisted I ask you for details, if you care to share them.” Hanzo sat down next to the cowboy. It was a tight squeeze with the dryer on the other side of them.

McCree was silent for a while. His metal finger tapped against the ceramic mug as he stared at the contents. He only removed it to pull the cigar from his lips.

“I imagine Winston will not be pleased to find you were smoking in here.” Hanzo commented.

McCree lowered his shoulders. “Yeah, I know, couldn’t help it. Didn’t feel like going outside like this. I’m washing everything else you know.” He gestured to the row of washing machines. “Figured you’d be proud.”

“Strange time for laundry.”

“Eh, well, my serape got stained pretty bad. Had to get those and I figured I might as well get the rest while I’m at it.” McCree took a sip of the tea, somehow not bothered by the heat. “God, this still tastes like grass.”

“And yet you’re drinking it.”

“Can’t deny it helped me sleep. Besides, you went through the trouble to make it, it’d be rude not to.”

Hanzo studied his face as he took another long sip. He didn’t cringe much at that flavor, which meant he either enjoyed it more than he cared to admit or he was already used to it. His hat was pulled low, blocking most of his eyes.

“I take it you do not wish to discuss what happened?”

McCree lowered the mug and put the cigar back between his lips. “Just give me a minute there, Hanzo.”

So he did. They sat in silence for a while as McCree burned through the cigarette. The rhythmic pulse of the washing machines was a relaxing sound, almost working out their own tune.

Hanzo pulled the mug closer to his face. He breathed in the scent and focused on the warmth covering his fingers and his palms.

He glanced at McCree’s right hand before he took a sip. He almost felt like sleeping.

“It could have been worse, you know. I mean Angie’s alive.” McCree's cigar was gone. For a moment he was grinding his teeth together until he put the mug to his lips.
“But she almost wasn’t.”

McCree swallowed and sighed, “Yeah. I still don’t have this healing thing down. But apparently phoenix tears are straight from heaven.”

Hanzo’s eyes widened. “You brought her back... with tears?”

“Yeah I know, it’s like the damn climax of every crappy animated film in the nineties. Or at least the bad ones that I’ve seen.”

He frowned, “No, that’s amazing. I did not realize your spirit held that kind of power.”

McCree leaned back, pressing his hat against the wall so it lifted the brim out of his face. “Don’t yours?”

Hanzo snorted. He could feel the static of the dragons moving across his skin. “They are powerful indeed, but it is a destructive force. Even now I cannot properly control it. Unleashing them simply lets them run wild.” He sipped his tea. “But for your phoenix to have the power to save someone from the brink of death, it makes me wonder where Reyes acquired it.”

McCree suddenly glanced to the side. A smile tugged at his lips.

“What is it?”

“Aw nothing, she was going off about how god damn old she is. I’ve got a hag living in my brain.” Suddenly he flinched, the tea splashing in his cup before he laughed.

“You should not antagonize her.”

McCree just shrugged.

One of the washers finished it’s cycle during the silence. The cowboy decided to busy himself with unloading it, moving it to the dryer. With nothing else to do, Hanzo got up to help. McCree gave him a curious look but didn’t comment as he handed off a bundle of wet clothes.

Only after Hanzo shut the machine and turned it on did he realize something.

“You were crying.” He said.

McCree flinched as he stooped down to pick up their mugs. “Ah, yup. Is that weird? It’s kind of scary, you know, your friend dying in your arms.”

Hanzo spun around. “McCree-”

“And you can’t do a damn thing to help. Dunno if it’s cause I was too late or I’m just not good enough at this. Thought... I thought I was about to lose someone else.”

The archer pressed his lips together as he stepped over and took his mug. McCree’s left hand began tapping against his own once again.

Hanzo calmly took a breath as he finished the tea. “What is it you told me? That the best you can do is make the decision to do better the next time around?”
McCree blinked, his eyes going wide. The tapping stopped. “Hah, damn, using my own words against me, huh?”

“You have only begun training with these abilities,” Hanzo decided to continue to dodge his embarrassment. “All you can do is continue to improve them, so that this does not happen again.”

“When you’re right, you’re right.” He chugged down the rest of the tea. “Mind if we switch up our training sessions?”

“I’m not sure I could aid you much.”

“How about you run around the training room dodging bullets and when you get hit I’ll fix you up.”

Hanzo frowned. “No.”

McCree bit his lip before he laughed. The second washing machine shut down, and he put his mug on the dryer before heading over.

The archer studied the man’s tattoo again. He assumed it was the light, but the feathers on it seemed bright somehow. He wondered if it could spring to life the way his did when he readied an arrow. Ghostly orange flames pulling away from the cowboy’s back as they arced into a proper pair of wings.

He found himself dwelling on the image too long, only brought back when McCree shoved a pile of clothes in his direction.

“Gonna help with these too?”

Hanzo put his mug down next to the other before he opened the empty machine.

Somehow the tea’s warmth lingered longer than usual. Perhaps he was imagining things.
Chapter Notes

Might as well just say it, enjoy this cute bit while u can

Hopefully have part 7 done before all this goes up but we'll see

(also went ahead and updated the tags)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So the guy’s coming over there to kick my ass, right?” McCree leaned forward in his seat. “Doesn’t realize that I can snap out of the cuffs with my prosthetic.”

Angela smiled, relaxing in the recliner they had in the living room. The doctor had recovered just fine with help from Lúcio. While the kid’s medical knowledge wasn’t quite as extensive, McCree was impressed with how much he knew.

But even with that she confined herself to a week of rest. While she might have healed putting any kind of strain on her back would put her back at step one.

It had been Fareeha’s idea to practically ban her from her office, knowing Angela would be tempted to work. Instead the rest of the team tried to keep her occupied.

McCree decided to do that by telling stories.

“I nail the guy right in the jaw with my metal hand, knocks him out cold.”

Angela’s smile vanished. “You’re lucky that didn’t kill him.”

“Nah, I know how to control my strength.” He flexed his left arm. “Well, now I do anyway.”

“Now?” She raised an eyebrow. “That sounds like another story I want to hear.”

“Yeah, yeah, but later. Anyway with the guy out I make a dash out of the interrogation room. Get caught but not before I snatch one guy’s keys and steal his car.”

Angela crossed her arms. “Don’t they track police vehicles?”

“Sure, that’s why I ditched it and ran in the opposite direction.”

She laughed at that before rolling her eyes. “Sometimes it’s a wonder how you stayed out of trouble for so long.”

“Aw, I didn’t stay out of trouble, I just had an easy time avoiding the consequences.”

McCree let his flame flicker around his metal fingers. He’d gotten much more comfortable with showing off the ability around the others now. Most of them didn’t question it outside of Hana who
started asking for details right away. At least with her urging he’d discovered how to produce a blast of flame.

Reinhardt had made a comment about it, saying how familiar it all looked, but seemed to catch himself and apologized. McCree just waved it off.

If it looked familiar then maybe he was doing something right.

McCree was so lost in thought he didn’t realize Angela was reaching towards him until her fingers brushed against the flames. His surprise made them spark but they quickly settled down onto his palm.

“It’s strange to think about fire being used to heal.” She didn’t move her hand. “But it feels almost soft.”

“Yeah, I think I’d have to put some effort into actually burning someone with this.” Then he frowned as he twirled the flame into a cone shape. “Course, I’m having trouble doing the opposite as well.”

“Healing can be tricky,” Angela lifted her palm as it began to glow with a pale yellow light. “It often requires some other forms of medical knowledge to make it function right.”

McCree just stared at it, amazed he hadn’t seen it before. Angela was always using her equipment to heal others. His gaze followed the light as she reached over and put her hand on his arm.

The sensation surprised him, so much different from the warmth of his flames. The light sparked and tingled and he swore he could taste cinnamon in the back of his mouth.

“I should have offered sooner,” she drew her hand back. “But I rarely use my abilities this way anymore. I found ways to charge my equipment with it, which makes it much more efficient. Perhaps I should practice the basics again.”

“Wait, offered what ma’am?”

“To teach you.”

McCree felt his eyes widen and a part of him wanted to slap himself. Of course! Why didn’t he just ask her in the first place?

“You’d do that?”

“Of course, after I recover. Lúcio’s learned a lot, but the more healers we have in this place the better. Just in case I get into a mess like that again.”

McCree frowned as he finally put out the flame. “Yeah, was wondering actually, how come your spirit didn’t heal you during that mess?”

Angela shook her head. “She can’t.”

“Pardon?”

“That’s the trouble with her, and the difference from yours I suppose. Her healing abilities have no
“But why’s that?” McCree threw out his hands.

She just shrugged, “I couldn’t tell you. The unicorn in myths has always been an immortal beast, bringing life to the world around it, at the risk that it is fragile to any injury.”

He frowned and studied her face for a while. Even without her make-up and her hair pulled back in a loose ponytail it didn’t look like she had aged at all.

“So that’s your secret?”

“Huh?” She looked up at him.

“The secret to your eternal youth.” He pointed at her face. “Must be the unicorn.”

Angela blinked before she laughed at that. “Perhaps it is.”

“Can you make any meds for that with your abilities? I have no business looking as old as I do.”

“I think part of it’s the beard,” she gestured to her chin. “At least it’s better than when you first arrived here.”

He inwardly cringed at that memory and tugged at it as a distraction. “Almost wonder if I should grow it out like that again.” Then he smirked, “Dress up like Torbjörn for Halloween.”

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea, you’re already in hot water for what you did to his garden.”

“Huh? But he doesn’t know about-” McCree paused when he saw the smile on Angela’s face. “Oh man, Angie!”

She covered her face when she laughed.

“I can’t believe you ratted me out like that.”

“I told you I wouldn’t cover for you.”

“Betrayal,” he put his hand over his chest as he fell against the chair. “You’re not invited to my funeral.”

“Relax, I think it’ll be fine. He just muttered something about a paintball turret.”

“Oh god.”

She laughed again, the sound filling the lull in the conversation.

“Also, speaking of that,” Angela pointed to her face. “Don’t forget your appointment in two weeks.”

“Hm, right, I should probably write that down huh?”

“Or I’ll end up sending you a message when you inevitably forget.”
“That’s much easier, let’s do that.”

Angela swatted at him and he leaned to the side to avoid the hit.

“You two aren’t having a party without me, are you?” Fareeha was heading over to them, two cups of tea in her hands.

McCree sat back up. “I’m just getting to know my future sister-in-law. We were thinking about a bridal shower.”

Fareeha gently kicked him in the leg before handing one of the cups to Angela. She smiled when she took it, inhaling some of the steam. By now McCree could catch the scent of chai.

“Didn’t bring me any ‘manita?” He tapped his boot against her shin.

“You don’t drink tea,” she kicked him back harder.

“He does now,” Angela glanced at him as she took a sip. “Café a la Hanzo.”

“Oh, is that it?” Fareeha leaned over him with a grin. “My mom tried to get you to drink it for years. Who would have thought that archer would get away with it.”

McCree ignored the heat rushing to his cheeks and pulled his hat down before Fareeha could see it. “Helps me sleep.”

“I’m sure it does.”

He fidgeted in the seat before pushing himself up. He kept his hat low as he pretended to check his communicator. “Hah, would you look at the time? I better be going.”

“Another training session with tu amor?”

“No!” He snapped much quicker than he meant to. Angela and Fareeha were both laughing as he bolted out of the room. A few moments later he realized Clementine was as well.

Chapter End Notes

U know this fic went over 50k the other day what the fuck

I have 15 more parts to go...
McCree swore he’d been having a pleasant dream that night. Something about a familiar river and a childhood friend laughing as he climbed the rocks near the rapids. He dropped in bits of twigs and watched them get caught in the surge of water, vanishing underneath.

“Hey,” his voice didn’t sound familiar. Neither did his face. McCree couldn’t see his face. “Ever wonder what’s down there?

“*Ever wonder what that feels like?”*

He snapped awake at that, or he thought he did. The room he was lying in wasn’t his own. The walls were dark, floral wallpaper peeling off and collecting on the ground. There was no furniture in sight apart from a very old television resting on a coffee table. The thing had knife marks in it, although they all looked intentional.

“*Mijo, stop drawing on the furniture.*”

He knew that voice, it was his mom’s voice. He spun around as he studied the doorways, the fan on the ceiling with the broken light. He looked out the sliding glass door to see most of it covered in a wall of desert sand.

“Uh, Clem?” He spoke up. “You in here? Or is this another nightmare.”

“I am here,” the bird flew in from the kitchen.

Wait, how did he know it was the kitchen. He squinted his eyes as they darted around. Something about this place was too familiar.

“It is not another nightmare,” she perched on top of the flat screen TV. “I just pulled you out of one.”

Did she? He could have sworn that dream was pleasant. Couldn’t remember it now.

“Then where are we?”

“Do you recall those ruins I mentioned before?”

“Huh? But these aren’t-?” He ran his boot over carpet. “I mean, when you said that I kind of expected a stone monument or something.”

“Those would not be familiar to you.” She fanned her wing out in a gesture, “This is.”
Was it? It felt that way but McCree couldn’t seem to place where it was all from. He started walking through the rooms, each of them in the same ruined state. Dust lined the counters in the kitchen and the coffee machine in the corner that seemed to still be on. The light on the clock flickered on and off like it always did when you didn’t reset the time.

The bedrooms seemed even emptier. One contained a vanity with the mirror shattered. McCree stepped over to it but somehow couldn’t see his reflection. He squinted as he glanced at the broken pieces, swearing the room in the mirror looked different than the dismal grey behind him. The other had nothing but a set of stickers on the wall that someone had tried in vain to peel off. McCree ran his thumbs over them as he tried to place their shapes.

Strangely enough, he didn’t remember until he stepped into the garage. The door was closed, but a bend in the metal let some of the sand spill onto the concrete floor. He tried the light switch and it came on, dangling loosely from its wire on the ceiling. Inside sat an ancient Chevy truck—still on wheels and everything—with the hood propped up. The entire engine was missing but a set of carjack cables still clung to the batter. The whole thing was in poor shape, dented, rusted, like it had been there for thirty years.

But glancing up at the charm that dangled from the rearview mirror his memory snapped into place.

“Mija—”

“Mijo, Mamá.”

“Ah! Lo siento, Mijo. But quit trying to play with that. You’ll break the string.”

“Aw, Mamá...”

He could almost see her in the garage, wiping her hands on a towel as she discussed business with another client. Cars like that were becoming much rarer those days, the people who knew how to repair them even less so. They didn’t have a steady stream of customers, but plenty of high paying ones.

“This is my house,” he said. A part of him was surprised he had forgotten what it looked like, but after his mother died when he was ten he had been dragged away from it. You tended to forget sentimentality when keeping up with Deadlock and Blackwatch.

“A bit rude to be showing me things like this, ain’t it?” A lump was trying to form in his throat but he swallowed it back as he headed back inside.

“I did not put it here. This space is merely a visual representation of your own mind.” Clementine was still perched on the TV. “A place where you keep your memories.”

“Pretty damn empty for that isn’t it?” He couldn’t stop the bitter laughter that escaped.

Clementine tilted her head before she hopped down on the table, pecking a button on the TV. The screen flickered a few times before it came on.

“McCree,” a younger Genji sat perched on the railing of the upper floor in the garage. McCree had always thought it made him look just like a bird. “Are you certain this is wise?”
“Course it ain’t, that’s why we do it.” He tossed Genji one of the water balloons. “Get ready cause Reinhardt’s on his way.”

“Well, why do I let you talk me into this?”

“Well, you love me.”

The cyborg huffed and shook his head before throwing the water balloon with as much force as he could manage. The sound of water colliding with someone’s skin was loud. The entire garage went dead silent as McCree finally looked over the edge.

Reinhardt was out cold.

“Oh my god!” McCree stumbled back. “Christ darlin’, what the hell?”

“That’s what you told me to do.” Genji snapped.

“Not that hard, shit, we gotta hide. Angela’s gonna destroy us.”

“Hey!” Torbjörn’s voice boomed from below. “What’s the big idea boys? You two get back here this instant.”

McCree laughed as the screen turned black. He had almost forgotten that event, almost. Sometimes the cyborg forgot his own strength back then, and it wasn’t much concern since he used all of it during combat. Reinhardt had been okay, thankfully, laughing as he told the story to everyone else on base.

Angela and Gabe were not nearly as amused.

“Well, I need to ask him if he remembers that.” McCree put a hand on the screen. “I bet the new kids would get a kick out of that story. How do you work this thing anyway?”

“Well, just load up a memory of yours, or mine, although I seem to know your mind better than you do.”

He blinked at her. “Or yours?”

Her feathers ruffled for a minute. “Indeed, I can share mine as well.”

McCree sat down on the floor before resting his arms on his knees. He gave her an expectant stare and glanced at the TV.

She shook her head.

“Aw, come on Clem, just a few? I bet you have a bunch of Gabe in there right?”

“Well, do you truly wish to see those?”

“Well, he sounds different, the way you talk about him. I wonder what he was like inside his own head.”

Her tail feathers curled up for a moment, “very well.” Her beak tapped against the side of the
The scenery was somehow jarring. It looked nothing like McCree’s desert. Clementine must have been perched in her tree, the branches full of orange colored leaves. Looking down he could see a grassy hill, but in only a few feet there was nothing but water. It sat as still as a pond, as if you could walk on it. It’s glassy surface reflected the sky, or lack-thereof. Up above were buildings, skyscrapers, coming down from the sky. What could be seen of the sky on the horizon was dark, the deep purple of dusk. Many of the lights on the buildings were turned on, lighting up the lake like stars.

McCree felt his mouth fall open.

“Marigold, we need to talk.” Gabe’s voice sounded far less gruff than McCree remembered. “Or rather, you need to stop talking.”

He came into view then, standing below the tree with his arms crossed. His face looked so much younger, it was almost like it was a different person.

“Perhaps I wouldn’t need to talk if you would, Master Reyes.” Clementine taunted before leaping down a few branches. “Just tell him already.”

“Absolutely not, that’s just going to cause three different messes that I don’t want to deal with. Besides, there’s no room for that in our line of work.”

“In your line of work you could both be dead by tomorrow.”

“Yeah right,” Gabe pointed at her. “You can revive me.”

“But I can’t revive him.”

Gabe’s eyes widened and his stern front completely dropped.

“Listen to me, Master Reyes, never in my lifetime have I found anything good to come of keeping secrets. Doesn’t he deserve to know how you feel?”

“Ugh, don’t say it like that.” He covered his face.

Clementine flew onto his shoulder. “Doesn’t he deserve to know the wonderful poetry you’ve spun just about the color of his eyes?”

“Shut-up,” he snapped and swatted at her.

She simply laughed as she took off again, spiraling around above him and flying out over the lake.

The screen turned to static for a brief moment before the image changed. She was perched in the tree yet again, but everything seemed brighter. The horizon shown with a bright gold that created dark shadows on the buildings. Gabriel was lying below the tree, hands behind his head and a blissful smile on his face.

“You’re in high spirits.”

“What gave it away?” Gabe opened his eyes as he smirked.
“Hm, your smile, the lights,” she hopped down the branch. “But I think my favorite is the fact you keep giggling under your breath.”

“Shut-up,” he didn’t stop smiling.

“Come on, tell me about it.”

“You already know.”

“Certainly, but I like to hear it from you.”

His hands moved to the front of his face. “You saw. You saw him get so worried that he just... damn.” He rolled over to hide his grin. “Damn it, I can’t do this, you saw!”

She laughed at him. “Indeed, but it’s fun to see you get so shy.”

“Wonder if Jack is dealing with the same shit in his head.”

“Oh there’s no doubt. His wolf is probably elated that he won the bet.”

Gabe moved his hand and stared up at her. “Bet?”

“Oopsie, did I say that?”

“Marigold?” His voice turned low and he sat up.

Her laughter returned, and when she flew she made certain to rush past his head before heading out over the water. Her gaze was cast down at her reflection, almost blending into the orange light from the sky.

Then suddenly there was a shadow, rushing up to the surface.

The screen went black.

McCree blinked, only now aware of the unsettling feeling hovering around his stomach.

“Uh, Clem?”

“Hm?”

“The hell was that?”

“What was what?” She tilted her head at him.

McCree wasn’t sure if it was her voice or something in the back of his mind that told him she was playing dumb, but he knew she was. The more he studied her the more he was aware of a sudden wall that had appeared in his mind.

He didn’t think much about the fact that hosts and spirits could share thoughts and emotions. He assumed that his lack of contact with her made it just bleed together easier.
But now? Now he was aware, hyper aware. She was hiding something.

And she wasn’t about to spill the beans either.

“Did you want to see something else?” She asked.

“Nah, I think that’s fine for now. We’ll have a movie night another time.” He flashed a grin before he stood up. If the link worked both ways she was probably aware of his suspicion.

He’d just have to put up a few walls of his own.
McCree got his message from Winston while he was outside, hanging with Genji and Zenyatta. He still wasn’t much for meditating, but when the monk invited him he found it hard to say no.

And it was nice, calm and quiet with a cool breeze on his face. Sometimes it was strange to see Genji sit so still for so long.

But then the message came, the buzzing noise causing both of his companions to turn their heads.

“Sorry,” He glanced at the name. “I gotta get this. I’ll talk to you two later.”

Genji nodded and Zenyatta waved.

Winston was requesting his presence in their make-shift meeting room. The space was plenty big enough, with the screens in place, but it needed more chairs. Especially if they planned on adding new members. McCree had heard that Brigitte was planning to come on board soon enough.

McCree let his fingers scroll through the past messages, almost surprised by his own formal tone. Sometimes it was strange to think of the scientist as his new commanding officer, and sometimes Winston argued that he wasn’t, but he was. The big guy called all the shots, and even though it was clear as day he was still figuring his position out he was doing his best.

Maybe he hadn’t planned to be in charge when he issued the recall, but that’s where things stood. No one else had taken up the torch and at this point McCree wasn’t sure he wanted them to.

When McCree arrived he saw Fareeha and Lúcio waiting in there as well. Lúcio spun around in his chair, almost seeming out of it.

“Ah, hello McCree.” Winston stood at the front of the room, his usual spot. The holo screens were already on, Athena’s symbol on one of them.

“Just Jesse off the field sir,” McCree thought about sitting down but opted to stand next to Fareeha instead. “What’s happening?”

“A job,” Fareeha’s posture matched her words. Her arms were crossed and she stood up straight, showing off her two inches of height over McCree.

“With a group this small?”

“It’s a small job, I hope.” Winston looked at the holo screens as a message popped up. McCree skimmed over the language, mentions of Talon and information. “Athena found this message for us,
sourced from a financial office a few miles outside of King’s Row. It’s specifically asking for our help in escaping.”

“From Talon?” Fareeha’s eyes were fixed on the text.

“Yes, they mentioned they’ve been gathering intel and Talon’s picked up on their trail.”

“Sounds like a trap,” Lúcio said. “I’m assuming Athena’s run checks on the source.”

“I have,” she spoke. “It comes out clean. The rest of the investigation would have to be done in person.”

“How did you even get this?” McCree scratched his chin. “It wasn’t sent to us.”

“As Winston said, I found it.” Athena stated. “While the file was hidden, I’m constantly running searches on information. It came up.”

Lúcio shifted in his seat. “I’m not sure I’m comfortable with the idea that someone knew that you’d find it.”

“I agree,” Winston adjusted his glasses. “Which is why I think we need to look into it, whether or not a rescue is necessary.”

“So that’s why you called me in.” McCree ground his teeth together.

“Sorry McCree, I know you don’t—”

“Jesse, and no need to apologize. I’ve got you covered.” He tapped his hat before crossing his arms. “So, what do you want us to do?”

“I think we should search the source first.” Lúcio’s fingers drummed against the table. “An office computer, right? Might be something on there to prove what it’s saying.”

“We should search for Talon activity as well.” Fareeha said. “If they are around there, perhaps we can shut down any plans they have in advance.”

“I wouldn’t rush in there too quick,” Winston said. “At least not with your group this small. Gather intel if you can, but we can plan a strike later.”

“Yes sir,” McCree and Fareeha both said at the same time. They shot each other a glance and Lúcio chuckled a bit.

“I’ll have Lena fly you guys in tomorrow morning,” Winston said. “She’ll fly you back out in three days. That should be enough time to dig around and make a quick pick up if necessary. We’ll just have to assess the situation as it goes.”

All three of the nodded and Fareeha even gave her salute. Lúcio got up to leave the room, glancing back at the pair of them for a second.

“Uh, that’s all,” Winston adjusted his glasses.

“Oh,” Fareeha blinked.
McCree laughed to himself to ease the embarrassment as he gripped Fareeha’s shoulder. Some habits were harder to kick than he thought.

The three of them went in separate directions. McCree decided he wanted a quick distraction, and food was the first solution for that.

Scrounging around in the kitchen didn’t yield as much as he liked. Most of the food either required cooking or it was fruit. McCree could eat an apple, but he was hoping for something else.

Then he found the tin of cookies in the cupboard. Opening up the smell of peanut butter hit him, and he had two guesses as to who these belonged to.

“Agent McCree,” Athena’s voice caught him off guard.

“Wha- yes ma’am?”

“I would advise against eating Winston’s food without his permission.”

“Yeah yeah,” he pretended to shut the lid, snapping a few of the treats onto his palm before he did. “Whatever you say.”

When the A.I. had gone silent he slipped the tin back onto the shelf and left the room, munching on the first one.

He spotted Angela resting in the living room again, reading on her tablet. He considered asking her for some quick healing tips before he left but then Fareeha entered the room, starting their conversation with a kiss on the forehead.

McCree decided he didn’t want to interrupt.

He crammed the last cookie in his mouth as he wandered around the hall. He could go practice his shooting, but that would hardly be necessary. He could also catch up on some sleep but he wasn’t eager to do that either. Perhaps he should practice some fire by himself, or build up a stock of ashes, or-

“Go find your archer?” Clementine spoke.

“I didn’t say that.”

“You were thinking it. You were just pretending not to.”

God damn, mind-reading, canary.

“I heard that too.”

“Quit nosing around in there. I don’t need your commentary on every-”

“McCree.”

Hanzo’s voice almost made him scream. He turned to see the man standing in his bedroom door, eyebrow raised.
“T-talking to the phoenix,” McCree shrugged.

“I guessed as much, but what are you doing?”

“Dunno yet, haven’t decided. Winston called me for a new mission. Gotta head out in the morning.”

“That quick?” Hanzo frowned.

McCree tapped his spur on the floor. “Well, might be too late if I’m honest. The message we got didn’t have a timestamp, but half the job is gathering information.”

“I see,” Hanzo had that look on his face again, the one that said he wanted to know more. “In any case, would you like me to make you some tea before you leave? Or perhaps coffee?”

McCree’s heart skipped a beat for a second. Tea still tasted gross, but it was a solid fact it kept his nerves down. That was certainly something he could use on a plane ride.

“If you’re offering, sure,” he scratched at his cheek. “Sure the rest of the team would appreciate it too.”

Hanzo nodded before he stood up straight and grabbed his bow from it’s spot on the wall. “Come along then.”

“Huh? Where too?”

“To practice, obviously.”

McCree groaned. “Aw, come on, can’t I just-”

“No, we are trying to prevent another mistake, remember?”

He wanted to snap at the archer for bringing it up but he knew the man was right. Now wasn’t the time to slack off, especially since this job might involve some techniques he hasn’t used in ages.

“Fine, fine, but before we go I need to ask.”

“What?”

“You don’t have a set of lock picks, do you?” McCree gave a sheepish grin.

Hanzo stared at him for a long time, his eyes hardly moving until he reached into one of the satchels at his waist. He pulled out a thin black case.

McCree beamed at him, caught himself before he spat out something stupid. “Oh thank goodness, didn’t want to have to go back to get mine, saves us the time.” He grabbed it before he followed Hanzo down the hall.

It had been a little while since he had done this properly, he needed to polish his skills.

Sometimes those precious few seconds made a world of difference.
“Hey,” McCree slipped the box into his pocket. “Did I ever tell you about the time Genji knocked out Reinhardt with a water balloon?”

Hanzo blinked before he stared at him, wide eyed. “No.”

“Pff, alrighty then, so we had some downtime at Blackwatch right?...”
McCree kept his back against the wall of the office building. Lúcio was beside him, all the lights on his equipment turned off. His fingers and his lips itched for a cigar but he ignored it. Smoke would only attract attention right now.

“All clear, Pharah?” McCree said into his comm. Their comrade was either up in the air or on the roof of a building, monitoring the situation from afar.

“Clear,” she said. “We’ve still spotted no Talon activity either.”

“Tch,” McCree began to work on opening the door. “Only gator I’m afraid of is the one I can’t see.”

Most modern buildings had built-in security systems these days, something Lúcio disabled earlier, but plenty of others still had old school locks. It just made things easier in the long run.

With the lock undone, McCree eased the door open. He kept his eyes and his ears open as he scanned the room. The door led into the bottom of a stairwell. A single light shone down from three floors above, making everything a dull shade of brown.

He glanced under the stairs, nothing visible in the shadow it cast.

*Hey Clem?* He stepped inside.

“Yes?”

*How did Gabe keep me from getting blown up back then?*

She was silent as McCree motioned for Lúcio to follow. He lit his flame for a moment, banishing any of the remaining shadows.

Nothing was there.

*“He used his wings.”* She said.

McCree dropped the fire as the pair headed up the stairs. *He had those?*

*“He rarely used them, they are not subtle in any sense of the word.”*

He recalled the orange light from his memory, so bright even with his eyes closed that he could remember the exact shade.
“You think you’ll run into another bomb.”

This just seems a little too familiar is all. The door to the third floor was locked. He pulled out his lock picks again and got to work.

Lúcio fidgeted next to him, his gaze focused on the hanging light.

“You okay there?” McCree said.

The musician blinked. “Huh? Oh yeah, I’m fine.”

“You’re awfully quiet.”

“Isn’t that the idea on a stealth mission?”

McCree laughed a bit. “True, but trust me don’t let yourself get too serious. Getting lost in your own head is the last thing you need.”

“I’ve done this before you know.” He leaned against the wall. “The revolution I started was way more than just riots.”

“And I don’t doubt that. You’ve got a good head on your shoulders kid, just don’t let yourself get lost in it.”

He frowned, “I’m not sure I get your point.”

“You’re nervous.” The lock came undone and McCree put the kit away. “Which is fine, keeps your senses sharp, but if it gets out of hand you start hearing things, seeing things, gotta find ways to keep your head clear.”

Lúcio seemed to understand that better, staring at the door as McCree nudged it open. “And how do you do that?”

“Me? I make jokes, even if something isn’t funny. Not everyone appreciates it.” He tapped his hat before looking around the room. Most of the room wasn’t visible with the cubicle walls in place.

“You know, that might explain a few things about you Eastwood.”

“Hah, don’t go telling everyone.”

“Always wondered why your laughs sounded different.”

McCree wanted to ask about that, but kept quiet for now. It wasn’t the time to get caught up in a lengthy discussion. The low visibility in the room wasn’t his friend, and he considered his options before flicking on one of the light switches.

Half of the lights on the ceiling came on, making everything much easier to see. Grey carpets, grey walls, at least the walls had a decent amount of artwork to liven up the place.

“Sure that’s a good idea?” Lúcio asked.

“It’s less of an eye catcher than me walking around with my arm on fire.” He kept his hand on his
gun as he headed into the room. “If someone comes in just grab a mop and pretend you’re the janitor.”

“This is a carpeted floor,” Lúcio laughed.

“A broom then, I don’t know. Clean the windows. Just act like we’re supposed to be here.”

“You’re still dressed like a cowboy.” The musician was grinning now, back to normal.

“I’ll hide under a desk or something.”

“With your tall frame? That I’d like to see.” Lúcio nudged him.

“Yeah yeah, let’s focus on finding our computer.”

Lúcio was gone in a flash. He skated from cubicle to cubicle, turning the computer screens on and running through a page of something McCree couldn’t read before moving onto the next.

McCree decided to let him work in peace, keeping his eyes on the doors and the windows. Everything was still silent.

He tapped the comm. “All clear?”

“Yes, all I’ve spotted was a man taking a short cut from a corner store.”

McCree studied the ceiling, glancing at all the security cameras. If Talon had been using those to gather intel they were currently shut down, but they could always have extras. He took a moment to inspect the plants by the elevator.

“Got it,” Lúcio called out.

It took a moment to find him in the jungle of make-shift walls. The musician still swiveled a bit in his chair as his fingers flashed across the screen. The data was buzzing by faster than McCree could begin to process it.

“Find anything yet?”

Lúcio shook his head. “It’s likely if they do have any information it’s on a drive, but I can easily check what kinds of files have been open on this thing.”

“But no way to access it?”

“Nah, but I could always plant a bug, access the data from another location when they plug it back in.”

“Nifty,” McCree leaned on the back of the chair as he watched. The words and letters meant absolutely nothing to him.

“What? You never done this Eastwood?”

“Wasn’t my area.” He lifted his head back up to scan the room. It was so quiet he could practically hear the electricity burning through the light bulbs.
A beeping noise made him jump, his gun flying out of his holster as he looked around again. His eyes fell to the computer. Lúcio’s fingers hovered above the screen as a video call alert flashed in the center.

“Uh, I didn’t do that.” He said. “Do we answer that?”

McCree didn’t know what the right answer was. Could be Talon, although it was unlikely they’d show up this way, or just a wrong number. Either way he shoved Lúcio out of the way before tapping on the button. If they were going to get caught, it might as well be the face of the guy who already had a huge bounty.

An image didn’t come up on the screen, likely the person didn’t have their camera on.

“Huh,” a female voice. “I didn’t think you’d actually pick up.”

“May I ask who this is?” McCree put on his best smile and kept Lúcio from moving into the frame.

“The owner of the computer you’re hacking into.”

His smile dropped. “My apologies, was a bit curious about a message we found.”

There was a pause. “Jesse McCree, you joined the Overwatch recall?”

They were getting on the same page. “You could say that. Surprised you didn’t already know.”

“You do a surprising job at hiding yourselves despite some of the damage you cause. Either way, you may want to get to the point. If Talon is still tracing me we only have three minutes before they trace this.”

“I think you should get to the point first, darlin’. You called us here after all didn’t you?”

Another pause. “In a sense, yes, however I set up that message three weeks ago.”

His eyes narrowed. “Talon still ain’t come to pick you up?”

“That’s what concerns me.”

“They knew.” Lúcio whispered. “They knew we’d come here.”

Shit, this just got a lot trickier.

“Listen up darlin’, if you still want to get out of here it’s gonna be tomorrow, first thing in the morning. You can pick the location but it’s gotta be near a place we can land an aircraft.”

“I’m surprised you trust me.”

He grinned. “Oh, I don’t. If you want us to do that you better bring whatever information it is that has Talon coming after you. Along with that,” he clicked his tongue and pointed. “You’re gonna have to show me your pretty face.”
The silence lasted too long. McCree kept a sharp eye on the clock down in the corner.

One minute left.

Then the call window blinked before the camera turned on. Brown hair up in a messy bun with pale skin. Thick framed glasses sat low on her face and judging by the cute cat design on her shirt she was in her pjs. He gauged her age somewhere in her late twenties.

He hated that it seemed young to him now.

“Got a name, darlin’?”

“Ashleigh, that’s all you’re getting from me now.”

“And meeting place?”

“Roof of the apartment building next door. 5:30 AM”

He winked, “It’s a date.”

She made a disgusted noise before she hung up.

“Eastwood, I don’t like this.” Lúcio was a bundle of nerves again. “Talon knew we’d show up eventually, so where are they?”

“Waiting,” McCree shut the computer off and stood up. “Which is why we get the hell out dodge as soon as possible. Did you get any of that Athena?”

“Some,” she spoke into the comm.

“Debrief us later McCree.” Pharah said. “For now let’s get to a safer place.”

“On it, come on Lúcio.”

The pair of them made their way out the same way they came in. McCree was still just as slow with the doorways, locking them before he shut them. He kept his eyes focused but his ears even more-so. Somehow he was waiting for the faint digital beep of a bomb.

It never came.
McCree stood with Fareeha and Lúcio on the roof as they waited. At this time of day in England the sun hadn’t shown its face yet, leaving the air frigid. Every breeze felt like a blast of ice. McCree pulled his serape closer, tempted to ask his friends if they wanted him to start a fire.

But Fareeha looked far too serious, constantly glancing around. Lúcio leaned against the wall with his arms crossed, but just as ready to move if it became necessary.

Lena was going to swoop by, no stops, and pick them all up. They had debated sticking around to gather more intel but it was too risky at the moment. The group was too small and they had zero leads on where Talon could be lurking. McCree argued that he’d done it on his own before, no sweat, but Winston shut that idea down. There was no way he’d leave McCree anywhere without some kind of back up.

McCree made a joke out of it, but part of him was relieved to hear that. Lúcio had given him an odd look.

He was about to worry that their client was going to be late when the door to the roof swung open. His grip tightened on his peacemaker but he could make out Ashleigh’s silhouette. She held a suitcase with both of her hands, tilting back to manage its weight.

“You followed?” McCree said.

“I didn’t notice anything.” She didn’t let go of the bag. “But I don’t think that says much.”

“Aw, I don’t know about that.” McCree stepped over. “You noticed they were after you in the first place, right?”

“Via computers, not senses.” She looked up at the sky. “Where’s our ride?”

“Two minutes,” Fareeha said. “Do you have the data?”

Ashleigh pulled a drive from her pocket and handed it to McCree. He barely even glanced at it before tossing it to Lúcio. The musician loaded it on a personal tablet, scrolling through it.

“Hm,” She crossed her arms. “I was wondering who actually hacked into my computer.”

“Aw what, don’t think I’m capable?” McCree snickered.

“I didn’t want to assume, but if you knew your stuff well enough you could have turned my webcam on from the start.”
“It’s true,” Lúcio pulled out the drive. “This all checks out by the way.”

By now McCree could hear the faint hum of Lena’s aircraft in the distance. He cracked his knuckles and stretched. A job went smoothly for once.

“Don’t... ah how do you say it? Count your chickens before they hatch?” Clementine said.

McCree let his eyes fall shut as he glanced around for her. You wanna turn into a chicken to complete the metaphor?

“Absolutely not,” she laughed.

He couldn’t quite place her in the dark space. He let his body turn around, trying to catch a trail of her fire but got distracted by something else.

Something big.

At first he couldn’t figure out what it was. Even though it seemed clear it was just a dark shape, small lights appearing on it like stars. For whatever reason he took a step closer, focusing harder. He could see the faint outline of the building it was sitting on, almost taking up the entire roof. The creature–some kind of bird–was facing away from him.

The hell was a spirit that huge doing all the way out here?

“McCree,” Fareeha’s voice snapped him out of it. “Are you ready?”

Responsibility tugged at him, urging him to follow his orders, but he couldn’t stop staring at the building. It was only two blocks away.

“Be right back,” he darted to the fire exit.

“McCree,” she shouted. “Where do you think you’re going?”

“You don’t see that Pharah? Come on, it’s huge. I gotta know what it’s doing here.”

Her confusion didn’t last. “We have our orders.”

“It’ll only take a sec. I’ll be back before Lena even gets here.”

“McCree!”

He slid down the ladder and dashed down the stairs. He ignored her shouting after him and Winston shouting into his comm. With a tap of the button he turned the communicator off.

He knew he should let it alone, but instinct was driving him forward. Something about that bird gnawed at his curiosity and if he left without at least having a face to track down later he wouldn’t be able to stand it.

“Master McCree, this is unwise.” Clementine cut in. It was strange for her to sound so cautious but he couldn’t figure out why. That wall had shown up again.
It only made his curiosity worse.

As he drew closer to the building he switched to using the back roads. Thankfully at this time of day there was no one wandering the streets. He caught glimpses of a few cars but nothing more.

He was there now, leaning against it and catching his breath for a moment. The owner had to be around here somewhere, inside perhaps. He glanced around for a way to climb up. Then again maybe he should shut his eyes and make sure it was still here.

He took a deep breath and did so.

His entire body froze.

The second the street vanished around he found himself staring at something. It’s huge head—a barn owl—was staring directly at him. It’s eyes were bright, glowing, like looking at the dead center of a semi truck cruising down an empty desert road. And it’s beak, could he even call it that? It opened wide, into the shape of a grin that was lined with sharp teeth.

He couldn’t move, couldn’t breathe, couldn’t even manage to open his eyes. All he could do was stare. Everything started turning cold, numb, as if the ground would give out from under him.

As if he was drowning.

Then it moved, its head tilting to the side.

“Vaquero.” Its voice was worse, a whispering echo that crawled around in his brain like a louse.

“Master McCree!” Clementine’s scream dragged him back to reality. He was able to open his eyes and only see the concrete wall across from him.

Then he heard two clicks. He turned his head to see himself staring down the barrels of two shotguns.

“Howdy, ingrate.”

Chapter End Notes

Told you

Suck even more cause next update won't be for a few days. Part 7 is done but it burned me out a bit I gotta take a break

BRIGHT SIDE is it wound up at 8 parts long so you'll be getting a lot of fun stuff when it comes around, until then ur welcome to scream at me

Also feel free to scream at my on my tumblr (ceata88) or ask questions even. If it's not spoiler related I'm down.
Honestly I love u guys so have this a day earlier than planned

Some news: It's November now, and I plan on trying to binge write a novella and finish the first draft within the month, so I apologize if updates wind up a little slower. Gonna try and balance it out but huff

But ey have fun with this, this part has 8 sections, it's hecka long and hecka stressful so hahaha...

The blast from the shotguns was so loud it made McCree dizzy, even as he barely ducked out of the way. He rolled out of the alley and took off down the road, Peacekeeper in hand.

Reaper, damn it. Reaper was here?

Reaper had a spirit?

That must be who it was attached to. That owly looking mask finally made sense.

It wasn’t the first time their team had run into him. Usually it was by coincidence, although the mercenary took the chance to aim for their lives. The last time it happened Lena barely made it out.

He tapped his comm back on as he kept running. Voices immediately bombarded him, Fareeha demanding his location and Winston scolding him.

“Reaper,” he shouted into it. “Reaper’s the one who was damn waiting for us.”

There was a breath of silence.

“McCree get out of there now.” Winston said.

“Where are you?” Fareeha shouted.

He was about to give his location, studying the street sign to give out something more concrete, when a flash of smoke caught his eye. Suddenly Reaper was on his left, firing out another shot.

McCree blocked it with his prosthetic, but the blast was strong. Even without nerves he can feel the circuitry screaming.

Reaper vanished again, his laughter making the smoke jerk around. The damn bastard was taunting him.

McCree couldn’t stay out here. He needed to be in a more open space. There may be less cover but there’d also be less places for Reaper to hide. There’s also be less obstacles for Fareeha to deal with, if she found him.
“McCree,” her voice came in as a reminder.

“I’m okay,” he kept running. He had to keep running. “Bastard’s just fuckin’ with me right now.”

He could hear Reaper laughing. He snapped his Peacekeeper out but saw nothing and he kept
going.

Eventually he broke out of the streets into a market square. A few people were there, walking
around in the early dawn. McCree didn’t hesitate to raise his gun and fire a round. The people
screamed and scattered.

“Such a hero.” Reaper spoke behind him.

McCree whirled around, lifting his left arm, praying his guess was right when the next two shots
rang out.

His guess wasn’t right, but suddenly the metal wasn’t his only shield. A wall of flames erupted
from the ground, stopping the bullets dead in their tracks. His eyes widened, the dangerous heat from
it burning at his cheeks.

That was new.

“So you’re finally learning how to use that thing,” Reaper said.

McCree’s initial reply was his Peacekeeper. The second he aimed the gun the flames vanished. He
fired off two rounds but they predictably missed. Bullets rarely did much to a damn cloud.

But he kept his eye on the black mist as it drifted around him. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Do you really think I didn’t see it earlier? Wondered where all your fire power was.”

He solidified for a moment, and McCree prepared himself to shoot, but then he dissolved into the
air again.

“Certainly makes killing you a little more difficult.”

The smoke drifted onto the cobblestone, separating until it vanished between the cracks. McCree
stumbled back and tried to get a read on where he was.

And what did that mean anyway? How the hell did Reaper know what Clementine was capable
of? His mouth was going dry as the thought swirled in his mind.

How did he...

A gun clicked behind him.

He turned. Too slow. The round cut across his cheek, burning his skin. He ignored the instinct to
cover the injury as he raised his peacemaker. Return fire didn’t injure the ghost but at least it forced
him to back off.

A different warmth covered his cheek, brushing the pain away. He could almost feel Clementine
draping her wings around his shoulders, pressing his nerves down.

“Calm down. I know you can find a way to defeat him.”

He could. He’d seen what they had done on the previous missions. He remembered what Winston told him. The trouble was finding the resources. All he had out here was his gun and a couple of flashbangs.

His gaze darted down to them, resting at his hip. The weapons themselves wouldn’t be very potent but maybe he could give them a little more juice.

No time to plan, smoke swarmed around him before materializing on his left. Both shotguns were aimed directly at his torso.

McCree snatched up the flashbang, holding it between them as he put as much heat into his hand as he could muster.

Light and sound exploded from it, so much that McCree flew backwards. His vision was spotty, ears ringing and he barely registered it as he rolled across the ground. His prosthetic hand was still intact—durable thing—but he could see the singe marks along the metal. The sparking from the shotgun round only got worse.

His limbs were shaking as he forced himself up. His brain pounded against his skull and he couldn’t make his vision focus.

Maybe not his best idea.

He glanced over to see Reaper reforming, or trying to. The ghost was growling as his body flashed, parts of him shifting in and out even as he grew more solid. Even then he managed to pull out another set of shotguns, taking aim.

“Stay down,” he said.

McCree considered telling him to “go to hell” but he was fairly certain that’s where he came from.

Something whistled through the air and one of Fareeha’s rockets hit the ground in front of Reaper. The explosion sent up dust and gravel. The noise did nothing to aid McCree’s violent headache.

But he didn’t look away, he didn’t dare. Fareeha hovered above the square, her launcher still aimed. Reaper’s black smoke mixed in with the dust before swirling around, scattering the dirt as he reformed.

“McCree,” she shouted. “Get out of here now.”

He would have taken her up on that, knowing she could easily fly to avoid most of Reaper’s attacks.

But then Reaper aimed anyway, smoke curling around the handles of his shot guns.

“Se viene la muerte.”

McCree’s heart stopped at the phrase, but he had no chance to shout a warning. Both of the
shotguns went off, smoke chasing after the bullets. It twisted and swelled, shifting into a pair of wings.

It was fast, too fast. Fareeha tried to launch herself out of it’s path, but the owl struck hard. It seemed to swallow her for a moment, nothing but a mass of black before suddenly she was falling. Her launcher fell from her grip.

“Pharah!” McCree screamed, hoping she’d wake up. Hoping she’d launch herself back into the air. Hoping she’d–

Her armor covered body slammed into the ground with the sound of shattering concrete.

Something broke in his chest. His vision was swimming again and his breathing came up short.

Then his attention was drawn up. The owl wasn’t gone. The smoke made beast had turned around, its eyes black and hollow this time, as it headed straight for him.

He had to stop it. How? How the hell did you stop a rampaging spirit?

“How the hell do I do that?”

He didn’t know what that meant. He’d fired his gun plenty of times. But as he lifted his weapon he thought about Hanzo. He thought about how the dragons would spark as they emerged from his tattoo. He thought about how they curled around the arrow, waiting to be unleashed.

He thought about it as he took aim, as he let fire shoot down from his shoulders to his fingertips. The world slowed down for a moment. He took a long breath as he aimed the barrel between the monster’s eyes. Two empty black pits stared back at him and the damn thing was smiling again.

“You know what time it is,” he said before he pulled the trigger.

Flames exploded from the revolver, venting out the sides before it followed the round to the target. The fire twirled into a vortex before taking shape, Clementine fanning out her wings and her tail. The bird let out a monstrous screech before the forces collided.

The smoke sparked and flashed as red and black melded together. Crackling filled the air as embers sputtered out like fireworks.

Then it all condensed before it flew out in a violent burst. McCree was forced to cover his eyes. The wind that rushed by his face was hot and dry.

When he looked back up both of the entities were gone.

“Clem? You there?”

“I am fine.” She reassured him. “But this is not over.”

Shit, Reaper, where was Reaper? McCree glanced around the plaza.
Another click sounded behind him.

“Nice trick, where did you learn that one?” Reaper taunted.

McCree spun around, at least to glare at him. Like hell he’d let himself die looking frightened.

Then something whizzed past his ear and struck Reaper in the neck. The mercenary staggered back, clutching at whatever it was. McCree didn’t have time to find out.

“Get down!” A new voice shouted from behind him. McCree didn’t bother to question it, he ducked and rolled to the side. He saw a trio of rockets fly by overhead, heard them make contact. Reaper’s scream was violent, angry, melting into a growl. McCree saw his smoke spark before it sunk down into the ground.

The ghost didn’t come back up.

The cowboy turned his head to see who fired the shot. It was a face he recognized only from news clips and security cameras. The visor was unmistakable.

The man who called himself Soldier 76, what was he doing here? He stood next to Fareeha, rifle still raised as an object glowed on the ground between them.

Fareeha.

Questions fled his mind in an instant as McCree shoved himself back up, sprinting across the square. The soldier did nothing apart from lower his rifle as he cowboy knelt on the ground.

“Pharah? ‘Manita?” He tried to ignore the broken cobblestones. He didn’t want to think about how hard the impact was. At least her armor was still intact. Perhaps it saved her? He tugged her helmet off either way, fingers trailing across her neck.

There was a steady pulse. She was breathing.

Only now did he pick up on the warm sensation coming from the object next to him, a biotic field. At least the soldier was helping in more ways than one.

McCree thought about questioning him, but he didn’t care right now. He lit a flame on his palm and pressed it to Fareeha’s forehead, unclear of how injured she was.

“Relax kid,” the man spoke. “She’ll be fine.”

McCree whirled around with a glare. “Don’t call me that. And who the hell are you supposed to be?”

“Do you really think you should worry about that right now?”

Something about this guy rubbed McCree the wrong way, twice over, but he also knew the guy was right. McCree tapped his comm to contact Lúcio or Winston.

Only to be met with the screaming of feedback.
He groaned and tore it out of his ear, looking it once over. The damn flashbang must have jacked it up somehow.

He shoved it in his pocket as he dug out Fareeha’s, hoping hers was still intact after the fall.

“Guys?” He said as soon as he put it on.

“Eastwood, where the hell are you?” Lúcio shouted. “Is Reaper still there?”

“Nah, he cleared out, but Pharah took a bit of a nasty fall. Can’t say how bad the damage is.”

“I’ve got Athena tracing your signal now.” Lena spoke up. “We’re on our way loves.”

McCree glanced back at Soldier 76. He considered asking more questions, recording the conversation, maybe snapping a photo, but he turned his attention back to Fareeha. If he needed to he could just hunt down the bastard later.

He knew how.

A hand on his shoulder made him jump. His gun was up and pointed at whoever was behind him.

The stranger had on a mask as well, covering their whole face. The shade of blue on their clothes was strangely familiar.

“Let me help,” their voice was distorted. They gestured toward Fareeha. “I have some medical supplies.”

McCree narrowed his eyes but he didn’t have a good reason to doubt them. These people had just saved their lives after all.

So he nodded, but he barely lowered his pistol as the stranger walked around and knelt down. They had some kind of syringe in their hand and McCree’s finger tensed against the trigger.

“Painkiller,” they held up their hands, not moving until McCree lowered his gun again.

He took a few moments to study this stranger over again. He couldn’t shake the familiar feeling gnawing at the back of his mind. They must have been the ones to shoot Reaper earlier, but with what? Most bullets went through him.

Then his gaze fell on the rifle slung across their back.

Sniper, that shade of blue, and the way their pinky curled out as they held the now empty syringe.

He almost dropped his gun. “Ana?”

The stranger flinched, unmoving for a few moments. Then there was a sigh as they put the syringe away, reaching up and taking off the mask.

“Hello, Jesse.” A familiar face, although it carried many more age lines and was missing an eye. Somehow the eyepatch suited her, the dark color contrasting her silver hair.

But in spite of its familiarity, McCree couldn’t help but feel like he was hallucinating. Ana was
dead. She died years ago.

“The hell?” He sputtered out and scrambled back, keeping his gun raised. “What the hell? Is this some kind of new damn trick? Because it’s not funny.”

Ana held up her hands, “Jesse-”

“You’re dead.” He raised his voice and got to his feet. “You’re supposed to be dead.”

“She’s not the only one.” Clementine suddenly spoke up.

McCree spun around, fixing his gaze on Soldier 76. The man was still staring at the spot where Reaper disappeared, or so it seemed. It was impossible to get a damn read on what he was thinking with that visor on.

Ana wasn’t the only one.

McCree took a deep breath and shut his eyes.

There it was, a wolf. The creature was much larger than he thought it’d be, towering over him. It’s fur was white, glowing like a full moon with a pair of yellow eyes staring down at him.

McCree gritted his teeth when he opened his eyes into a glare. “Jack.”

The man finally turned his head, and with how his eyebrows moved McCree could only assume he was glaring.

“One of you better tell me what the hell is going on.” He glanced back at Ana who’s hand rested on Fareeha’s cheek.

“This is why I said we shouldn’t get involved,” Jack spoke up.

“Oh what was I supposed to do, Jack.” Ana shot him a glare. “Just sit up there and let my kids get hurt? Are you insane?”

McCree was tempted to fire his gun to get their attention but he had only one round left. Better to save it in case he really needed it.

“Hey,” he shouted instead, forcing them both to look at him. “If neither of you feel like talking right now, maybe you’ll loosen up on the way back to headquarters.”

Jack snorted and turned away. “I’m not going back.”

“Like hell you ain’t.”

“What? Are you going to make me?” The man lifted his rifle. “I’d like to see you try.”

“You think you two can just fuck off and pretend to die?” McCree felt something hot spark along his collar. “The hell, you survive that shit and you don’t tell anyone? Do you have any fucking idea what happened to us?”

He turned his anger on Ana who met his gaze. “Did Fareeha know? Did she ever know? Hell,
you sent her that spirit just to convince us all you were dead right? You sent her a constant fucking reminder of what happened to you.”

Ana placed her hands in her lap. “I thought it would be better if—”

“If what? You up and fucked off out of our lives? Yeah, sure was better, with everything falling apart.”

“That wasn’t her fault,” Jack snapped back. “Now calm down kid.”

McCree moved when he turned, so that his peacemaker was pointed directly at Jack’s chin. “Don’t fucking call me that. I ain’t a damn kid anymore, and I certainly ain’t your kid.”

Jack didn’t move, didn’t flinch. McCree wished he had the ammo to send off a warning shot.

“You’re either coming with me to headquarters or I’m giving you a bullet wound to remember me by.”

“I’ll go,” Ana said as she stood up. “Just put your gun away.”

“Ana,” Jack said. “We don’t need to go anywhere.”

“Yes we do, Jack.” She crossed her arms. “Or at least I do. I came back on board because I wanted to help people, I wanted to help you, but they need my help as well.” She gestured to Fareeha and McCree. “It isn’t fair to keep them in the dark like this, even if we don’t stay there.”

The silence was unbearable. McCree ground his teeth together, wishing he could kick something, shoot something, but he didn’t move. Eventually he could hear the sound of Lena’s aircraft approaching.

“I’m going, Jack.” She said. “I’m going to explain this mess. I’m going to take care of my daughter... like I should have done ages ago.”

The aircraft was almost above them now. McCree still hadn’t moved. His jaw hurt from gritting his teeth but at this point it was the only way to keep himself from crying in frustration. Who the hell did they think they were? Did they really have no damn idea how much damage they left behind?

“Lower your gun, McCree.” Jack’s commander voice came out. “I’ll go.”

He ignored the urge to kick the man in the shin, just like he had all those years ago when they first met, but he backed down. He didn’t say a word.

He didn’t say anything when he picked Fareeha up from the ground. He didn’t say anything when Lúcio was asking about the two strangers. He didn’t say anything at Lena’s shocked expression when she saw Ana, or when that face became lost and confused staring at Jack.

He didn’t say anything. He just sat in the back with Fareeha’s head on his lap, letting Lúcio look her over as well. Every now and then he’d feel Jack’s eyes on him and he’d shoot the man a glare.

Just something to let him know this wasn’t over.
Y’all thought McCree was mad earlier....

Also added another tag since it's relevant now

Fareeha did wake up on the flight back. For a brief moment McCree was delighted, smiling at her, asking how she felt.

Then Ana had to ask the same thing.

Fareeha stared in shock for a while. Then she complained about a headache before burying her face in McCree’s stomach. He just kept a protective hand on her arm, not saying anything even when he could feel tears staining his shirt.

McCree couldn’t actually get a read on how she felt about it, since she allowed Ana to help her into the base. With her expression though, he took a guess that she was just humoring her mother for now. Fareeha had usually been the kind of person who could pocket her anger, pull it out at a better time.

He always envied that.

The walk inside the base was tense and unbearable. Lúcio fiddled with his sound player, tempted to turn it on but always stopping himself as he glanced between his teammates. Between McCree leaving scorch marks on the ground and Lena’s vacant stare it was obvious something was very wrong.

The tension only got worse when they got inside. Plenty of people were there to greet them but many of them came to a halt at the sight of the two strangers. Genji’s hand actually moved to his sword for a brief moment. Torbjörn stumbled, eyes wide, before he turned and took off in the opposite direction. Winston just stood there, glasses sliding down his nose, casting Lena a few worried glances.

The only one to speak was Hana, lounging on top of her mech.

“Who are the grandparents?” She frowned.

“I’m not that old,” Jack mumbled out.

McCree almost laughed, wishing Hana would egg him on some more.

“Oh nonsense Jack, have you seen yourself lately?” Ana said.

The use of his name made the tension rise two more levels.

“No, Ana, I haven’t.” He let out an aggravated sigh. “Quit bringing it up.”
McCree wanted to ask what that meant, but he had a pretty good guess already as he kept studying Jack’s visor.

“Fareeha!”

Angela’s voice cut into the tension as the doctor charged into the room. McCree could see her stumble, still recovering from her injury, but he didn’t dare interrupt her pursuit.

Fareeha pulled herself out of Ana’s grip, letting her girlfriend catch her instead. Tears soaked Angela’s face and she could barely get a word in, touching Fareeha’s cheeks before pulling her into a kiss.

McCree pulled his hat down as he smiled, glad that the two of them were still able to do that.

He glanced at the entrance to see Hanzo standing there, arms crossed. Had he followed Angela in? The archer met his gaze, raising an eyebrow.

McCree just sighed. He couldn’t even begin to explain this mess.

“Your injuries,” Angela was practically gasping for air as she spoke. “I’ve got to check your injuries.”

Fareeha actually smiled. “At this rate we’re both going to have back problems before our forties.”

“Don’t joke about that, come on.” Angela pulled Fareeha’s arm around her shoulder and immediately cringed.

McCree rolled his eyes, about to go over and help but Lúcio beat him to it, taking most of Fareeha’s weight as the three of them headed toward the medbay. McCree decided to let him go. Hardly anyone looked like they wanted to be in this room right now.

As soon as Fareeha was gone the tense silence returned. Hana looked annoyed by all of it.

“Is anyone going to answer my question?” She pouted from her seat.

Winston cleared his throat and adjusted his glasses. “Ana Amari and Jack Morrison, or so it seems.”

“What?” Hana sat up at that. “For real?”

Ana’s laugh was nervous when she waved. “We have some explaining to do.”

“Got that right,” McCree adjusted his hat. “Let’s start with how you’re not dead.”

“Never died,” Jack’s answer was short. “Just pretended we did.”

“What for?”

“Personal reasons.”

“I believed I failed.” Ana moved herself between them. “I foolishly believed that you all would be
“The hell?” McCree spat back. “Did you really- nah, nah.” He held up his hands and took a step back. “Know what, you can try explaining that to Fareeha first.”

He saw Ana’s gaze drop to the floor.

“The past aside,” Winston cut in. “What are you two doing now?”

“The short version is looking for answers.” Ana fiddled with her gun strap. “Or at least that’s what Jack’s doing. I hopped along for the ride because I can’t let this fool run around by himself.”

Jack snorted in response, but didn’t argue.

“Why didn’t you inform any of us sooner?”

Before they could get an answer to that there was a thunder of footsteps. Reinhardt burst into the hanger, his armorer Brigitte right behind him. The man skidded to a halt, eyes wide as they stared across the room.

Ana smiled, “Reinhardt.”

The sound of his name made the Crusader visibly flinch. His eyes were wild, fearful, and his breathing picked up.

Then suddenly he was running out of the room as quickly as he came. Brigitte glanced at them all before heading after him.

Everyone in the room stared at the door, until Hana turned around with a glare. She crossed her arms and even pointed at Ana before getting up and heading out too.

The tension rose up another level and McCree could practically feel it on his shoulders now. His jaw was hurting again and he really wished he could get hold of a cigar.

He almost didn’t catch Hanzo stepping up next to him, stare fixed on him. McCree studied his eyes for a while, trying to figure out what the archer was thinking.

The very slight tilted of his head gave it away, a habit he assumed only Genji had.

‘Are you okay?’, that’s what he was asking.

McCree wanted to nod but instead he just shrugged, glancing back at Ana and Jack.

The sniper sighed and put a hand on her head. “This is quite a mess we’ve created, huh?”

McCree couldn’t quite place what snapped. All he knew is the tension in his shoulders vanished and rushed through his veins like a firecracker. He could taste smoke on the roof of his mouth, heat building up in his chest before he spun around.

“The hell did you think would happen, Ana?” The volume of his own voice surprised him but he didn’t stop. “Even if you wanted to up and leave you couldn’t be bothered to tell us you were alive? He had to bury all three of you!”
Her eyes were wide, but fixated on his shoulder for some reason.

“And where were you?” Jack growled. “Couldn’t be bothered to at least come back for a funeral?”

McCree’s breath caught for a moment, the taste of charcoal spreading up to his nose. “You watch your goddamn mouth, Jack. You have no idea what happened.”

“And neither do you,” Jack shouted and almost stepped forward if Ana didn’t block him. “So I suggest you shut up and pay attention, kid.”

“I said don’t call me that.” This time he could see the flames spark and explode from his shoulders down his arm. He glanced to see them twisting violently in the air.

“McCree,” Hanzo hesitated but reached out, touching his arm where the flames hadn’t appeared. “Calm yourself.”

McCree didn’t want to calm down, he really didn’t, but he at least tried to take a few deep breathes to banish the flames on his arms. His exhale was shaky, and he could see a stream of smoke float up from his lips.

“Actually, that begs the question.” Jack straightened up, out of Ana’s grip. “Why did you come back now? Do you really think all of this is going to turn out differently from before?” He turned his head in Winston’s direction. “And why is he in charge?”

Lena—who during most of the conversation had been standing idly by, staring at the floor—suddenly straightened up. She glared at Jack, teeth bared before she pointed at him. “Hey, don’t you dare talk about Winston like that.”

McCree agreed, more smoke flooding into his mouth. “He’s in charge because he called us all here. He’s in charge because he keeps everything under control.” Heat shot down his arms. He heard Hanzo mutter something in Japanese. “He’s in charge because he deserves to be, and if you have a damn problem with it maybe you shouldn’t have played dead!”

He could feel the flames climbing up his neck, along the side of his face. The tips of his fingers burned and he let them rest on his gun.

There was still one round left.

“McCree!” If Winston’s shout wasn’t enough to snap him out of it his fist slamming against the floor certainly did. “Stand down.”

He gritted his teeth, eyes fixed on Jack who met him with an empty stare. God damn he wanted to rip that visor off, see if there was a single line of regret in his eyes. Who the hell did he think he was?


His hand moved away from his gun and his shoulders dropped as he exhaled, a cloud of smoke escaping from his lips. He spun around on his heel, storming off in the direction of the shooting range. He needed something to blow off this steam, literally.
He barely noticed Hanzo following behind.
Unloading two rounds of ammo did little to quell McCree’s anger. The worst part was he could physically feel it burning under his skin, over his skin. Flames still popped and curled around his limbs, leaving black marks on the floor and the walls he stood close to. He could see it leaving marks on the handle of his gun.

Damn all this. What the hell?

He didn’t know what to do. He wanted to scream, shoot something properly, shoot Jack. Fuck Jack. Who the hell did he think he was? First he comes back from the dead, talks about shit he doesn’t understand and then goes and talks down to Winston?

*Fuck* Jack.

He put his gun down, at the risk of hurling it across the room and damaging it further. He didn’t dare leave either seeing how high the flames were going. The base probably wouldn’t appreciate having to evacuate due to a fire.

But the anger kept burning away. Why did Ana pretend to be dead back then? Fareeha needed her. He needed her. Jack wanted to know why he ran off? Because he had nowhere else to turn to.

Gabe had turned into someone he didn’t know anymore. Genji left long before he did.

There was nowhere else to go.

He pressed his head against the wall, fighting back the angry tears at the corners of his eyes. A part of him did realize that Jack was right, that he was just as much a runaway as the rest of them, but at least he didn’t play dead. Anyone could have contacted him if they needed to. They all at least knew he was alive.

When he heard the door open he snatched his gun back up, pointing it.

Hanzo glared back at him. “Put that away.”

McCree exhaled, lowering it and putting it back on the table. “What do you want?”

“It seemed unwise to leave you alone.” The archer glanced up. “I’m guessing you’re not used to having better control of your emotions.”

McCree growled and raised his shoulders. “Not in the fucking mood.”

“I can see that.”
“Don’t sass me.” He spun around.

“McCree, you need to calm yourself.”

“Don’t give me that shit Hanzo. I don’t want to calm myself. I got every damn right to be pissed.”

“You do, but letting your emotions run wild like this is dangerous.”

“Then leave,” McCree crossed his arms, watching the fire on them meld together. “I didn’t fuckin’ ask you to be in here.”

Hanzo let out a frustrated sigh, stepping closer. “McCree, you’ve started learning how to use your abilities. They react to your emotions, potentially more than others might. They’re reacting violently to your anger.”

“Yeah, I gathered that,” he looked back at the archer. “Why can’t you just let them be.”

“Because it is not that simple,” Hanzo glared.

“You sure about that? You seem to do a fine job of it.” McCree leaned forward, but decided to stay far enough back that the fire couldn’t reach him. “Cause bottling up your emotions is so damn healthy.”

The archer didn’t back down. “Says the man who refused to tell even his closest friends what happened to his arm.”

“Low blow, Hanzo. You told anyone what happened to Genji yet?”

The archer flinched.

“Yeah, I thought not, ‘cause it’s none of their fucking business. I wanna be pissed off right now so leave me alone.”

“No.” Hanzo stepped closer, hovering dangerously close to the flames. “I refuse to allow this to get beyond your control.”

McCree saw something move along Hanzo’s hair. Looking closer he could see sparks and thin lines of electricity dancing along the black strands. Some of them moved down across his shoulder, sparking brighter over the tattoo.

A part of McCree wondered what it would take to make the archer blow his lid.

“Your fire is meant to heal, but right now it is causing damage, it is dangerous.” Hanzo crossed his arms again. “If you let it go like this it will only bring harm to others, and yourself.”

McCree sneered. “You know, Hanzo, it almost sounds like you’re speaking from experience.”

Hanzo’s eyes suddenly went wide, staring out past McCree, past the wall. The sparks on his skin fizzled out.

It took a moment for McCree to realize that was the wrong thing to say.
“Hanzo?” His flames evaporated immediately as fear clutched at his chest. “Hey, darlin’, are you-”

“It was an accident,” Hanzo stumbled back, now staring at the floor. His shoulders were shaking. “It was,” his voice gave way to Japanese. “It was never meant to be that way.”

“Hanzo?” McCree held up his hands as he stepped forward. He didn’t want to reach out and grab him. He knew that rarely ended well.

“I had my orders. I was bound to them, but I...” his words jumbled together again. “It never should have gone that far, never should have...”

The shaking got worse. When his back pressed against the wall he slid down it, hands against the sides of his face.

“Supposed to be quick...” he mumbled. “Supposed to...” his mother tongue came back up and kept on going. McCree could barely pick out enough words to make any sense of it. He caught Genji’s name, he caught the word dragon, he caught the word death.

“Hanzo?” McCree kept talking, not sure what else to do at the risk of making the flashback worse. “Darlin’ stop, you don’t have to tell me.”

The archer didn’t respond, curling up as he kept rambling on. His hands moved down to his arms, gripping the sleeve tight, too tight.

“Hanzo?” McCree decided to risk it. His fingers barely brushed over Hanzo’s knuckles before the archer’s hand snapped out, twisting his wrist. He cringed, but didn’t move. Genji had done far worse.

But at least the man was looking at him now, eyes lost. He loosened his grip bit by bit, his hand falling away.

Only then did McCree notice the faint burns lining his palm.

Shit, shit, did he do that?

“Damn Hanzo,” he mumbled. “I’m sorry.”

The archer didn’t respond apart from a shake of the head. He pulled his hand close, gaze moving to the side as he pulled his knees closer. McCree decided to back up, sitting on the floor across from him.

This was one hell of a mess he created.

“Sorry,” he repeated. “I didn’t mean to do that, any of that. Uh, you okay?” That was a stupid question.

Hanzo’s jaw tightened. “I am sorry for-”

“Oh hell no,” McCree cut in. “Don’t you do that shit too. You don’t need to apologize for that Hanzo. I wanna know if you’re okay.”
“I will be fine.”

He sighed, supposing that was the best answer he’d get for now. “Uh, do you want me to try fixing your hand? Or would you rather Angela do that.”

“Dr. Ziegler will surely have her hands full.”

“She’s always got time to help people. Lúcio’s up there too.” McCree ground his teeth together. “And it’d make sense that you wouldn’t want me to go anywhere near it.”

Hanzo finally looked at him. His gaze seemed to be empty but he eventually held out his palm.

A terrible blend of relief and fear washed over McCree as he moved closer again. He was glad Hanzo still trusted him enough but was worried he’d just fuck it up again.

No, he couldn’t let fear or anger get the better of him now.

He took off his glove before taking Hanzo’s hand with his left. He studied the burn for a moment, noting the patterns of the flames.

“Guessing that happened when I flared up?”

“Indeed.”

“Why didn’t you say so earlier?” He lit the flame in his palm. “Would have sobered me up real quick.”

“I... did not think it would concern you.”

McCree frowned as he turned his gaze up. “The hell? Come on Hanzo, you don’t still think I don’t give a shit about you, do you?”

Hanzo shifted, almost pulling his hand away. “There was no reason to consider otherwise.”

McCree rolled his eyes and slowly slid their palms together. “You can’t share Debbie cakes and your feelings with someone and not be friends with them on some level.”

Hanzo tensed under the touch but relaxed a moment later. Without showing any signs of pain, McCree pressed down harder, letting his fingers curl over and touch the back of his hand.

“You don’t hate me.” The archer stated.

“No, I don’t hate you.”

“But with what I did to Genji-”

“Genji forgave you, I already told you. I have no business being mad in his place. Doesn’t matter if you did something awful before, you can make up for it. You’re making up for it. Damn, Hanzo, you’ve been nothing but helpful ever since you found out about this bird.”

They both fell silent, but McCree could still feel some sense of communication. He tried to focus on his work, wondering when the archer had become this important to him. Allies? Yes. Friends?
Why not. But he couldn’t keep ignoring the sensation of something else humming in his chest.

“Sorry, again.” McCree smiled. “Promised I wouldn’t burn you, but so much for that.”

“And now you’re healing fire with fire.”

“I hope I am.” McCree pulled back a bit to see the injury was fading away. “Hey, I am! Would you look at-”

Hanzo’s other hand snapped out before he could blink. It clutched at McCree’s wrist, pressing their palms back together.

“Hanzo?”

The archer shook a bit before he loosened his grip. “I am sorry, I...” The shaking got worse. He didn’t say anything else as he held McCree’s hand between his.

“Hey, it’s okay.”

“It is not.”

“Yeah it is. Nothing wrong with blowing a little steam.” McCree kept his flame going. “And between you and me, I was even worse. Tried to act tough but as soon as someone knocked down my defenses, well...”

“Did that happen often?” Hanzo’s voice cracked.

“Well, Gabe always knew how. Your brother too sometimes. Angie made me cry once too, she was apologizing about it the whole time.” He laughed at the memory now, the image of Angela fretting over him after just tearing him a new one for his careless injury. He’d never seen her mood change so fast.

There was silence for a moment, Hanzo still fighting back tears, glaring at the floor.

“It was meant to be quick,” he mumbled.

“What? Hanzo you don’t need to-”

The archer shook his head. “The order was simply to kill him. I tried to bargain with him instead. It turned into an argument.” His nails dug into McCree’s skin. “We fought. It escalated. I let my rage consume my thoughts, and when the dragons emerged...”

McCree swallowed. He’d seen Genji’s scars before, brief glances of his schematics. He had a pretty good idea.

But he quickly settled his fear.

“I couldn’t call them back.” The tears escaped this time. “I couldn’t...”

“Hey,” McCree brushed his left hand over Hanzo’s knuckles. “It’s all right now. Genji’s fine.”

Hanzo sniffed before he frowned. “He is a cyborg.”
McCree shrugged. “Okay, sure, but he’s fine. He’s alive, and he’s damn happier than I’ve ever seen him that’s for sure. I’m not gonna say you didn’t fuck up but you can come back from it. He did.”

Silence again. Hanzo squeezed his eyes shut as he pulled McCree’s hand closer. The cowboy’s knuckles brushed against his forehead.

McCree didn’t speak or move. He let Hanzo cry, clinging to his hand like an anchor.

You’ll be okay. He thought as the glow from the flames flickered. We’ll be okay.

There was no telling how much time passed. Both of them stayed silent as Hanzo’s tears slowed down. McCree resisted the urge to brush them away.

“Howz,” he said. “Glad you like the fire, but my arm’s going numb.”

The archer’s eyes widened as he let go. “I am sorry.”

“I don’t mind,” McCree rolled his shoulder to get the blood flowing. “You wanna go see Genji or something?”

“Why would I?”

“So you can see he’s okay. That he doesn’t hate you. Whatever you need.” McCree shrugged. “Just a suggestion.”

“Perhaps that would be a good idea.”

McCree smiled as he stood up, holding out his hand. “Sure it is, but if you change your mind that’s okay too.”

Hanzo took McCree’s hand and let himself be pulled up. There was an odd pause before he let go.

McCree grabbed his gun, picking at the singe marks and muttering about cleaning it. Neither of them said a word on the way upstairs. McCree sent Genji a message, giving him a very brief summary. The ninja said to meet him at his room.

McCree glanced back at Hanzo who had his arms crossed again. He was shaking as well, but looking closer McCree realized he was shivering.

Without a second thought he tugged off his serape and draped it over Hanzo’s shoulders.

The archer glanced at it before giving him a confused glare.

“You seem cold, darlin’.”

“It is... jarring, the contrast between the air and your flames.”

McCree decided to take that as a compliment and kept his hands out in case the archer returned the garment. Instead his fingers curled around the material as he pulled it tighter.
Genji was waiting outside the door, his visor flashing when he saw them. He stared at Hanzo for a while and when they got close enough he lifted up a corner of the serape.

The ninja pointed to it, “What?”

“He was cold,” McCree shrugged.

Genji paused before he let go of the material and straightened up. “Hanzo, are you okay?”

The archer cringed for a moment, gaze moving to the side. “I will be fine.”

“I’m sure you will, but that doesn’t answer my question as to the present.”

Hanzo lifted his shoulders so the serape covered his mouth and mumbled something in Japanese.

Genji’s visor flickered with amusement as he nodded.

“Well,” McCree held up his hands and took a step back. “I’ll leave you guys to it. Take care of him, yeah?”

“Jesse,” Genji straightened up. “Are you okay?”

“Huh? Why do you ask?”

The ninja crossed his arms. “Many of us witnessed your ah... fireworks going off in the launch bay.”

McCree cringed. “Yeah, sorry about that. I’ll have to apologize to Winston at some point too, I’m sure.”

Genji shook his head. “You’re just as awful at dodging the question as my brother.”

“Fine, I’m not okay.” McCree shoved his hands in his pockets. “But I’ll figure it out. Worry about one of us at a time, eh?”

The ninja pointed at him. “If you think I won’t find you later, you’re sorely mistaken.”

“Oh darlin’ I have no doubt about that.” He flashed a grin before he turned.

“McCree.”

He looked back at Hanzo. “Yes?”

The archer was holding out his serape. “Don’t forget this.”

“I didn’t, hang onto it until tomorrow for me, yeah?” He winked out of habit and tried to hide it with a tip of his hat. He didn’t miss Genji pretending to swoon.

He was going to get an earful about this tomorrow.
McCree figured he should go to his room, get some rest, hide somewhere where Jack and Ana wouldn’t bother him, but instead he was heading to the med bay. He knew Fareeha was in good hands with Angela, but the doctor also needed her rest.

Besides, he couldn’t think of a better person to talk to about this mess.

He was surprised when he couldn’t find Angela at least wandering the hall, but Lúcio was there, eyes fixed on his music player. In fact he almost ran into McCree, jumping when he realized the cowboy was there.

“Howdy Lúcio.”

“Hey Eastwood,” the musician gave a light smile.

“You fillin’ in for the doc?”

“For now, yeah, she strained herself.” His smile widened as he rolled his eyes. “I was going to ask her if I could hang out here anyway.”

“You okay?”

Lúcio paused, fingers tapping against the device. “Shaken up, I guess. Our job almost went south there.”

“Sorry about that.”

He shook his head. “I have a feeling if you hadn’t run out there then Reaper would have found us anyway, Ashleigh as well.”

Oh, right, her, somehow her presence had completely skipped McCree’s mind. “Where is she anyway?”

“Guest room, along with... uh those other two.” Lúcio cringed a bit.

McCree almost smiled. “Not a fan of them?”

“I don’t know them,” he scanned through his music player. “But Hana’s been texting me about Reinhardt. Genji texted me about you. I heard Fareeha talking to Angela too. It sounds like a mess.”

“Yeah, but it’s not your mess. Don’t stress yourself out about it.”
Lúcio’s eyes moved up into a glare. “Hey, if anyone makes my friends upset it becomes my mess.”

“What are you gonna do then? Blast Jack’s room with some music?”

Lúcio pursed his lips. “It’s not a bad idea.”

McCree laughed, “Well I won’t stop you, but right now I need to talk to Fareeha. She up?”

“Yeah, she’s alright. Just two rooms down.” The musician pointed.

“Thanks,” McCree tipped his hat as he walked past. “Oh, and by the way?”

“Huh?”

“If you’re going to do that to Jack, I suggest looking up a band called Linkin Park. He hates their music.”

Lúcio flashed a grin. “You got it, Eastwood.”

McCree made sure to knock before he entered the room. Fareeha was leaning back on her bed, eyes closed. He couldn’t tell if she was asleep.

But she opened her eyes, glancing over to him. Tension seemed to rush out of her shoulders.

“Hola, ‘manita.”

She nodded, “Hola.”

“Mind if I come in?”

She shook her head no, rubbing her eyes and trying to sit up.

“What’s the damage?” McCree tugged at the visitor’s chair before sitting down.

“Mostly bruising, two broken ribs.”

He flinched, “Ouch, you didn’t notice that earlier?”

She sighed, “My mom’s painkillers are legendary. Either way my armor took most of the damage. Uncle Torb’s going to have a heck of a time repairing it.”

“Honestly, thank goodness for that.” McCree leaned back and propped his feet up on the edge of the bed. “When that thing hit you... I thought you were dead before you hit the ground.”

“It felt that way,” she twisted the sheets in her grip. “It was cold. Smelled like blood. It felt like it was pulling the air right out of my lungs before I blacked out.”

He sighed and tried to push the image out of his mind. “How are you holding up otherwise?”

“What do you mean?”
“You pissed off?”

Her eyes narrowed. “Yeah, you?”

“Youp.”

There was a pause. McCree listened to the bed creak under the weight of his boots. “Your mom talk to you?”

“She tried. I essentially told her in our language to fuck off.”

McCree chuckled, “I’d probably tell her the same thing right about now.”

“I’ll have to talk to her eventually.” Fareeha leaned her head back. “When I’m less angry.”

He hummed in agreement, tempted to pull out a cigar, but he knew Angela would carry him out on a stretcher if he did. Instead he opted to hum, tapping out a rhythm on the arm of the chair.

“Jesse,” Fareeha spoke up. “I’ve been wondering something.”

“What’s that?”

“If my mom is alive, if Jack is alive then... do you wonder if Gabriel is too?”

His tapping stopped. His chest tightened. McCree could feel his vision going hazy for a moment.

“If he is,” he mumbled. “He better have a really damn good reason for not letting us know.”

He felt something shift in the back of his mind, a feeling of unease that he was fairly certain wasn’t his. He tried to pick at it, only for that wall to show up again.

“Want me to bring you some Debbie cakes next time?” He offered.

“Do you have any left?”

“I’ll get some more, no big deal.” He smiled at her.

“Get the crunchy ones, what are they called?”

“Star Crunch,” McCree stood up. “You got it. Need anything else?”

Fareeha shook her head. “No, Angela’s got most of it covered, when she gets better.”

He smiled before he leaned over and kissed her temple. “Te quiero, ‘manita.’”

“Love you too,” she said. “So don’t beat yourself up too bad.”

McCree only shrugged as he left the room. The hallway was empty now, although he could hear the faint sounds of Lúcio’s music player coming from Angela’s office. It was rare for her to let people in there without her around, but he imagined Lúcio must have earned it.
Before he could hit the button for the elevator the doors opened. Winston stood on the other side.

McCree covered his nerves with a tip of his hat. “Howdy there, sir.”

“McCree,” Winston sighed. “Glad I caught you, Lúcio said you were here.”

“On my way out, did you need something down here?”

Winston motioned for McCree to hop on. He did so, hands jammed in his pocket. He was so focused on staring at his boots he forgot to pick a floor number.

Winston got it for him.

“Uh, thanks,” he grinned. “So, what did you need me for?”

“First of all,” the scientist snorted. “I understand that you’re upset by all this, but I never want to see you losing your temper like that again. Understood?”

McCree flinched, “Yessir.”

“That being said,” he adjusted his glasses and cleared his throat. “I uh, wanted to thank you for backing me up. I’m never sure if I’m doing this job right.”

“Come on big guy,” the cowboy slumped against the wall. “There’s no such thing as a perfect leader, not even Gabe was. Honestly? I like how you run things around here. Feels more like a team and less like an army.”

“I appreciate it. Third order of business, has Ana spoken to you yet?”

McCree tensed up. “No sir, why do you ask?”

“Said she was going to try to apologize individually, and... I’m curious about information, to be honest.”

“You ain’t talked to her yet?”

“Oh I did, her and Jack, mostly her. She reported on what they’ve been up to. Gathering information, stopping gangs and terrorists along the way, nothing that unusual.”

The elevator door opened. McCree stepped out but leaned against the doorframe to keep it from closing. “If that’s the case, why so curious?”

“I’m pretty sure you already have a good guess as to why.”

He pressed his lips together, gaze moving to the side. There was a question that had been bugging him for a while. Why were they there? It was the first time he encountered either of them, so it seemed unlikely they were tracking Overwatch activity. There’s no way it was a coincidence either. They could have possibly been after the same target, information on Talon, but how did they know Ashleigh had it?

“Did they say anything about Reaper?” McCree kept his gaze on the wall.
“Not much. They know he’s a mercenary, frequently hired by Talon but not working for them directly. They’ve had a few runs ins with him.”

McCree snorted. “‘Run ins’? Sorry but I find that unlikely.”

“Why’s that?”

“The two of them were in town with us for a reason. Can’t be tracking Overwatch, considering how much Jack doesn’t care, and I doubt they knew about Ashleigh.”

Winston didn’t reply, he just waited for McCree to continue.

“They weren’t following information or Overwatch, they were following Reaper. I don’t think their ‘run ins’ were much of a chance either. I think they know exactly who he is.”

“I thought the same thing. I was hoping she would tell you.”

“Maybe she will. If she does I’ll be sure to report it, boss.”

The scientist cringed. “Ugh, don’t call me that either. It’s worse than Commander.”

McCree laughed, “Then quit calling me McCree off the field. It’s my codename.”

“It’s your last name.”

He kept smiling as he took a step back. “No, my full name is Jesse McCree Amari Reyes, didn’t you get the memo?”

Winston rolled his eyes. “Go get some rest, Jesse. And by the way, next time you want cookies be sure to ask.”

He flinched. “Ratted out again.”

“I have cameras all over the base.”

“Aright, alright, sorry sir.” He tapped his hat as the doors shut before heading to his room. He needed to rest, but he wasn’t looking forward to the dreams that would follow.
Ey Hanzo's here, get to meet some dragons too

Hanzo was having a bit of trouble focusing.

Not even his favorite spot on the roof seemed to quiet his thoughts. At least it wasn’t the same torrent as yesterday, but many of them hadn’t left.

Talking to Genji helped, although his younger brother started the conversation by teasing him.

“So, you got his serape?”

“Is that what it’s called?” Hanzo rubbed the material between his fingers. It smelled like whisky and cigar smoke, but was somehow warmer than anything else.

“My oh my, nice going brother.”

He frowned, just now noticing Genji’s tone. “What do you mean?”

“He frowned, just now noticing Genji’s tone. “What do you mean?”

“Hanzo, Jesse barely lets anyone touch that serape, much less wear it. I only got away with it once because he thought my impression of him was funny.”

He tried not to dwell on that thought, on why the cowboy would lend him something so precious. He returned it the next morning during breakfast and McCree took it back with a smile, as if it wasn’t unusual.

He asked McCree how he was doing. The cowboy immediately changed the subject.

Hanzo decided to give him his space.

But it didn’t keep the man out of his thoughts. He’d never seen McCree get that angry before, or felt it.

Hanzo glanced down at his palm. The skin was completely clean by now, as if the injury had never happened, but he remembered it.

He supposed he was glad that nothing worse happened.

The archer glared before taking a deep breath and shutting his eyes. He needed to put the cowboy out of his mind, focus, meditate. But even forgetting about this morning his mind drifted to last night.

It had been a pleasant dream for once, something that hadn’t occurred in ages. Most nights he was lucky to dream of nothing at all. He couldn’t remember the location, some kind of street shop. Genji and McCree were there, laughing about something or another.
But when Hanzo moved to join them the dragons tore it to shreds. Lightning cut into the scenery, distorting it back into the image of his home.

It had been raining that day.

“Brother?”

Hanzo opened his eyes, forcing himself to focus on the clouds lining the sky. He didn’t need to get lost in that memory again.

At this point there was only one other option for clearing his head, although it wasn’t ideal.

He shut his eyes again and focused on his breathing. Even with everything picking at his mind he ignored it, tried to imagine the sound of rushing water.

Eventually he could feel the spray of it on his face, a light breeze blowing his hair. He opened his eyes to see his mindscape, in his usual spot no less. He sat atop a rock that rested in the center of a river. The churning water reflected the night sky above it, a full moon in the center of the sky. Hanzo let his eyes follow the flow, down its twists and turns. The river never ended, he knew, he had tried to walk alongside it once.

The dragons emerged from the water, twirling around each other like they always did. Their eyes were sharp, fangs bared as they circled him.

More like vultures than dragons.

“Been a while,” Tsuki spoke first, she always did.

“Brave of you, coming here.” Umi growled, his claws scraping along the rock.

Hanzo snorted. “Perhaps it would not be as long if you were more open to conversation.”

Umi snapped at him once. “You know why we don’t.”

“Traitor,” Tsuki hummed.

“And yet you still obey my call.” He raised an eyebrow.

“Bound to it.”

“Bound to you.”

They both flew away from him, spiraling along the river.

Hanzo sighed, looking down at the churning water. “How long will this go on?”

“Forever,” Umi growled.

“Who knows.” Tsuki sighed. “You made us attack your brother.”

“Our brother.”
Hanzo gritted his teeth and glared. “And he has forgiven me.”

“Oh?” Tsuki stopped her flight and turned. “You believe that now, do you?”

“I do.”

Both of the dragons hummed and twirled up into the air before circling above him, around the moon. A shadow trailed down it’s center, making it look much like their eyes.

“We’ve been watching, Hanzo.” Tsuki said.

“Every move, every thought.” Umi followed.

“Your life has changed quite a bit.”

“New life, new friends.”

Tsuki hummed again, “that cowboy in particular.”

They flew closer and closer together until they covered the moon. Hanzo kept staring up at their shadow, waiting for the real answer.

How they loved to speak in riddles.

“The phoenix, it’s been eons.” Tsuki turned her head down.

“She’s changed.” Umi growled.

Hanzo frowned, “What do you mean?”

“A spirit of healing.”

“Or of war.”

“Depending on where she belongs.”

“She’s ancient.”

“When Rome was an empire.”

“A conqueror and a queen.”

“So long ago.”

Slowly the dragons descended until they were circling around him again, close enough that he could touch. He didn’t dare.

“Does not matter.”

“It is in the past.”
“Exactly,” Hanzo gripped his knees. “It is in the past. So is what happened to us. Why can’t you let it go?”

Both creatures snapped around, their faces hovering close to his, before they spoke in unison.

“Because you will not.”

A surge of water swelled up and crashed into him, dragging him under.

Hanzo snapped out of it, gasping for air out of habit. Once again he tried to focus on the clouds, only to see someone staring at him.

Ana Amari frowned a bit, tilting her head. She held a mug in one hand, steam rising out of it.

“Sorry, I’m not interrupting am I?” She gave him a smile. “Or bothering you. This used to be my spot. I guess it figures the other sniper on base has taken a fancy to it as well.”

Hanzo got his breathing back under control. “I do not own the roof. You are welcome to come and go as you please.”

“Oh, well thank you.” Her smile grew.

He expected her to wander off to another spot and settle down. He did not expect her to sit down right next to him. She crossed her legs in a similar fashion to him, holding her mug with her pinky out. He could faintly smell cinnamon.

“Can I help you?” He tried to keep his tone calm. He didn’t know the women personally but knew she had wronged a number of his teammates. If he could avoid speaking with her he would.

“Hanzo Shimada.” Ana hummed into the mug. “Never expected someone like you would turn up here.”

He felt his eyelid twitch. “If it has to do with my brother, save it.”

“Ooh, this dragon has some bite.” She lowered the cup. “I assure you I didn’t come up here to make an enemy.”

“At the moment you are not in the favor of my friends and allies. If you do not wish to make an enemy, I suggest speaking to me another time.”

She didn’t respond for a moment before she pulled out a thermos, holding it out to him.

“Tea?”

He glared at the container before his gaze moved up to her. “I am not that easily swayed.”

“I’m not asking you to be friends with me Hanzo. I just want to talk for a bit. You don’t have to like me, but at least you aren’t pissed enough to ignore me.” She tilted the thermos toward him. “Go on, it’s chai.”

Hanzo sighed and took it. The first sip was hot, almost burning his lips but the flavor was nice, calming.
“If you have questions, ask them.” He said.

“Fine, I want to ask about Jesse since you were the one who ran after him. It would figure he’d rope in both of you brothers.”

He paused before taking another sip. “What are you implying?”

“I wasn’t implying anything. First Genji and now you.” She narrowed her eye at him. “Or are you telling me you two aren’t in a relationship yet?”

Hanzo almost dropped the thermos. “What? Of course not.”

“Oh, well then my mistake.” She smoothed out her coat and took another dainty sip from her mug.

He squinted at the tea in his own container. “Wait, are you saying that McCree and my brother...?”

“Hm? Didn’t they tell you? They were practically joined at the hip for awhile.”

Hanzo felt himself getting lost in the dark liquid. He knew McCree and Genji had been close back then, but that thought had never crossed his mind. It was clear they weren’t in that sort of relationship anymore.

“Never mind it, I’m not worried about who’s dating who, for now.” She shot him a look. “I can be an over-bearing mother later. For now I want to know how my son is doing.”

Hanzo pressed his lips together for a moment. “To put it in his words, he’s ‘fucking pissed off’.”

Her laughter was short, fading out into a sigh. “Yes, that sounds like him indeed. That fire didn’t get out of control did it?” She paused. “How long has he been working on using those abilities?”

Hanzo thought it over. “Only about a month.”

“Oh god,” she rubbed her face. “Damn it Gabe, I told him. I told him if he was going to give Jesse that thing to instruct him properly.” She put the mug down. “I heard all kinds of stories, you know, back when Gabe and Jack first joined the army. They both had caused quite a mess when they lost their temper. And Jesse, he’s good, but his emotions are wild.”

Ana let out a long sigh. “I really shouldn’t have left. There was still so much to teach them. Did you know Fareeha’s spirit can let her see the future? Bet she’s never practiced that considering how that fight went.”

Hanzo had almost finished his tea during her rambling.

“I’m getting off track, how was he doing before these events?” She pointed at him. “How’s the phoenix doing? Did he tell you how he lost that arm? I saw it in the wanted posters and wound up with a list of a hundred reasons how it could have happened.”

“That,” Hanzo finished the tea. “Is none of your business. If McCree wishes to tell you he will. As for the phoenix I... assume she is fine. She often sits on my shoulder.”

Ana giggled at that, cutting her lips with her fingers. It lasted for an uncomfortable amount of
time. Hanzo could only stare at her.

“Ah, pardon me,” she said when she noticed him. “She used to do that to Jack too is all.”

The archer frowned. “Explain.”

“Oh? Did McCree not tell you that either? Gabe and Jack were basically engaged.”

This time he did drop the thermos. It clattered against the roof and started to roll toward the edge. Hanzo scrambled to grab it, almost slipping off himself.

Ana was giggling again.

He sighed as he pushed himself back up. “You’re doing this on purpose, aren’t you?”

“I apologize, but even without my falcon this eye is sharp as ever.” She pointed at it with a grin.

“Let me ask you something.” He returned to his seat. “You and Jack kept yourselves hidden from your teammates, why?”

“I can’t speak for Jack.” She snorted. “I’m not a fan of his excuse anyway, but he was around when everything fell apart. As for me, well, I foolishly believed for a long time that they’d be better off without me. I’m beginning to understand how wrong I was.”

She stared into her mug, a vacant expression. Hanzo decided not to press the issue.

“Then what were you and Jack doing?”

“He’s trying to discover the reasons Overwatch fell apart. Even with what happened to Gabe there were a lot of other factors involved that damaged the organization as a whole.”

Hanzo frowned. “What did happen to Commander Reyes? The only data on it is news sources, which I’m not inclined to trust.”

“That’s good,” she pressed her lips together before taking a sip of tea. “But it’s not something I can discuss right now.”

“Why not?”

Ana put a finger to her lips. “Trust me, I will inform everyone later, but now is not the time.”

The archer turned his gaze to the sky. “I am not a fan of secrets, Ms. Amari.”

“I understand, but even if I’m going to discuss it I would not tell you first.”

“Very well then, can you tell me anything about the opponent you faced? Reaper, wasn’t it?”

“Ah, sorry, I can’t discuss that either.”

A chill ran up his spine to his shoulders. He kept his gaze forward as he considered these statements. “I am getting the feeling... these two things are related.”
“Sharp eyes suit a sniper well.” She finished off her tea before standing up. “Whatever you’re thinking, do me a favor and don’t say any of it to Jesse.” She stepped towards the ladder.

“I apologize, Ms. Amari, but as I said, I do not like secrets.”

She just shrugged before she headed down.

He understood her logic, maybe now wasn’t the best time to discuss it, but he refused to hide it. The cowboy was beginning to trust him, and at some point he decided that was too important to lose.

If Jesse was up for it, he’d bring it up during evening training.
Reaper 7-6

Chapter Notes

I see y'all actually discussing stuff in the comments there and it literally makes my entire week
to bad I'm gonna ruin urs

See the end of the chapter for more notes

McCree flipped through disk after disk. He hadn’t noticed the shelf of them the first time he’d come into this empty house, but when he came digging it showed up. Every single one was labeled with a date and a memory. Sometimes he’d smile at the title of it, tempted to put it into the TV, but then he’d put it back.

He was looking for something specific.

It had been nagging him since he talked to Fareeha. The idea that Gabe might be alive as well made him hopeful and frustrated at the same time. Maybe he didn’t have to feel guilty about having this damn bird.

But then again, if he wasn’t dead where could he be?

Speaking of her, that wall had only gotten worse and worse. He wasn’t sure if she failed to drag him out of his nightmare last night or simply didn’t. This time it was too vivid, still drifting in the back of his mind.

“Ever wonder what that feels like?”

The voice of his childhood friend, whose name he still couldn’t remember. It sounded like a ghost now, grinning at him from the shadows.

“Got you.” He taunted and jeered as his hands slammed into Jesse’s back. The force sent him off the rock they had been standing on, directly into the churning water.

Sand cracked against the sliding glass door, snapping him out of his thoughts. He glanced up to see the storm but then simply went back to the disks.

At least that nightmare had jogged his memory. Something about that owl had felt familiar since he first saw it. He’d never seen it before but it felt like it knew him. He was hoping he’d find the answer in his memories, or Clementine’s.

He hadn’t seen the phoenix since he got in here. Wasn’t sure he wanted to. He’d slipped in during a nap and he hoped to keep it that way.

Then again, the damn canary could read his mind, so it was only a matter of time.

As if on cue, her flames burst into the room, phasing through the window. They swirled above
him before they took shape and she landed on the TV.

“Master McCree,” she tilted her head. “I did not even realize you came in here.”

“Mm, nope, didn’t really want you to.” He kept flipping through the DVDs.

“You... are upset.”

“Took you that long to notice? I must be picking up on your wall trick better than I thought.” He moved his gaze up to her, watching her feathers turn red. “Come on Clem, you really think I can’t feel that?”

“I am sorry, it is simply-”

“Simply what? A secret? Fine, I get it, we all have personal shit to deal with. But let me ask you a question.”

She almost seemed to shrink. “Of course.”

“Is it possible for a person to have more than one spirit? I know Hanzo does, but I figured since he had that whole split dragons put back together deal maybe it was an exception.”

“I... yes. It is possible. One can gather spirits through heritage or even steal them from someone else.”

“See, I thought so. Couldn’t stop thinking about that damn owl. Showed up in my nightmares too.” McCree put the disks down. “Couldn’t stop thinking that I had seen something like it before.”

Her flames sparked at that but she didn’t move, didn’t speak.

“Think you can do me a favor and play that memory you cut off?”

Her head moved down until it almost sunk into her shoulders. “I don’t know what you-”

“Don’t give me that shit Clem. Play it. That’s an order.”

Her head shot up at that but her flames grew darker. Eventually she sighed, tapping away at the screen.

McCree studied it closely, watching the water. There it was, the shadow underneath the surface. It was massive, huge, he could barely make out the shape of its wings.

Then it drew closer, two bright lights shining out.

“No me olvides, ‘manita.”

When the image cut off this time McCree didn’t complain. The sandstorm raging outside matched perfectly with the torrent of emotions sweeping through his brain right now.

“Clementine,” he sighed. “What the hell was that?”

She kept hesitating, shrinking down even more. “My sibling, I suppose you could say. We have...
been sharing a host for roughly five centuries now.”

“Have you now?” McCree stood up. “Because I’m pretty damn sure if he was in here you would have mentioned him sooner. I’m pretty damn sure if he was in here I would have seen him. So I have to ask,” he stepped closer, towering over her. “Where the hell is he?”

She didn’t answer, her eyes never leaving his. He couldn’t read them at all, bright glowing lights that seemed to go right through him.

“Is he still with Gabe?” His voice cracked.

The phoenix let out a long sigh, her flames beginning to vanish into the air.

“Yes.”

Sand and wind cracked the sliding glass door. The sound had McCree snapping awake, staring at the wall of his room.

He was up in a second, tossing on his hat and his serape as he stormed. Anger burned hot under his skin but he kept it down with steady breaths. Even then he could hear his boots singeing the floor underneath his feet.

“Athena?” He said the second he got in the elevator.

“Yes Agent McCree?”

“Where are Jack and Ana right now?”

There was a pause. “In their guest room, at the moment. Are you alright? Your internal body temperature is quite high.”

“I’ll be fine.” He stepped off the elevator.

He ran into a few people in the hallway, none of them eager to interrupt his pursuit. Lúcio was walking with Zenyatta, glancing up from his communicator with wide eyes. The omnic said something but McCree refused to slow down to listen to it. Brigitte and Torbjörn seemed to be arguing, speaking in german. The pair of them glanced up at McCree only to press themselves back against the wall.

Keep his anger under control, he had to. He was certain the amount of rage screaming in his head would create a pillar of fire that would burn a hole in the roof.

But they knew, didn’t they? That’s why they were chasing after Reaper. They knew.

He didn’t bother knocking, or waiting for the door to slide open properly. His left hand gripped the edge and shoved it to the side.

Ana jumped from her spot on the top bunk, almost spilling tea on the floor. Jack sat on the bed below her, fingers trailing over his tablet. Without his jacket or his visor his age was much more clear. New scars lined his shoulders and his upper arms, a good number of them from bullets. McCree thought about tossing out a comment about his carelessness.
But the biggest difference had to be Jack’s eyes. Their bright blue seemed paler and stared past McCree into the hallway.

“Jesse,” Ana swung her legs around and jumped down from the bunk. “What’s going on?”

A spark leapt from his chest to his shoulder, but he snuffed it out. His gaze darted between the two of them. “Did you know?”

Jack put the tablet down, reaching up for the top bunk before he stood up. “Be more specific.”

“Do you know who Reaper is?” McCree felt smoke rising up in the back of his throat as he spat out the question.

Ana’s eye went wide. She glanced at Jack before looking down at her mug. “Jesse, even if we do—”

“You know!” He took a step into the room. “You know it’s Gabe, don’t you?”

Ana sucked in a breath. Jack’s empty eyes narrowed, moving around like they were searching for something.

Then he sighed, “I can feel your fireworks from here, kid. You should calm down first.”

“I told you to stop calling me that.” Another burst of heat ran up McCree’s back. “Only one person’s got the damn right to call me that.”

“Who? Gabriel?” Jack stepped closer. “Or did you forget that he just tried to kill you and Fareeha?”

McCree flinched, his flames going cold for a moment.

“Yeah, we knew. I’ve known for a while now. Hell, I had a good guess when he first showed up again. I saw that damn owl before everything went up in flames.”

His fists fell open, heart hammering away in his chest. “What?”

Jack snorted and turned back to his bunk, picking up the tablet. “It didn’t like being obvious. No one with a spirit at the time saw it hovering around.” He squinted at the device before he sighed and handed it to Ana. She set her mug down on the nightstand before flicking through the screen.

When she was done she passed it back to Jack, who came back over, holding it out to McCree.

He stared at the screen, multiple files hovering around on one page. One had images of stone carvings, an owl with a wide toothy smile.

“One of the things we were looking into was this spirit. I wanted to know what it was and where it came from, because I sure as hell didn’t remember Gabriel having something like this. Turns out it’s been hiding underneath his phoenix for centuries.”

The soldier paused and narrowed his eyes. “Excuse me, your phoenix.”

McCree gritted his teeth but didn’t reply.
“It’s a spirit of death.” Ana said. “According to the lore it held the power of immortality.”

“Mean son of a bitch.” Jack cut in. “As time went on it started tricking its new hosts, gaining control of them. Most times it would lie in wait until their lives were on the line, offering them only one way out.”

McCree’s chest tightened. His flames were all but gone now, slowly being replaced with ice. The tips of his fingers felt numb. “Wait... are you saying–”

“That’s exactly what I’m saying.” Jack was no taller than him but suddenly McCree felt small under his gaze. “That phoenix was there to keep that damn thing in check. When he gave it to you there was nothing holding it back. It messed with his head, planning it all step by step. The damn thing is practically possessing him now.”

The room was beginning to spin. McCree could practically hear the blood roaring in his ears from the rising panic. This couldn’t be happening. That couldn’t be true. All of that happened to Gabe because...

“All because he made the damned decision to give you that phoenix.” Jack’s words were laced with venom, his teeth bared.

McCree could hear Ana shouting something. He could hear Jack shouting back, but he didn’t take time to listen. He spun around and bolted from the room as fast as he could. He tugged his hat down as he tore through the hallway. Outside, he needed to get outside. It felt like the air had been drained from the building.

Because Gabe gave him the phoenix.

The memory of Gabe smiling, his face illuminated by her flames as she sat perched on his arm, only made his chest ache.

_Stop smiling._ McCree screamed in his head. _Stop it. Don’t you know what you’re doing?_

Why did he give him this damned bird? Nothing good had come out of it. If he hadn’t he’d still be alive. He’d still be himself. He could use these abilities far better than McCree could. He would have healed Angela. He would have saved that kid.

Why did Gabe hand her over?

“He loved you.”

A sob tore out of his throat but he refused to slow down. He was so close.

“You’re my kid. You know that, right?”

McCree ran out of the door. The outside air hit the side of his face and he stumbled. His legs felt numb and suddenly he couldn’t move forward.

He fell back instead, his head hitting the wall before he slid down.

“He wanted to protect you.”
“My fault,” McCree mumbled as the tears escaped. “It’s all my fault and I knew it. I...”

If it wasn’t for him Gabe would still be around.

He wished he’d never gotten this damn bird.

Sometimes he wished he never existed at all.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone needs it, "No me olvides" means "Don't forget me"
Oh goodness there were a lot of people screaming at me... hopefully this will make it slightly better

McCree completely lost track of how long he’d be sitting out there. The sun was on its way down, getting close to sunset. He’d managed to move himself to the cliff side but it took a while for the tears to slow down, and even then a few extra would find their way down his cheeks. His eyes stung and his throat felt dry.

His communicator had buzzed once, an announcement from Winston about an optional meeting. McCree thought about messaging him about this, telling him he knew who Reaper was now, but his fingers wouldn’t stop shaking.

He’d just have to inform him later. He told himself that over and over again to rid himself of the desire to run away. Go out and find Reaper again and find out if this was all true.

Clementine hadn’t said a thing since he woke up earlier. He didn’t make any attempts to speak to her either. At some point he’d have to. He needed to find out why she never told him any of this. What point was there in hiding it?

His communicator suddenly buzzed, still resting in his palm. He glanced down, surprised to see it was from Hanzo. The archer had never messaged him before.

> *Left the meeting. Too much noise. Ana was asking me about you. Are you alright?*

Too much noise? What kind of meeting were they having up there?

He thought about how easy it would be to lie. It was just text after all, but after a few shaky breaths he tapped out a reply.

> *Not really. Would prefer some space.*

He took a moment to pull out a cigar, something he should have done a while ago. He tried to light it with his fingers out of habit but his flame wouldn’t catch. He cursed and dug around for his lighter.

The communicator buzzed.

> *I assume you figured out Reaper’s identity?*

He dropped the cigar as he rushed to reply.

> *You know?*
> I guessed, based on Ana’s silence. I planned to discuss it during training.

McCree let out a breath he didn’t realize he’d been holding. At least Hanzo wasn’t keeping shit from him too.

> Yeah, I figured it out. Feeling... overwhelmed atm.

> Would you like some tea later?

He smiled.

> Yeah, be appreciated. Thanks

> You’re welcome. I shall ask Reinhardt for advice on making steak and potatoes as well.

Something stuttered in his chest.

> ??? You don’t need to do that wth??

> I have already decided. I will have it ready in two hours.

McCree chuckled before it turned into a full blown laugh. His chest still ached and a few more tears fell from his eyes, but somehow his entire body felt lighter. His fingers hovered over the buttons, trying to think of what to say that didn’t end with “holy shit I think I love you”.

> I’ll be there.

He put his communicator in his pocket, finally finding his lighter. He picked his cigar up and put it between his teeth. He struggled with the lighter, fingers still shaking.

God damn this mess.

He let the smoke calm him down, watching it curl into the air. It seemed so much calmer than the stuff that had been spilling out of his mouth the other day.

“Hello Jesse.”

He almost tossed the cigar off the cliff when he jumped. He turned to see Zenyatta, floating there with his hands folded in his lap.

“Uh, howdy.” He put the cigar in his mouth to calm his nerves. “What brings you out here?”

“Ahh, the meeting they had was rather... noisy.” The omnic turned his gaze to the sky.

“Funny, Hanzo said the same thing. What are you guys talking about up there?”

Zenyatta tapped his fingers together. “You did not attend. I imagine it has to do with the reason you were so angry earlier.”

McCree flinched and rolled the cigar around between his teeth. “Sorry if I spooked you.”

“Your anger does not frighten me.” A pair of Zenyatta’s orbs drifted away from his neck and
started to circle over McCree’s head. “But I was concerned as to the reason.”

Pressure lifted away from McCree’s shoulders. The shakiness in his fingers eased up. “I’m only talking about it if you are.”

“Hm?”

“Something’s bugging you. Not like you to break eye contact, that I know of.” He blew out a plume of smoke. “And noisy is a very vague way to describe a meeting.”

One of the orbs bounced. “I’m surprised you can read me that well.”

McCree shrugged. “Genji gave me a lot of practice at reading body language.”

“Winston called the meeting because of something Lúcio brought up. He’s been digging around Vishkar’s activity, last week he found something.”

The monk drifted closer, floating next to McCree. “They recently built a new office, claiming they’ll be able to improve the lives of the people around it.”

“Kid’s not happy about that I take it?”

Zenyatta shook his head. “He wishes to infiltrate it himself, gather data. If possible he would burn it to the ground.”

“Can’t blame him.”

The omnic didn’t comment on that. “Lúcio is a passionate spirit, and skilled at what he does but…”

“I’m pretty sure our last job was his first official stealth mission.” McCree scratched his cheek. “And he wants to go in there alone?”

“That was Winston’s concern, and the reason for the meeting. Lúcio was not fond of us ‘underestimating’ him, as he put it. Lena argued he should at least take some back up.”

The omnic paused. The orbs seemed to float lower, clinking against his shoulders. “So, Lúcio suggested Bastion.”

McCree bit down on the end of his cigar as he turned his head. Bastion? To be honest, McCree had forgotten the omnic was even around.

Lúcio had found them during a casual run around at Eichenwalde. The musician was raving about his discovery, begging the rest of the team to go and check it out. Unfortunately the first person to check in was Zarya.

She pulled out a weapon. The bastion unit responded.

It was a mess. Lúcio had managed to calm them down but the damage was done. He still insisted on taking it back to the base, despite a number of protests. He argued that they should at least keep it out of the hands of someone worse.

That was agreed upon. Bastion had been brought here, although they never actually entered the
base. They hung around the perimeter, usually in the woods. At some point they took up the job of keeping all the security systems in working order.

It hadn’t been without its problems. Roughly four months ago something had triggered the unit’s defenses. Lúcio wound up with a bullet wound in the arm.

But, come to think of it, McCree hadn’t heard anything since then. Maybe they had finally settled down.

McCree tilted his hat down. “I have a feeling that suggestion didn’t go over well.”

“It did not. Torbjörn protested. Reinhardt argued back. Zarya backed up Torbjörn. Soon enough the entire room was in chaos. Some supported the idea, others did not, and then others tried to consider every option. There were many... ah, unkind words said about my kind. Eventually I had to take my leave.”

McCree looked at Zenyatta from under the brim of his hat. His fingers were still tapping together, out of rhythm with the flashes of his orbs. The two above McCree’s head still spun around at the same pace.

“Sorry there doc, none of you deserve that.”

“You need not apologize Jesse. You were not-”

“Yeah I do.” He flicked his used cigar over the cliff. “This base is supposed to be our home, or our second home. It doesn’t do any good if there’s people here thinking of you that way.”

“I appreciate it, but only they can change their thoughts. I simply have to present the best example I can, Bastion as well.”

McCree hummed in agreement. He held up his hand, snapping his fingers but not even a spark would emerge. Did Clementine cut his powers off out of spite? Was that even possible?

“No then, my friend, what ails you?”

He let his hand fall when he sighed. “Found out that Gabe’s still around, sort of.”

The orbs all flashed at once. “Oh?”

“Yeah, he tried to kill me and Fareeha a couple of days ago.” McCree didn’t want to use the title. A part of him was still denying that could have been Gabe.

“So you’re finally learning how to use that thing.”

Damn.

“Reaper,” Zenyatta said. “But why is he so hostile now?”

“His spirit, I think, owl thing. Owl of death or some cryptic shit. Jack thinks it must be controlling him.”

“That is possible?”
“Sure,” McCree shrugged. “Clem- eh, my phoenix told me it has to do with names. Naming a spirit gives you ownership of it, but it can work in reverse too. Think the owl accounted for that.”

“That is indeed troubling.” The omnic sighed. “But where did he get it?”

“Always had it, apparently. The phoenix kept it in check but... then he gave her to me.”

“Ahh, you’re blaming yourself again.”

“Why the hell shouldn’t I?” McCree turned when he snapped. “All of this because he felt like he needed to protect me. If he never handed her over none of this would have happened. I never should have accepted it.”

“Why did you?”

His mouth hung open, useless as he searched for an answer. Why had he? Obviously back then he didn’t even consider the consequences. Gabriel was already invincible after all, or so it seemed.

“You’re my kid. You know that, right?”

“Cause he said it was a family thing and I... I dunno.” McCree pulled his knees up, resting his arms on top of them. “Wanted something to cement the fact I belonged there, I guess. I wanted it to last. Because of our situation, where we were, sometimes it didn’t feel real. He was my boss. We had to stick to our jobs on the field. Sometimes I got scared thinking that if one of us got out, that’d be it. That’d be the end of it. I’d just be on my own again.”

He let out a weak laugh. “I took her and it still ended up that way.”

“Situations you could not control.” Zenyatta sent another orb over. “You were not aware of this other spirit, perhaps he was not either. It is easy to feel guilty about decisions made in ignorance, but dwelling on it will not change anything now.”

McCree snorted, “Yeah, yeah, I know. Can’t fix any of it.”

“I did not say that. True, you cannot go back in time and change these events, but that does not mean it is impossible to fix your mistake. To fix his mistake. You are not the only one who made a mistake, Jesse.”

“How the hell am I supposed to fix this?” He threw out his arms.

“Ah,” the omnic lifted his hands, pressing the palms together. “Your guess is as good as mine. I have not taken the time to study these spirits, but I like to believe it is not impossible.”

True, that was true. McCree himself still didn’t know everything. These spirits were complicated, their bonds with their hosts even more so. Perhaps there was a way to knock out that owl without killing Gabe in the process.

Silence passed for a while. McCree watched the orbs floating around them, realizing if he listened close he could hear a faint note play when they flashed. He reached up with his left hand, tapping against one. It sounded like a wind chime. He smiled.
Then he heard someone walking towards them. He turned his head to see Lúcio, hands shoved in his pockets and probably the biggest scowl he’d ever seen on the kid’s face. The musician stood next to Zenyatta for a moment, silent, before letting off a long groan as he fell back on the ground.

“Yeah, welcome to the party kid. Did you bring some alcohol? Cause I forgot.”

“Don’t drink,” he mumbled. “Never goes well for me.”

“Want a smoke?”

Lúcio narrowed his eyes, like he was considering it.

“How did it go?” Zenyatta interrupted.

“My ears are still ringing,” the musician put his hands over his face. “Hearing people’s tones took long enough to get used to but that was just... damn.”

“Tones?” McCree frowned.

“My conure, spirit,” His voice was muffled by his palms. “Helps me pick up the emotions behind people’s voices, but when you have everyone screaming like that...”

“Oh.”

“But did you reach a decision?” Zenyatta said. “I take it the mission is at least still on the table.”

“Yeah, I can go. I can even take Bastion. Took ages to show them how I’d make it work out, but too many people were still concerned with them going off. Only way to settle it was to agree on a kill switch.”

McCree could see the omnic straighten up and he flinched himself. “Kill switch?”

“Remote shut-down if they get out of hand. Keep me and civilians from getting hurt but... ugh!” Lúcio kicked at the air before he sat up. “Could you imagine doing that to someone? Just putting a chip in their brain to knock them out cold whenever you wanted? I don’t like it.”

“That is... unsettling.” Zenyatta sighed.

“You can’t just say no?” McCree said.

“If I did then they couldn’t go. I said I’d ask them about it. No way I’m gonna put Bastion through that if they don’t want to. If not then I’ll have Genji tag along. Or maybe Tracer... you up for a stealth mission Eastwood?”

McCree grinned, “I’d love to but my abilities are malfunctioning. Not the best time.”

“Really? Damn. Have to do with your uh... storm down the hall?”

“Why I’m out here.”

“So it is a party.” The musician sighed. “Remind me to send you some tracks later, help you out.”
“You guys do too much for me,” McCree tapped at one of the orbs again.

“Hey, if you wanna make it up to me, come say hi to Bastion.” Lúcio hopped up. “I’m pretty sure they haven’t even met you yet.”

McCree wasn’t sure how well that would go over, having no experience with the omnic, but it certainly beat sitting here feeling sorry for himself. He pushed himself up, the orbs following his movement.

“Lead the way then.”
Honestly I.... love u guys so much. You all make my day I'm glad I can make yours with this stuff.

Bad news is I don't have part 8 done yet, so many writing projects... I'm gonna try and get it done ASAP, thanks for your patience until then! (And feel free to poke at me on tumblr if you have questions)

Also yeah I love Bastion, they're my child, so important

McCree knew that the bastion unit was camping out in the woods. What he didn’t expect to find was an actual campsite. There was an entire lodge in place, built around the trees in the area. The roof cover it was a translucent piece of tarp, a tear in one corner of it from a fallen branch. Surrounding the structure were flowers, a lot of flowers. The entire clearing was covered with them, only just enough space for a pathway in-between. The whole thing almost put Torbjörn’s garden to shame.

“Yo, Bastion.” Lúcio skipped forward, straight into the building. McCree could only follow after, minding where he put his boots. A number of beetles scurried out of his path.

“They built all this?” McCree mumbled, staring up at the archway.

“We helped some, but yes.”

“Wow.”

The inside wasn’t any less impressive. It was organized with tables and planters. A number of baskets hung from above housing even more plants. A young tree grew in the corner, it’s leaves pressing against the walls.

And there was the unit, watering can in hand. Bits of grass still grew along their shoulders, a number of flower petals along side it. The yellow bird–Ganymede as he’d heard–sat on top of Bastion’s head. The creature chirped before it took off, flittering over to Lúcio’s shoulder.

The omnic beeped their greeting, putting down the watering can before stepping over. McCree felt a little daunted by their height, but the head tilt was pretty cute.

“How’s it going big guy? I got news for you, on that mission thing I mentioned, but first...” Lúcio gestured over to McCree. “Meet Eastwood, or Jesse, or McCree, uh...”

“Jesse,” McCree tipped his hat. “Nice to meet you.”

The unit straightened up. Then it reached up, mimicking the motion as it made another beeping sound, as if they were trying to say the word ‘Jesse’.
McCree couldn’t help but grin. No wonder Lúcio was so fond of the omnic.

“Works better with a hat, I’ll have to get you one sometime.” He scratched his chin. “Maybe one of those sun hats, since you like gardening.”

“A delightful idea,” Zenyatta hummed. “I would not mind one myself.”

The sound the unit made in response was quick and high pitched.

“Hang on buddy, talking too fast.” Lúcio pulled his visor back down over his face.

“They were simply giving me a greeting.” Zenyatta said.

“You two can understand what they’re saying?” McCree straightened up.

“Nah,” Lúcio shook his head. “Well not a lot of it anyway. I can recognize names now, hello, things like that. I’ve been working on a translation program for a while now.” He tapped the side of his visor. “Zenyatta’s been helping me out on accuracy. It’s still muddled, like using an online translator, but you can get the basic idea.”

“Whoa,” the cowboy’s eyes widened. “Hell kid, that’s genius.”

The musician grinned, “Thanks, but it’s still in progress. Hopefully when it’s more refined I can reproduce it for everyone.”

“Bastion’s been eager to speak to everyone.” Zenyatta said. “And I believe this would also dispel a lot of the fears about their presence.”

“Aw, I don’t need a translator for that.” McCree wandered around the greenhouse. “Kinda sold me already. How many of the team actually comes out here?”

“Lena does sometimes.” Lúcio said. “Hana does a lot too. I’ve managed to get Winston a couple of times but he tends to keep busy. I never invited Reinhardt but... I’ve seen him seen him here once or twice.”

McCree paused, his hand hovering next to an orange lily. He thought about Reinhardt’s history, his life as a Crusader, that battle at Eichenwalde.

“What was he doing?” He frowned.

“Just talking. They were just talking. Laughing even.”

Bastion let out a string of noises.

“They said Reinhardt wanted to talk about the battle.” Zenyatta said. “He comes in to talk about it, or other things on his mind. Bastion tries to respond, but Reinhardt can’t understand them.”

McCree felt something stab at his chest. Without thinking he pulled his communicator out, sending a message to Hanzo.

> Uh, is Rein okay?
Bastion beeped away again, heading back over to their watering can.

“They said that they like Reinhardt.”

McCree smiled. “Hey, what’s not to like about the big guy?”

His communicator buzzed.

> He seemed rather distressed earlier, but the cooking is helping.

Well that was good at least. He tapped out a quick response before putting the communicator back. “Pretty impressive garden in here. Is it always blooming like this?”

“From what I know,” Lúcio shrugged. “Dunno how they do it. I’ve been bringing them seeds back whenever I can get them and they make them work.”

“The climate here is rather ideal for plants.” Zenyatta said.

“Sure,” McCree pointed. “But I’m pretty sure pansies prefer colder weather.”

Lúcio shrugged again. “I told you, I dunno. They just do it somehow. It’s like magic.”

Magic. McCree narrowed his eyes as he stared at the unit. The noise it made was faint, almost like humming as they watered a planter. Ganymede chirped and flew back onto the unit, whistling along to the tune.

It wasn’t possible, was it?

He took a deep breath and shut his eyes for a moment. He followed the tune and the smell of pine. Eventually he honed in on a faint red light. It shifted into the shape of a squirrel, its tail made up of leaves.

“Holy hell,” McCree mumbled as he opened his eyes. “Bastion’s got a spirit.”

“What?” Lúcio shouted. “Really?”

“You never saw it?”

“I can’t do that vision junk outside of my room, too hard to focus. Little guy wants too much attention when I do that.”

“They have a spirit?” Zenyatta’s voice seemed to shake, his hands folded in front of his chin. “Truly? What is it?”

“Some kind of squirrel, leafy looking tail. I’ll take that as a guess as to why they’ve got a green thumb.”

“They have a spirit...” The omnic echoed. Then he was giggling, the sound growing louder and louder. It chimed around the room and Bastion turned around. The sound they made sounded faintly like a sigh.

“You okay there doc?” McCree asked.
“Ah, I am fine. Just excited. Omnics being capable of hosting spirits... it opens up all sorts of possibilities.” The orbs around his neck hummed out a tune.

“Wonder where they got it.” McCree watched Bastion lift one of the planters and move it to a higher spot.

“Might be new,” Lúcio shrugged. “That’s what Mei said about mine. I never really knew where I got it from, just sort of showed up one day.”

The cowboy had never given much thought to new spirits, but he supposed they all had to start somewhere. There was no telling how they formed, maybe he’d ask Clementine later.

If he bothered speaking to her again at all.

Whatever, he didn’t want to think about this right now.

The unit’s footsteps had him snapping back to attention. The omnic headed over to him, hand outstretched. Resting on their palm was a yellow rose, just the flower. McCree stared at it for a moment, glancing up at Bastion’s eye before reaching out to take it.

“What’s this for?”

“Yellow rose, commonly a symbol of friendship.” Zenyatta said. “Bastion’s been studying flower languages, as a form of communication.”

“Aw,” McCree smiled and put the flower on the brim of his hat. “Well aren’t you sweeter than a glass of ice tea.”

Lúcio was practically grinning from ear to ear, but after a few moments it fell. “Uh, right, Bastion?”

The unit turned, or at least their torso did.

“We talked about that mission. They said I could take you, but only if you let them put in a kill switch. Something to turn you off if things get messy.” The musician bit his lip, eyes moving to the ground.

Bastion shrugged, a short beep as their answer.

“Huh?” Lúcio’s eyes widened. “Are you sure? Bastion, something like that is-”

The unit’s shoulders dropped. The noise it made was long and drawn out, sad even.

“That wasn’t your fault.” Lúcio grabbed his upper arm. “Torb’s turret malfunctioning was just a fluke. Anyone would have panicked.”

Bastion shook their head. They pointed at Lúcio with another flurry of beeps.

He sighed, “Okay, fine. If you’re cool with it. Let’s try and prove to them that it’s not necessary though, okay?”
Bastion chimed out their response. Ganymede repeated it.

“Oh hey, that’s right.” Lúcio jumped. “Hey Zen, you up for playing a little music? We should show Eastwood.”

Zenyatta laughed, calling his orbs back to him. “Very well.”

“What, you guys have a band?” McCree clutched the brim of his hat. “Should have told me, I would have brought my guitar.”

“We’ve been trying to get Genji to join.” Lúcio pulled out his player. “Turns out he’s terrible at playing instruments.”

McCree laughed, remembering the cyborg’s impatience when they were younger. He moved over to one of the empty benches, being careful when he sat down so the flower on his hat didn’t fall off.

“When you guys are ready.”

“Come on guys, let’s do track two. We really should title these.”

Ganymede was the one who kicked off the song, a quick opening that gave way to the melody Zenyatta’s orbs chimed out.

McCree sighed as he listened.

Why the hell hadn’t he come out here before?
Chapter Notes

*wheezes*

Holy hell I'm... sorry... this took so long jesus.......... 

Nov. was hell month Dec. was also hell month and honestly the universe has barely let up yet I'm going to fight it 

That aside this part has six sections so yay..... prayin the next one doesn't take as long 

thanks for your patience guys

The week passed by much slower than McCree would have liked. The dinner Hanzo made had been great, perfect, although it wound up more like a feast than anything else. There was so much food the rest of the base was invited to come and get some. Not that McCree would complain; Reinhardt made an amazing strudel.

But things shifted back to stressful the very next day. Jack and Ana were still on base, and while Ana seemed to be making progress in patching up her relationships, Jack skulked around like a honey badger. He always kept his shoulders raised, never looking at anyone, and while it wasn’t uncommon to see him out of his room there was no telling where he went. Hana tried bothering him once, he just ignored her.

Lena flew Ashleigh out to her family living in America. Not the safest place to go but Winston didn’t want her lingering around on the base, there was a whole list of security issues to go along with it. They’d been combing through the data they got, listings of Talon activity in England along with a few possible base locations. It was only a matter of time before they started heading in and taking them out. McCree wasn’t looking forward to it.

Especially since his powers still weren’t working. Not even a spark would flare up no matter what he tried. He had to assume it was tied in with Clementine’s silence. The bird still hadn’t spoken to him, but to be fair he didn’t make the effort to talk to her either. The hell had she lied to him for?

At least Ana apologized, while watching him in the shooting range one day. He didn’t say much in response, wanting to accept it but at the same time wanting a better excuse than what she was offering. He supposed, in the end, he just wouldn’t be able to understand her motivations. He figured he’d forgive her when Fareeha did. After all his ‘manita had been hit the worst.

So he told Ana he’d think about it. He shoved back the urge to cry, the urge to cling to her like he used to do when he was younger.

Eventually she left, and he curled up and cried into his arms instead.

He distracted himself with Bastion most days. McCree didn’t think he’d find so much comfort out there, but since he couldn’t understand the omnic there wasn’t much need for conversations. He took
out his guitar one day, playing tunes and laughing when Ganymede landed on it, chirping back. Bastion showed him how to make flower crowns, and he decided to give it to Hanzo as a joke.

But for some reason the archer didn’t take it off all day.

Genji teased him about it, of course, asking where he got it. Hanzo just crossed his arms.

“It was a gift, surely you don’t think I’m so rude as to toss it out, do you?”

McCree let Lúcio show off his plans for the mission. The kid had already snatched up a number of floor plans of the building. He had his route and the equipment to get him in and out easy. As for Bastion’s stealth, well...

“Check it out, I’ve been working with Hana on developing this.”

The unit beeped when it crouched down and their plating shifted colors to match the wall of the cabin. McCree almost spat out the soda he’d been drinking.

“What? Where did you get that?”

“Hana uses it to recolor her mech to match her outfit.” Lúcio shrugged. “Enough tweaking around and it’s instant camouflage. He doesn’t have to sneak all the way in with me, just hang nearby in case of an emergency.”

McCree couldn’t say he wasn’t worried about the kid, he was, but Lúcio seemed to have a good handle on what he was doing. He’d just have to trust him.

He wasn’t the only one worried. In fact, he hadn’t seen Genji fret this much since his master was caught up in a fight in King’s Row. The omnic had come out fine, him and Reinhardt escaping with hardly a scratch.

Then again McCree knew why Genji was so worried, but he didn’t bring it up. The cyborg could worry about confessing his own crush.

Speaking of which, Hanzo had brought that up on day three.

“You used to date my brother?” He was frowning at another pack of debbie cakes, like he knew he shouldn’t be eating them, but he was going to anyways.

“Oh hell, that’s right,” McCree laughed. “I forgot about that.”

“You forgot?”

He shrugged. “Honestly, at the time it all sort of blurred together. I’d describe us more as friends with benefits really. When we met back up it seemed silly to start it over again.”

Hanzo looked like he wasn’t satisfied with that answer, but he dropped the topic.

Time spent with the archer was his other escape. Training that week had been minimal, considering his malfunctioning powers. Hanzo seemed content enough to just let McCree distract himself with one thing or another. He let himself get dragged into a game of poker—which he was actually rather good at—and joined in when Hana ambushed them with a nerf gun.
All of it helped McCree relax, keep his head clear. Even if he still had staring contests with Jack whenever the two of them were in the same room.

Eventually Lúcio headed out on his mission. The entire base seemed to be holding their breath, hovering around Winston’s lab for updates on the situation. McCree decided to offer a distraction for Genji, who wouldn’t stop pacing outside of the lab.

“Hanzo,” McCree growled as he leaned forward. “Don’t you dare use that blue shell.”

The archer just smirked as he pressed the button.

McCree screamed.

“You should not taunt him,” Genji chuckled. “Believe me.”

Hanzo flinched a bit at that but relaxed as he passed into third place.

“I ain’t losing to you this time Genji, get the fuck back here.”

“No,” The ninja taunted. “You’ll have to catch me first.”

“Cease your flirting,” Hanzo mumbled.

“Aw, what’s wrong brother? Feeling a bit jealous?”

Hanzo only response to that was launching a green shell, nailing Genji’s character head on. McCree laughed, almost losing control of his own player.

“I can’t believe this.” Genji said. “Betrayed by my own brother yet again.”

“Genji, will you quit bringing that up every time I beat you at a video game?”

“Betrayal!” He dramatically dropped the controller when McCree passed the finish line. “How could you Hanzo?”

“As I recall, that is the purpose of the game.”

Genji gasped as he fell on his side, draping his arm over his visor. “Avenge me Jesse, you must avenge me.”

McCree smiled as he kicked the cyborg in the leg. “Knock it off you over grown tin-”

Suddenly Genji shot up, faster than McCree could blink. He sat very still.

“Genji?” Hanzo asked. “Are you alright?”

“Lúcio...” The cyborg breathed out. “No, no.” He shot up and dashed out of the room, leaving nothing but a streak of green light.

“Shit,” McCree dropped the controller and took off after him, Hanzo close on his heels.
It seemed Genji wasn’t the only one who picked up on whatever was wrong. A crowd was forming outside of Winston’s lab. With the door open McCree could hear the conversation from the communicator.

“Get away from them.” Lúcio’s shouts were harsh, angrier than McCree had ever heard.

“The hell is going on?” He asked out loud.

“There was a trap.” Mei’s hands covered her mouth. “Bastion went on the defensive and got shut down.”

That meant Lúcio’s defenses were cut off, hell.

Genji was pacing again. Zenyatta hovered nearby, as if he wanted to comfort his student, but his hands were folded in front of his chin. Hana almost seemed relaxed, leaning against the wall, but she was chewing at her nails.

They couldn’t do anything but wait.

“Touch them again lady, I dare you.” Lúcio’s shouts were rough with static.

“Come on kid,” McCree ground his teeth together. His hand bumped against Hanzo’s wrist and without thinking he clung to it. The archer didn’t protest, or he didn’t notice.

“I knew this was a bad idea.” Torbjörn was muttering somewhere behind them.

“Not the time, Torb.” Brigitte growled.

“I said let them go. Let me go, you glorified secretary.” Lúcio’s voice was growing at alarming levels. The speakers screamed under the noise. “If you touch even one bolt I swear I’ll-”

All of it cut off, giving way to static. The silence was painful, as if no one was breathing.

“No,” Genji said before dashing toward the door. “Lúcio? Lúcio?”

McCree barely caught him, using the force in his left hand to hold the cyborg back. Even then it strained under the effort and he could see dents forming in his shoulder plate.

“Calm down, partner.” McCree growled.

“Calm down?” Genji spun around and McCree backed up. “He could be dead. I should have gone with him.”

“They would not kill him.” Hanzo’s voice was level. “Not yet.”

“Not yet?” Hana bit at two nails. “That’s not very reassuring, ajusshi.”

“He’s a revolutionary icon.” The archer crossed his arms. “If they wish to remove him, they’d likely plan a way that would shut down the rebellion.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?” Genji’s voice was laced with venom, a tone McCree hadn’t heard in years.
“It grants us an opportunity to form a plan.”

“We may not have the time for that.”

Hanzo’s calm expression gave way to rage. “We cannot charge out there recklessly.”

“Oh yes, you do love your planning. When have they ever really worked out, brother? The more time we waste the more danger he’s in.”

“You will endanger us all with that kind of thinking.”

“I will not stand here and do nothing!”

McCree saw Genji’s hand land on his sword hilt and shoved himself between them. “Both of y’all need to knock it off. We don’t need to be arguing.”

“Then what do we do, commander?” Genji spat, but let go of his weapon.

“Don’t give me that kind of attitude, Genji.” McCree shoved him back. “I know that you know better than this. Take a walk.”

“McCree–”

“Get!” He pointed down the hallway, never taking his eyes off the visor.

Steam hissed out of the cyborg’s vents but he started walking, hitting McCree with his shoulder. Zenyatta followed after him.

“He might try and leave.” Hanzo muttered.

“Then go after him, just try not to kick each others asses.”

McCree didn’t wait for a response. He spun around and headed into the lab. Hana tailed close behind.

Winston furiously tapped away at one of the screens. Another held a map of the facility, a small light blinking in one of the rooms.

“What’s going on, big guy?” McCree asked.

“Agent Lúcio’s communicator is still active.” Athena responded.

“Either they took it or he’s just unconscious.” Winston said. “I’m trying to figure out which it is, in case I’m tracing the wrong signal.”

“Bastion?” McCree tried to make sense of the layout.

“Signal was lost when he got shut down.”

“Not sure that was smart.” Hana was bitter.
“Not important now. We need a solution.” McCree zoomed in on the room. “Way this is set up I’d guess it’s a holding room. See if the signal moves around I suppose.”

“I’m also trying to access their video feeds.” Winston frowned. “Lúcio planted the bug, but their security is tricky.”

“Can I see?” Hana offered. One of her fingers was bleeding. She wiped it off on her shirt. “Lúcio showed me a few things.”

Winston passed her the screen before rubbing the bridge of his nose.

“What’s the plan, sir?” McCree said. “Takes five hours to fly there. The sooner we think of something the better.”

“If recovering him were that easy I would have sent you out, but this is Vishkar. If we get caught there it’d be the kind of bad publicity we don’t need. The UN has ignored the reports on us for now, since it’s harmless but...”

“Vishkar has the government in their pocket.” Hana bit at her thumb while she picked at the screen. “That’s what Lúcio figures.”

“I shouldn’t have let him go.” Winston muttered.

“Relax.” There was a crunch when she bit through that nail. “He’s been in jail before, he’ll find a way out. I’m sure of it.”

“Are you?” McCree watched her hand. “Seem pretty tense there.”

“I’m worried, fine, we all are.” She swapped hands. “Got not choice but to believe in him right now.” She frowned at the screen and passed it back. “I got through some of it.”

McCree studied her before nudging her toward the door. “Update us when you get video Winston. I’ll be back.”

The scientist nodded, already focused on the computer.

“Hey,” Hana complained. “I don’t need to be shown out.”

“You need to take it easy, kid.”

“Don’t baby me,” She pouted at him when they reached the hallway. For a second McCree swore he was looking into the past. “I’m not a kid.”

“You’re nineteen.”

“So? You were younger than me when you started doing this.”

McCree blinked. “Who told you that?”

“I can read, but Reinhardt mentioned it.” She crossed her arms before leaning against the wall.

A few muffled shouts distracted him for a second. He glanced down the hall to see Mei, Zarya,
Brigitte and Torbjörn standing in a circle. The armorer seemed to be arguing with the two, Mei trying to cut it off.

He turned back to Hana. “Just cause I was that young doesn’t mean I should have been there.”

She groaned and bumped her head against the wall. “Do not start that ‘you’re too young’ trash. There’s no such things in times like this.”

He opened his mouth but she continued.

“Do you know why we were called to duty? Fast reflexes? Maybe. But there wasn’t enough people to answer the call, so we did.” Her gaze moved to the floor. “There’s no such thing as too young. You know that, even if you don’t like it. Lúcio knows it too. You either learn to fight back or fall behind.”

McCree let his shoulders fall. He’d never seen her this closed off and serious. It was sobering, in a sense.

“I know you want to keep me safe, but I’m not naive.”

“Fine,” McCree scratched under his hat. “But try not to chew your fingers off. You want a smoke?”

She laughed at that. “Offering a cigar to a teenager? Mama Angela will put you on a stretcher.”

“Is that a no?”

“Better not. Wish I had some gum though.”

“Wanna go get some?”

Hana glanced back at the lab and shook her head.

“That’s fine, I will. Should find Genji too.” He tipped his hat. “Be right back, darlin’.”

He made quick steps down the hall, avoiding the nasty argument. Thankfully they were all too involved to notice him.

“I can’t figure out what Reinhardt saw in you.” Brigitte’s accent became stronger as she shouted. “You cheap, tin, garden gnome.”

“Excuse me?” Torbjörn was being held back by Zarya.

Sounded like family drama.

Thankfully it faded out quick when he reached the end of the hall.

>Hey, where’s Genji?

McCree fired the message to Hanzo.

>Pacing outside the hanger. Reinhardt and the monk are blocking the door.
He rolled his eyes. Predictable ninja.

The elevator ride down was painfully quiet. He was tempted to ask Athena for updates but let her work.

He almost missed Clementine’s nagging voice.

When he got to the hanger Reinhardt and Zenyatta were indeed blocking the door. Genji paced in front of them like an angry tiger. Hanzo was ignoring him, talking to Ana in fact.

She looked back at McCree as he drew close, but didn’t get the chance to say anything.

“Has Winston come up with a plan?” Genji dashed over to him.

“Not yet partner. Aren’t you tuned into the system?”

“I was tuned into Lúcio’s communicator.” The ninja sighed. “It is still silent.”

“Yeah, Athena thinks they knocked him out. Chance we’ll hear from him when he comes to. Until then Winston’s trying to get some visual. So try not to run off and do something stupid.” McCree flicked his visor.

Genji swatted at him. “I was not, I simply decided to wait here in case anything changed.”

“Only after I threatened to fire you up with sleep serum.” Ana smirked.

“Just like when he was younger,” Reinhardt chuckled.

Genji was visibly pouting with his arms crossed and his shoulders low. McCree resisted the urge to laugh at him as well. He knew the cyborg would be ripping his hair out if he could get to it.

“Come on, Hana wants me to get her some gum. I’d feel better if you weren’t hanging out in here.”

“You told me to take a walk.”

“Yeah, a walk, not an aircraft.”

The cyborg’s sigh was lined with irritation but his arms dropped as he headed for the elevator. The rest of the group followed after him, Hanzo rushing to catch up. At least the pair of them had stopped arguing for now.

Ana fell in step next to him, picking at the straps on her gloves. It was clear she wanted to say something, but didn’t know where to start.

“You know,” She finally spoke up when the elevator doors opened. “I had only one guess as to who told Lúcio that Jack hates that band.”

“Shit, the kid actually did it?” McCree tried to bury his laughter.

“He didn’t tell you?” Genji said as they crowded into the elevator. “Morrison’s reaction was quite
“You say fantastic, I say I have to room with him and I don’t appreciate you making it harder.” Ana snorted. “At least wait until I have my own space.”

“You are more than welcome to use mine.” Reinhardt smiled.

“Ah, such a gentleman.” She patted him on the arm. It was honestly nice to see their relationship was sliding back into place. “But no, I’d better keep an eye on him until the dust settles.”

The chatter turned idle as they made a detour to the kitchen. Finding the gum took a bit of effort, as Hana liked to hide most of her treats. Eventually Genji found it in one of the top cupboards, tossing down a pack of watermelon flavored ones.

On the way to the lab, McCree got a message.

> So good news and bad news
> I got access to the video cameras.
> Most of them are down.

McCree frowned. He thought about asking but they were close enough by now he could just see for himself.

The family drama had moved on it seems, with just Brigitte standing there glaring at the opposite wall. Her expression brightened when she saw Reinhardt.

Hana was back inside the lab, tapping through the screens while Winston fiddled with the bug program. Hanzo and Genji followed McCree inside.

“Here,” The cowboy stuck the pack of gum in Hana’s face, shoving her hand out of the way.

She shot him a glare but took it, pausing to rip into the pack and pull out three strips of gum.

McCree glanced at all the black screens. “How are they down? Did the kid knock them out when he went in?”

“Doubtful considering he wanted us to keep an eye on the place.” Winston fiddled with his glasses. “The only feed I can get are on the upper floors, which won’t help us.”

McCree scanned through the cameras, most of them black and a couple reduced to static. If Lúcio hadn’t taken out the cameras who did? Was there someone else there?

“The communicator signal is changing locations.” Athena spoke up.

That had them all looking at the main screen. The colored dot exited the room it had been sitting in before heading down the hallway.

“Lúcio?” Genji spoke into the line but there was no response.

“Ugh, if only I could get one of these cameras up.” Hana popped the gum in her mouth.

There was no telling who was carrying the signal. If it was Lúcio why didn’t he respond? The
signal traveled into a stairway and the layout changed as it moved down a floor.

“Where are they taking him?” Genji mumbled.

“We don’t even know it’s him.” McCree said.

“Then why is no one responding?”

“Come on, come on,” the cracking of Hana’s gum increased. Two of her fingernails were lined with dried blood. “Just give me something.”

Genji looked like he was going to bolt back out of the room but Hanzo held him back. The archer searched McCree’s face for an answer but he didn’t have one. They were in the dark, five hours away, there was nothing they could do.

“Guys?”

Lúcio’s voice came out of the speaker and everyone held their breath.

“Lúcio?” Genji almost shouted into the communicator. “Are you okay?”

“Aw, I’m fine, mostly.” He was whispering into the line. “Sorry about the drop, seems my voice shorted the mic on this thing. Only just got it fixed.”

“Did they capture you?” Hana said.

“Do you need us to send someone out?” Winston added.

“Yeah they caught me. I got out. I’ll explain later. In fact, I’ll meet up with you guys in six minutes. Count ‘em.”

The line cut off after that.

“Six minutes?” Hanzo frowned. “Surely he means he will call us.”

It was nothing but silence during that time. They waited to hear Lúcio say something else but he never did. The signal from his communicator barely moved from the room it was now in. McCree glanced at the schematic note that labeled it as a lab.

Then the signal flickered before it vanished.

“Hey!” Hana snapped up. “What happened to-”

The comment was cut off when static jumped through the room. A blue light flickered and pulsed before it opened up into a doorway. McCree’s hand snapped onto his gun.

But out stepped Bastion, the omnic beeping out a greeting. They were carrying something, no one. The woman in his arms was unconscious, dark hair and skin contrasting the bright blue of her dress.

Shit, McCree recognized her.
Lúcio jumped out after with a whoop. The blue light of the teleporter fizzled out before it vanished completely.

“What’s my time?” He pointed to Hana.

She cracked her gum. “Five minutes and thirteen seconds.”

“Yes,” He jumped. “I knew I had this in the- whoa!”

The musician was almost knocked over when Genji all but collided with him, pulling him into a hug. Hana pulled out her phone and took a photo.

“Do not ever do that again.” The ninja warned.

“Aw, come on, I’m fine. I’m fine.” Lúcio glanced at everyone else. “Really, you should have seen it. Not only did I get the data,” He managed to move his arm enough to flick out the drive. “But I picked up a prisoner.”

Bastion gently put the woman on the ground, letting out a few nervous beeps.

“Lúcio,” Winston pushed his glasses up his nose. “Is that who I think it is?”

“Sure is,” The musician pulled himself free of Genji’s grip but kept a hold of his arms. “One of Vishkar’s prized architects,

“Satya Vaswani.”
Chapter Notes

U wanna know who got rly emotional writing this?

Me, I did...

McCree stared at the mug of coffee and plate of waffles as he stepped down the hall. He’d be tempted to eat it if he didn’t think Fareeha would flail him for it. There was no telling why he got turned into the delivery boy for Angela after breakfast but here he was.

She was in her office, like Fareeha said she would be. There was a page of schematics on her screen, a prosthetic arm that looked similar to their new guest, Satya.

It had been nothing short of a shock around the entire base that she was here. Apparently the architect had been hesitant about the entire situation happening at the office, despite the fact she was the one responsible for trapping Lúcio. Some persuasion from the musician at least convinced her to release him and the bastion unit. Apparently she didn’t expect Lúcio to knock her out cold.

McCree hadn’t inquired much about her. All he knew was that she was locked up with her prosthetic barely functional to keep her from making an escape.

“Knock, knock,” He chimed up to get Angela to look away from her screen. Her eyes were tired but her smile was genuine.

“Jesse, what brings you here?”

“Breakfast,” He held up the plate and the mug before placing them down on an empty spot on her desk. “Fareeha said you didn’t sleep well the other night, and you weren’t there for breakfast.”

Angela made a face, like she was searching for an excuse but couldn’t find one.

“Gotta take care of yourself doc. Don’t know why I’m the one reminding you of that.”

She snorted but took the coffee, taking a long sip. “It just seems like new stuff is popping up every day around here. It gets hard to keep up.”

“I know the feeling,” He mumbled. “You know much about our new visitor?”

“She hasn’t said anything yet, that I know of. At least Lúcio mentioned she refuses to say anything. Refused to eat for a while too. I think Lena convinced her once.”

McCree frowned at that. It wasn’t exactly what he’d been picturing.

“We had to add reinforcements to her room. It turns out she also has a spirit.”

He blinked. “What?”
“A spider of some kind. Hanzo saw it by chance, but we haven’t really studied it.”

McCree groaned as he ran a hand over his face. Another thing added to this growing mess. He really hoped Winston was organizing it all better than McCree was in his head.

“Speaking of spirits,” Angela took another sip before putting the mug down. “We need to start practicing together, remember?”

He flinched. His forgetfulness aside that wasn’t his only reason for avoiding it.

“Actually, uh, dunno if that’ll be happening soon.”

She frowned, “Why not?”

“Uh, I haven’t really spoken to my phoenix since I found out about... you know.”

McCree told Winston what he discovered the day after. From there it was one person after another. By now the whole base knew, but no one brought it up. He remembered Fareeha biting back tears, but when that failed he ended up crying with her.

“Jesse,” Angela’s eyes were wide. “That was almost two weeks ago.”

“Yeah?”

Her eyes narrowed into a glare. “I’m certain I’m not the only one to tell you this, Jesse, but separating yourself from your spirit is dangerous.”

“It’s not entirely intentional okay? She’s not saying anything either.”

“I don’t care,” she jabbed him in the chest. “You go talk to her right now, no matter what it takes. You cannot let this keep up, it could hurt you.”

McCree grumbled, but knew she was right. Honestly the silence had been bothering him a lot, but he didn’t even know how to start that conversation.

‘Why the fuck did you lie to me’ might be a good start.

“Fine, I’ll go. But you better eat all of that before getting back to work.” McCree pointed to the plate.

“Fine,” She shoved him toward the door. “Get going.”

McCree wanted to make a comeback but she shut the door in his face. He resorted to sticking his tongue out at that instead.

He stared at his hand the whole way back to his room, snapping his fingers every now and then.

Still nothing.
Any basic attempts to get into his mindscape had failed. He didn’t want to risk falling asleep, knowing it might not work. Instead he tried what he did back when he first started. A stream of relaxing guitars echoed through his headphones as he leaned back on the bed.

It took a little while, his mind trying to jump to other subjects as a defense. Would having a Vishkar agent here just make things more dangerous? Would they be able to shut the company down with the data Lúcio got? They still had to go after Talon in England. They had to track down Reaper.

McCree shook his head. He couldn’t think about that right now. One step at a time.

He focused on the notes of the song, humming along with the tune. Maybe he should pick up his guitar and try to play along.

But in the end it wasn’t necessary. A blast of wind had him opening his eyes, the desert stretching out in front of him.

The wind was cold, harsh, but at least the sharp bits of sand stayed on the ground. The usual glaring sun was gone, but the night sky was anything but comforting. There was no moon to be seen, hardly any stars either. Just an empty black space threatening to swallow everything below it.

It was a wonder he could see with this kind of light. The sand was still bright enough, showing where it dipped and curved.

“Clem?” McCree called out, expecting her beacon of light to show up in the sky somewhere. He looked over at her tree but still didn’t see anything. “Clementine? Hey, at least show me where you are.”

There was still no response to that. He let off a long groan as he trudged through the sand. It felt like ground was sticking to his feet as he walked. He looked down, expecting to see his legs sinking into the sand, but they weren’t.

McCree leaned against the tree for a moment as he scanned the area. In this kind of light she should be easy to spot. She couldn’t just be gone. Perhaps he should check the ruins.

But when he stepped away he glanced down and saw the faint glow of orange. His gaze followed it up to see a tiny flame hidden on the other side of the trunk. The damn thing was smaller than his hand.

“Clem?” He knelt down.

The flame flickered, seeming to shrink for a second. “Hello, Master McCree.”

“The hell? Is that you? Why are you so damn tiny?”

“I am sorry.” That was her only response.

McCree felt an ache in his chest. He swallowed down the pain and slowly reached out, scared that if he touched the fire it would disappear. “Come on now, let’s talk about this okay?”

“I can still feel your anger.”

He sighed and scooped his hands under the fire. It hovered over his palms as he lifted it up.
“Yeah, fine, it hurt like hell to find out you’d been lying to me okay? But this... none of this is going to make it better. Why not explain why you did it in the first place?”

The fire flashed and shifted, taking on a more solid shape. He expected the phoenix to come out, but instead she took on the form of a pigeon. Her feathers were fluffed out, her face almost buried in them.

“I do not know where to begin.” She mumbled.

McCree stroked one of her wings with his thumb. “Did you know Gabe was still alive?”

“I did not. At least not until you encountered Reaper for the first time. I recognized my brother right away.” She lifted her head up. “I could not warn you because we were not in contact at the time.”

“Then why not tell me later?”

She shivered. Her feathers were such a dark shade of red and she shrunk back into her form. “It is... shameful. It was my duty, it had been for centuries, to protect my masters from my brother. Since that arranged marriage, since the task was given to me I took it very seriously. I always made certain he was dragged with me when I was given to a new host.”

“But you didn’t this time.”

Clementine flinched hard enough that her form lost shape for a moment. “A moment of weakness, foolishness. I have been alive for a long time, Master McCree. I have seen many masters come and go. Some I left, others were killed. When I was young it wasn’t uncommon for me to intentionally bring about my master’s end in order to find a more powerful one.”

McCree flinched, trying to imagine her doing that. “I thought phoenix owners could be revived.”

“Iron,” She said. “If you fall to an iron weapon you cannot be brought back.”

“Okay, good to know, but back to my question.”

Clementine let out a long sigh. Her form was lost again but at least the flames were bigger. “It wasn’t until I was given charge over my brother that I bothered to humble myself. I chose to dedicate myself to that task. Letting my master fall to someone’s hands would cause my mission to fail. Over time I became... attached.”

“Huh? What does that mean?”

Her fire curled around his hand once before she took on the form of a raven. “I became involved with the lives of my masters, their children, their children’s children. When Master Reyes mentioned giving me to you I was as excited as he was. I felt everything he did. I allowed myself to become distracted.”

McCree bit his lip, finally putting it together. “You forgot.”

“Initially, I never told Master Reyes about my brother. His presence is often unnerving and unnecessary, unless I’m to be handed over to someone. When the excitement came up, yes, I forgot. It wasn’t until I was in your hands that I remembered. I had no way of telling you or him.”
McCree was astounded at how cold the flames in his palm were. It felt more like clinging to a chunk of ice. Her form faltered again, the fire almost dripping through his fingers.

“I did not tell you about it because I am ashamed. I tried to gloss over the foolish mistake I made, as if it would solve anything. I knew you would find out, but I could not bring myself to tell you, to admit my failure.”

“Clem.”

“My pride has been his undoing, and yours as well. In the end my mistake has hurt you both.”

The pain in his chest was back full force. He couldn’t tell if it was just from him or the spirit in his hands. The dripping flames flashed and shook at the sounds of her sobbing.

“It was my duty to protect you. It was my duty to protect him and I failed on both accounts. You are just in your anger, and I am not deserving of your forgiveness, or his.”

“Hey,” he moved his hands to catch her flames and pull them back up. “Hey, Clem, come on. Pull yourself together will you?”

It took a while. The crying had to stop before the fire could take shape at all. Eventually it grew, swirling up until she took on a familiar form. Her head was still tucked into her neck.

“Listen,” He ran a finger over her head and down her back. “I don’t care if you’re some ancient spirit from who knows the fuck when. I don’t care if you’re a phoenix who can bring back the dead. You ain’t perfect. You’re gonna make mistakes.”

“Such mistakes should not risk the lives of my masters.”

“Hey, I put myself at risk way more than you.” McCree pointed out. “Come on, there’s gotta be a way to fix this. We’ll figure it out. Just... Best you can do is make the decision to do better the next time around.”

Clementine snorted, her flames finally brightening a bit. “You love saying that, don’t you?”

“It’s true, ain’t it?”

“I can’t believe you’ll forgive me that easily.”

“I never hated you Clem,” McCree sighed and pulled his arm closer. “I just couldn’t figure out why you’d do that.”

She studied him for a moment. “Because I’m a prideful bitch.”

He didn’t mean to laugh at that, but he couldn’t help it. “Shit, you’re starting to sound like me.”

“Much to my misfortune.”

“Aw, there’s my sassy Clementine.” He poked her on the chest.

Her flames glowed now as she hopped onto his shoulder. She twisted around the back of his neck,
pressing her head against his cheek.

“I am sorry, Master McCree.”

He scratched under her chin as he leaned against the touch. The fire was warm again, and glancing out at the desert he could see the sun beginning to rise. The black sky gave way to dazzling shades of purple and blue.

“I forgive you,” He said. “Cause I love you.”

The fire on the back of his neck sparked. “I love you too.”
McCree was almost skipping down the hall as he headed for the shooting range. He hadn’t felt this light in days, and kept snapping his fingers over and over again just to watch the flame spark to life.

“I’ve never seen you so amused, apart from that time you won that farting putty in a crane game.” Clementine was laughing.

He grinned at the memory. It was the small things at the time that kept him going. He should honestly look into getting more of that stuff.

“What can I say, I missed this.” This time when he snapped the flame up he let it climb over his palm. He moved his fingers in a rhythm, making the flame spin around. “And it means me and Hanzo can get back to training proper.”

“Mmm, quiet relaxed training instead of noisy weapons. I wonder why.”

“Hey, put a sock in it bird mom.”

“You’ve been getting very snug with him recently. Don’t think I wasn’t watching.”

McCree mumbled and tried to get rid of the heat in his cheeks by rubbing his neck. The flames over his hand danced even higher.

“I’d wager he likes you too.”

“Obviously, since he hangs out with me so much.”

“In a romantic sense, stop dodging the subject.”

“That’s just crazy,” McCree said as he opened the door. “There’s no way he’d-”

The cowboy froze when he realized he wasn’t alone. The moment he saw Jack standing there, armed with his pulse rifle, the light feeling in his shoulders vanished. The flames on his hand fizzled out.

The pair stared at each other for a long time. They hadn’t had any sort of conversation since McCree found out who Reaper was.

“Oh look,” Clementine broke the silence. “It’s my son-in-law.”

McCree barely held back his snort at that comment. Her tone only made it funnier.
Not happy to see him?

“No happier than you. He’s changed, although it seems his spirit has not.”

McCree didn’t know anything about the wolf, and at the moment he preferred to not find out.

Finally he tipped his hat down, “Howdy.”

The older man snorted as he finally lowered his gun toward the floor. “No need to be polite, McCree.”

He frowned, “Believe it or not I’d rather not argue with you. Especially since I’m meeting Hanzo in here soon. Can’t be in a foul mood when he shows up.”

The soldier muttered something before he spoke up. “Do you want me to leave?”

“I don’t own the shooting range, do what you like.” McCree pretended to prep his revolver as he wandered over to get more ammo. Sure he’d love it if Jack would piss off but he didn’t have the right to kick him out.

“How much do you know about that phoenix, kid?” Jack said.

McCree tried to bury his irritation as he snapped the cylinder of his gun shut. “Not that much, you know, considering I’m learning most of it on my own, Jackie.”

He looked back in time to see the soldier flinch at the nickname. “Don’t call me that.”

“Then quit calling me kid, commander.” He sneered at him. “I know you hate me for what happened to Gabe but—”

“No,” Jack cut him off and tossed the gun over his shoulder. “I don’t hate you.”

McCree stuttered and paused for a second. “Could have fooled me with how you were talking last time.”

“You’re the one who broke into my room screaming at us.”

“Cause you were keeping secrets.”

“To keep you from doing that.” Jack stomped over to him. “Ana said that you would. She said if we told you out-right you’d flip your lid, might even run off again to find out for yourself.”

“Christ, stop treating me like I’m still a teenager.”

“Speaking of running off,” Jack’s voice lowered. “That’s what I’m really pissed at you for. What the hell were you thinking?”

“I told you,” McCree squared up this time. He refused to feel smaller. “You have no damn idea what happened.”

“Then explain it to me, McCree, because all I knew is that you vanished. Overwatch was put
under orders to list you as a criminal and I couldn’t get in touch with Gabe for days.”

That made McCree pause. He’d never asked anyone what happened to Gabriel after he left, he wasn’t sure there was anyone to ask. His blood felt cold for a moment and he almost stepped back if not for the feeling of Clementine’s wings at his shoulders.

“There was a fight, okay?” He muttered. “Maybe it was ‘cause of the owl, I don’t know. It got bad, bad enough that I ran off and didn’t look back.”

Jack snorted, “Typical.”

“Hey,” McCree jabbed him in the chest. “You’re the one who decided to play dead all those years. Who the hell was running away then?”

“That’s none of your business.” The soldier growled before he shoulders dropped. “But I suppose what happened between you and Gabe isn’t any of mine either.” He turned around and headed back to his lane. “For the record, I don’t blame you for what happened. Nothing could have stopped Gabe from handing her over, just wish I knew enough to warn him back then.”

“Yeah, yeah, you and me both.” McCree glared after him for a while. He supposed that was as close to an apology as he was going to get out of the old man. Jack had always been one for good manners, but he sucked at apologizing.

Too much damn pride.

He heard Jack growl, glancing up to see the fingers on his free hand fiddling about. The soldier was muttering again, his voice impossible to make out with that mask covering his mouth.

Eventually he sighed, turning back around.

“As much as I’d rather not talk to you,” he put a hand over his chest. “There’s someone else who keeps insisting on it.”

McCree was about to ask who when Jack held his hand out. A white light flashed from his chest, shooting out along his arm before it leapt into the air. It only glowed brighter as it drew closer, the faint shapes of snowflakes scattering into the air. When the light took on its wolf shape it seemed to shine like crystal before growing more solid.

The creature was still taller than McCree, even on all fours. It’s yellow eyes were as intimidating as before, but its tail wagged.

“Greetings young one.” Its voice was unbelievably deep, yet somehow gentle.

“Uh,” McCree glanced at Jack who’d completely turned away from the conversation. “Howdy?”

“No need to feel nervous. I have no wish to harm you. It is nice to see you and my old friend again.” The wolf sat down. “Although she was missing for a while. Did you two have a fight? That’s no good you know.”

The cowboy was barely able to get a word in with how chatty this thing was. Even when it stopped speaking it suddenly nudged him with its nose, sniffing at his shoulders.
“What the hell?” McCree tried to shove the spirit back, surprised when it actually worked. Its fur was soft but it felt cold under his fingers. He glanced at Jack again for answers but the soldier still wasn’t looking in his direction.

“Oh, sorry, I do not mean to be rude.” It laid down this time.

“It’s how he learns about you.” Clementine said.

“Well maybe I don’t want him too. What’s he want?”

The wolf chuckled, tail wagging again. “You are the host of my friend, it is only normal for me to introduce myself.”

“Yeah but if Jack hates me then-”

It snorted, shaking its head. Then it leaned close, close enough that McCree could feel its cold breaths rush past his neck. “He does not. He is too prideful and too hurt right now to admit it, but he worries about you.”

McCree frowned. “Then tell him to quit being a jackass.”

The wolf laughed, lifting his head. “Hear that pup? Quit being a jackass.”

The soldier groaned and finally turned around. “Keep that shit up and I’m calling you back.”

The spirit kept chuckling as he leaned back down. “I apologize on his behalf. I hope that his time here will correct some of the damage. Wolves were never meant to live alone you know.”

McCree wasn’t sure what to say to that. At the moment he didn’t care to make nice with his past commander, but it made a little more sense as to why Jack was acting this way.

And a little more sense as to why the soldier was still hanging around the base.

The wolf’s ears moved forward as it sniffed at the air. “Oh? It seems company is on the way, I best take my leave.” It stood up, nosing at McCree’s face again. “May we meet again soon, child of the sun.”

McCree supposed he was grateful the creature didn’t lick him before it padded across the room. Jack turned and reached out a hand, only to freeze when the wolf licked him instead.

McCree laughed.

“Damn it,” Jack cursed. “I told you to stop doing that.”

“Not a chance, pup.” It pressed its nose to Jack’s chest before bursting into fragments of light that flickered and faded out of view.

Jack wiped at his face and his hair, although there didn’t seem to actually be anything there. McCree wanted to point that out, to use this as a chance to tease him, but just then the door opened.

Hanzo stood there, two mugs of tea in his hands—no, that was coffee by the smell of it. The archer glanced at Jack before he made a point of ignoring him as he stepped into the room.
“What, no tea this time?” McCree grabbed the mug and inhaled the scent. It was certainly different than the last time Hanzo made it.

“Reinhardt and I made some during lunch. I thought to try making it again.”

McCree smiled a bit. “You’ve really taken up cooking with him, huh?”

“It is a good thing to learn, and quite relaxing.” The archer gestured to the mug. “Tell me what you think.”

McCree sniffed at it again before he took a sip. The flavor was certainly much stronger than last time, and Hanzo had the decency to not add any sugar.

“Well, it’s certainly not my favorite sludge.” He smirked. “But it’s miles better than last time. Good job.”

He swore he saw Hanzo’s cheeks go pink. “Ah, well, thank you.” He fiddled with his mug for a moment before taking a long sip.

The mood was shattered when Jack walked by, snorting. “And you used to tease me and Gabe about this shit.”

McCree sputtered at first with the sudden rush of warmth to his neck. “Oh fuck off, Jack.”

The soldier just waved as he headed out the door.

Hanzo frowned as he watched the door. “Was he bothering you?”

“Nah, no more than usual.” McCree took another sip. “Nothing to worry yourself over at least. On a nicer subject, check it out.” He grinned as he snapped his fingers, bringing up his flame.

Hanzo stared at it. “You got it back?”

“Yup, we had a little talk. Things are a little more back to normal so we can-”

McCree almost flinched when he felt Hanzo’s fingers brush against his. The archer was smiling as the fire danced over his skin. Every time McCree’s heart hammered against his chest the flames flared up.

The archer’s gaze softened, brown eyes glowing from the orange light. He let his fingers trail over McCree’s palm, moving up to his wrist. “Uh, Hanzo?” McCree didn’t want him to stop, but wasn’t sure what the archer was doing.

The other man blinked, his smile dropping before he pulled his hand back. “My apologies.”

McCree laugh was nervous but he couldn’t stop himself. “No, no, it’s fine I just uh, nevermind. Um...” He put the fire out and rubbed the back of his neck.

“Gracious you’re behaving like a child.”
Shut-up Clem. He chugged at his coffee, not that it helped with the burning in his cheeks. “So, um, training.”

“Yes, that is why we are here.”

“Think you can show me those electric arrows of yours again? I’ve been thinking of trying something like that.”

“I think healing fire on a bullet would be counter productive.” Hanzo hummed against the rim of his mug. “But we’ll see what you come up with.”

Chapter End Notes

If y’all want to know btw, his wolf is named Whitefang huehue
Chapter Notes

I do not have much to say atm

cept that I have to work on part 9 faster

Quick note tho, working on something reaper76 week (sorta) that's from this AU, so keep half an eye on my tumblr for that (probably later but telling u now in case I don't have an update by the time it's done)

Admittedly, Hanzo never spoke much to Winston outside of mission prep. It’s not that he had an issue with doing so, it more had to do with the fact that the gorilla–scientist–spent so much time closed up in his lab. While other members had no issue with barging in or dragging him out, Hanzo wasn’t the type to do that.

But there were exceptions, such as biting questions about the prisoner they had on base. Hanzo wasn’t fond of her being here and hadn’t completely figured out why Lúcio brought her in the first place. Information was one thing, but the longer she stayed the more they were at risk. Vishkar likely wanted her back, and if she managed to escape somehow they’d be left with a mess.

Hanzo was still working on trusting his teammates, but things like this kept his nerves on edge.

The scientist’s door was open when Hanzo got there. He sat at his workbench, tinkering with a device, a tool in one hand and a banana in the other. Hanzo knocked on the side of the wall.

Winston turned around, pushing his glasses back up. “Oh, Hanzo. Hello there.”

“Hello,” He took it as an invitation to walk into the room. “I apologize for interrupting.”

“Hello,” He took it as an invitation to walk into the room. “I apologize for interrupting.”

“Eh, I should take a break anyway.” Winston picked up his comm. “Darn it, how many texts did Lena send me?”

Hanzo forced back the instinct to peek at the messages. Instead he focused his gaze on the device. “What are you working on?”

“Trying to upgrade our defense systems. Lúcio brought back some Vishkar tech, thought it would help with making shields.”

“Is it?”

“Doing it on small scale is a lot easier than doing it on a huge scale.”

Hanzo nodded in response.

“Speaking of Vishkar, that is what I came to inquire about. How long do we plan on keeping Miss Vaswani here?”
Winston sighed, “I’m not sure. I figured until she gave us some information but getting her to talk is rather difficult.”

“I can think of easier ways.”

Winston shot him a dirty look. “I really hope that was a joke Hanzo.”

The archer just shook his head. “Please continue.”

“I mean getting her to talk at all. She wouldn’t even eat for a while until Lena convinced her, somehow. She’s always had a charm for that I guess.”

“She has a spirit.”

“I’m aware.”

“She’s a risk even with her arm deactivated.”

“I’m aware of that too.”

“Vishkar is either going to want her back or want her dead. The longer she remains here the greater risk she carries.”

“I know, Hanzo.” The scientist snorted. “But I’m leaving these decisions to Lúcio for now. I’ve brought these concerns up to him as well, but we can’t just kick her out the door either.”

Hanzo supposed they couldn’t. It’d be too easy for her to report their location to her company.

“Have we learned anything else?” He asked.

“Lúcio’s report isn’t due for a couple of more days. If you want to know anything now I’d ask him.”

The archer pressed his lips together at that thought. His relationship with the musician was still rather strained. He wasn’t unaware of the amount of fake smiles Lúcio sent in his direction. It made sense, but Hanzo wasn’t sure how to work around it.

Well, avoiding it wouldn’t help.

“Thank you,” Hanzo nodded before he headed out. He paused once at the doorway. “If you wish, we can address the concerns about defenses at the next meeting.”

“Hm, I should.” Winston sighed. “I’ll work on an outline.”

The archer just nodded again before he left.

He considered asking Athena to locate Lúcio for him as he headed down the hall. The musician had too many places that he hung around in. Searching the base would take far too long.

But he didn’t get the chance to ask. When he reached the elevators the doors opened to reveal Ana Amari, swirling a cup of tea.
Her face brightened when she saw him, “Oh, Hanzo, good to see you. I was just looking for you actually.”

He frowned. “I have not spoken to McCree all day.”

She laughed, waving a hand before letting him onto the elevator. “No, not that. We’re at least speaking enough so I can ask after him myself. No, I wanted to ask you something.”

“What?” He leaned against the wall and let Ana choose the floor. The ex-commander was easy enough to talk to, but he still didn’t trust her.

“It came to my attention just how many people here have spirits, and how few of them know how to use them. I believe Mei, yourself, and your brother are the only exceptions.”

“What about Angela and Fareeha?”

Ana shook her head. “Angela is out of practice and Horus is a lousy teacher.”

He paused at the name before realizing she must mean the falcon. Hopefully Fareeha gave it a different title.

“Point is, I would like to teach everyone and I came to ask if you would help.”

Hanzo blinked. “Me?”

She nodded. “Mei is eager to help and I’ve seen what you’ve done with Jesse. I bet between the three of us would could have this whole base ready in a month.”

The archer had to admit it was a good idea. Overwatch could benefit from added power.

“What about Morrison?” Hanzo felt the elevator come to a stop.

“I asked, he predictably said no.” She moved into the doorway as soon as it opened. “Also says I should not get comfortable.”

“How long were you planning to stay?”

“As long as I’m needed.” She smiled. “I know Jack will too, in spite of his griping. He just needs time.”

“What makes you think he won’t leave on his own?”

“It’s not in his nature.” Ana put a finger to her lips. “Eventually he’ll get tired of fighting it.”

Hanzo considered inquiring into that but let it go.

“I was going to meet Mei and Zarya to help test some equipment. Care to join?”

“No thank you, I need to find Lúcio.”

“Oh? Well I saw him and Genji on their way to see Bastion.” She stepped away from the door,
giggling. “Quite a development, those two.”

“You’re being vague again.”

Ana just shrugged and let the door shut.

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Hanzo had only ventured out to this part of the woods twice before, both times searching for McCree. The cowboy turned the visits into a habit, not that Hanzo could blame him. When the weather was nice the woods offered a good escape.

He should use it himself sometime.

He could hear their voices as he approached the cabin. Lúcio was laughing and Bastion beeped to a tune.


“Face it, you forgot Eastwood’s theme song.”

“That’s not his theme song.”

Hanzo peeked around the door. Genji sat the empty bench, Lúcio directly on his lap. The musician was facing him, arms draped over his shoulders.

Oh, that’s what Ana meant.

“Okay, try this one.” Lúcio said.

Bastion hummed out a different tune, making a series of noises to go with it.

“Well now you’re going easy on me. That’s Daft Punk.” Genji tapped the musician’s nose.

“Which one?”

“Get Lucky.”

“Yup,” He pushed his dreads back before kissing Genji’s visor.

Hanzo rolled his eyes and decided to come out of hiding, clearing his throat.

Lúcio jumped and both of them turned to look at him. The musician let go of Genji, flashing a sheepish grin.

“Hello brother,” If Genji was annoyed he didn’t show it.

“You both could at least have the decency to do that in private.”

“Aw, Bastion doesn’t care, do you?” Lúcio looked over at the omnic.

The unit shrugged.
“Ah,” Genji tapped his visor. “I never told you, did I?”

“I think I’ve got it.” The archer crossed his arms. “But it took you a surprising amount of time.”

He snorted, “There’s nothing wrong with being careful. Besides, you don’t get to lecture me about when I ask someone out.”

“What does that mean?”

“When are you going to ask out Jesse? Hm?”

Lúcio let out a low whistle and chuckled.

Hanzo knew his cheeks were burning but he refused to let his expression change. “I do not feel that way towards him.”

“I can hear the embarrassment in your voice.” The musician laughed.

Hanzo scoffed as the pair of them chuckled at his expense.

“Relax, brother, I’m only teasing.” Genji wrapped his arms around Lúcio’s back. “Did you need something?”

Hanzo couldn’t place if the question was genuine or not. When they were younger Genji rarely liked being interrupted when he was with yet another date, but he was a different person now. He pondered how to answer, but when he opened his mouth Bastion wandered over. A flower crown rested in their palm before they put it on Hanzo head.

The archer stood frozen for a moment, blinking before he adjusted it. “What is this?”

“I might have told him how much you loved the last one.” Lúcio smiled and shrugged.

Hanzo sighed but nodded at the unit. “Thank you, my friend.”

Bastion beeped before they returned to their flowers.

Hanzo made sure the flowers were secure before he spoke. “I came here to talk to Lúcio.”

The musician sat up. “Huh? Me? Look if you heard any music it was Hana this time.”

An obvious lie. “I wanted to ask you about the prisoner you brought here.”

“Vaswani? What about her?” He let go of Genji and turned around.

“For what reason did you bring her here? Because the longer she stays the riskier it is.”

“Yeah, I know that.” He twirled one of his dreads between his fingers. “But to be honest I didn’t have a plan. It was just an opportunity.”

“Opportunity?”
Lúcio glanced at Genji. “Did you not tell him what happened?”

Genji looked away and crossed his arms. “It is not my job.”

The musician rolled his eyes but smiled. “Fine, you already know the job went sour. Vaswani had a trap and I got caught up in it. Bastion was nearby, was doing fine until a bunch of employees opened fire.”

The unit made a sad sound.

“Not your fault,” Lúcio called out. “Anyway the kill switch came on and I was cornered. Tried to fight back, use my voice even, then they tased me.” He frowned and rubbed his shoulder. “Damn hurt.”

Hanzo didn’t comment. Electricity barely affected him now.

“When I was locked up Vaswani came in. She seemed... doubtful. I could hear it in her voice. Pointing it out made it worse, decided to try using it to my advantage. Eventually persuaded her in the right direction, sort of.”

Hanzo frowned. “What do you mean?”

“His abilities give him quite the silver tongue.” Genji chuckled.

“Sure does, try not to use it too often, but it helps in a pinch.”

“That’s a lie,” Genji jabbed him in the side. “I know you used it on Hana to get the last of the Oreos.”

Lúcio swatted his hand away and stuck out his tongue.

“So you convinced her to help you?” Hanzo decided to interrupt.

“In a way. The deal was that she’d get Bastion and me out, but I couldn’t take anything with me.”

“You lied.”

“Damn straight,” He leaned back against Genji. “I wasn’t leaving without that data so...” He shrugged. “I studied how she set up her teleporter and knocked her out.”

“How?”

He snorted, “Hit her with my amplifier.”

Hanzo wasn’t sure if he should be disgusted or impressed. While there were better ways to knock out a target, Lúcio succeeded. Not only that, but he figured out how to work the teleporter as well.

“Impressive,” He decided.

“Aww look, I got a compliment from Hanzo.” Lúcio elbowed Genji in the chest.

“Don’t get used to it.” The ninja bumped their heads together.
Hanzo rolled his eyes and knew he should just leave. His brother had always been rather
shameless about showing affection.

His assumption had been right. Lúcio turned around again, placing kisses along Genji’s face plate. The pair had practically forgotten he was there.

He turned to leave without a comment.

Then he heard an alarm.

He spun his head toward the noise. Bastion was already on full alert, dropping the clippers they’d been using.

“Torbjörn’s system,” Genji said. “It must have detected an intruder.”

“Aw damn, I don’t have my gear.” Lúcio got up anyway.

Thankfully, Hanzo was always prepared whenever he left the building. He gripped his bow.

“Genji, take Lúcio back and meet with the others.” He lined up a sonic arrow. “I will locate them.”

“Understood,” Genji jumped up, not hesitating to toss Lúcio into his arms.

“Whoa wait,” The musician tried to jump down. “I gotta be here in case Bastion—”

The unit chimed at them, giving a thumbs up.

Genji didn’t wait for anything else. He darted out of the cabin in a flash of green. Hanzo ignored the rush of air sweeping past him.

He stared up at the unit he barely knew, fully aware of what it was capable of all the same. It stared back, that blue eye expressionless and unmoving.

Hanzo pulled the flower crown back so it was farther out of his vision. “Ready?”

Bastion nodded, their bird taking off and leaving through a gap in the roof.

“Then let’s go.”
Gonna go ahead and toss out a disclaimer that unfortunately Sombra won’t be showing up in this fic outside of mentions, mainly cause I wrote the plot for this down before she was revealed and fitting her in was too tricky

In case you start wondering

Hanzo knew the woods put him at a disadvantage. There were too many places to hide even after he scaled the trees. So far his sight offered nothing. He tried to listen instead as he moved toward the triggered alarm.

The Bastion unit was smarter than he first thought. Before even heading out they took one of the sonic arrows, syncing themselves with their signals. Hanzo assumed that meant Bastion would be able to locate any targets, possibly before he could.

The unit was below him now, its camouflage up and running. The alarm was still going off. Hanzo’s ears were ringing.

His communicator buzzed.

> You got your comm?

McCree.

> No. Do you have any info?

> Ana on lookout. Gearing up with Fareeha. Can’t see anyone. Might be a squirrel.

Hanzo considered that. The system wasn’t flawless. It was built to detect multiple signatures to identify humans and omnics, but anything could set it off given the right circumstances.

That’s what logic said, but his instincts were screaming. Something was wrong.

“Do you see anything my friend?”

Two low beeps were the response. A no.

He took a deep breath, pulling his arrow back. He only had a few and didn’t want to waste them, but they needed a lead.

He let a few sparks travel down his arm, charging the weapon before letting it loose.

The arrow surged past the trees, its signal a high pitched hum that vanished into the brush. Nothing stirred.
Then Bastion made an alarmed sound. So loud Hanzo almost missed the click of a pistol to his left.

Too slow. He turned, but couldn’t see anything. The blast rang out and something hot cut across his shoulder. He fell back off the branch, but latched onto it. The flowers on his head slipped off, jostling the leaves below him.

Another click.

He let go, crashing into the bushes before the shot went off. He heard Bastion shift forms, firing a number of bullets into the direction of the noise before settling down.

Hanzo got back on his feet, ignoring the wound on his shoulder. It wasn’t that deep. He look around, arrow ready, but couldn’t see a target. They had been right next to him. Why couldn’t he see them?

Bastion’s beeps urged him back. He climbed up on the unit, charging a sonic arrow.

He glanced down at the temporary patterns on Bastion’s armor.

It clicked.

He fired off the next arrow, ducking down and grabbing his communicator.

> *They’re invisible. Do we have a way to track heat signatures?*

He sent that message to Winston.

The second arrow seemed to do the trick. Bastion switched back, their gun pointed in a specific direction.

> *Not everywhere. Do you need backup?*

Hanzo looked up at the omnic. Their eye seemed trained on the target, but they didn’t fire. Hesitating out of fear? or something else.

> *Focus on finding them. Might not be alone.*

Hanzo readyed another arrow as he straightened up.

“Do you see them?”

One high pitched beep. A yes.

“Do you have a clear shot?”

Another yes.

“But you’re hesitating.”

He moved around to look at the omnic’s eye. The blue light was flickering.
“It is alright, my friend. I am with you.”

The flickering stopped. The unit shifted forms again, firing into the brush.

Hanzo leapt on top, firing another sonic arrow in that direction. He almost lost balance when Bastion swiveled around, but kept his footing. The bullets had stirred up a lot of dust. He hoped whatever cloaking device they were using wouldn’t be immune to this.

Something shot out of the trees. Not faster than a bullet, but fast enough that Bastion couldn’t react. A small metal device hit his armor, latching on before static flew out of it.

An EMP? Some kind of taser? Whatever it was, Bastion let out a desperate sound, electricity popping between their joints.

Hanzo immediately jumped down, gripping the device. He felt the electricity jolt up his arm, but it wasn’t enough to hurt him. It was stubborn, his nails hurt as he attempted to wrench it from the metal, but he eventually succeeded. It kept running, electricity burning into his palm. The energy made the dragons go wild under his skin, hissing in his ear. They wanted out.

Instead he used it to focus, feeling it jump through the air from his skin to anything it could latch onto. Most of it branched out to the trees, tapping against leaves and twigs.

Then something else drew close enough. Twelve feet away.

Hanzo didn’t hesitate to turn, arrow out. He let the electricity follow it toward the target. The arrow struck.

A scream was his first hint, then the static ran up and down their form, their invisibility falling apart. They had on armor, but not much protecting their stomach where the arrow hit. A mask covered their face, the lights on it going haywire from the electricity.

Finally the energy ran out and they collapsed.

He darted over to check on them, taking the pistol away and removing their belt. It carried a number of clips, disruptors, and a couple of knives.

He didn’t check a pulse, couldn’t with the armor in the way. For now he stuck with disarming them and darting back to check on Bastion.

The unit was still conscious, but the sounds were off. They couldn’t seem to move properly to change their form back.

Hanzo placed his hands on their armor, trying to study the flow of electricity. It came in awful bursts, shooting along wires before cutting off again.

Umi circled over his arms as he tried to take hold of it and steady the flow. He hoped whatever that disruptor did wasn’t permanent.

But after a few moments the pulsing stopped. The electricity in their system flowed much smoother and their sounds evened out. Hanzo risked letting go so they could shift their form.
Bastion’s eye was still flickering, stumbling for a moment, but otherwise the omnic was okay.

Hanzo kept a hand on them, monitoring the energy in their system as he picked his bow back up. The target hadn’t moved from their spot. A part of him hoped they were dead, but not knowing who sent them would just make things more dangerous.

Another alarm went off.

The pair both turned their heads in the direction of the base, the source of the sound. Had someone broken in?

There was more than one intruder.

Hanzo didn’t hesitate to activate the voice reader on his communicator now. “Athena, what is going on?”

“We’ve detected at least two intruders into the building, based on forced entry. We have no visual.”

Damn, they were all cloaked? There was no telling how many there even were.

“Agents Genji and Lúcio are heading to your location.”

Hanzo wanted to argue with that, until he realized he hadn’t reported what happened. He saw Bastion heading through the woods, either back to his camp or toward the base. The archer darted after him, climbing up onto the unit’s shoulder while he focused on responding.

“I took out one target in the woods. Electricity disrupted their cloaking device. We need to find out why they came here.”

“We need to find them first.” Winston said. “I’m trying to use Athena’s vital readings to locate them, but it’s normally only synced into people she has registered.”

“I might have something that can help.” Fareeha said.

“I’m getting the flour.” Tracer shouted.

“That’s not-” Winston sighed. “Mei, your ice should be able to find them, right?”

“I’ll do my best.” She shouted back.

When Bastion emerged at its camp, Genji and Lúcio were already there, much better equipped. Concern laced their expressions as they rushed over.

“You okay there?” Lúcio spoke to the unit before glancing at Hanzo’s injury. “And what about you?”

“We’re fine,” Hanzo jumped down. Genji reached for his shoulder only to be smacked away. “It is not that deep.”

“It’s still bleeding.” Genji crossed his arms.
Hanzo ignored him, “There’s no telling how many intruders there are. We need to seek them out.”

Bastion let off a series of beeps, so fast they melded together. Lúcio squinted into his visor as it all translated.

“Two?” The musician muttered.

Hanzo’s blood went cold. “What?”

“They said there were two of them, but one vanished. Bastion can’t find them anymore.”

Hanzo drew his arrow without thinking, looking back at the trees.

“Brother, you need more arrows.” Genji said.

“I am aware.”

“Head back to the base. We shall scout around out here.”

“What, do you have heat vision on that thing?” Lúcio tapped against Genji’s helmet.

The ninja shrugged. “Some.”

Hanzo rolled his eyes. That alone wouldn’t grant them the advantage they needed, even with Genji’s sharp instincts. His eyes fell on Lúcio’s amplifier.

His hand snapped out, grabbing it. Lúcio shouted in surprise but let him take it as he held it out to Bastion.

The unit beeped and tilted their head.

“Can you sync up with this like you did with my arrows?”

The idea clicked right away, the unit chirping and nodding.

“Oh,” Lúcio grabbed it back. “Like using it as a sonar, right?”

Bastion nodded again.

“Heck yes,” Lúcio fiddled with the settings. “If we do that, sweeping the area should be a piece of cake.”

“I leave you to it,” Hanzo shot Genji a glance. “Try not to do anything foolish.”

“I think that should be my line,” His brother gestured at the injury.

Hanzo ignored it yet again and took off to the base.

The base hallways seemed quieter than Hanzo would have liked, but the communication system was chaos. Team members were constantly chiming in with reports, nothing found so far. It
frustrated Hanzo to no end while he gathered his arrows. Running around the base playing hide and seek wouldn’t help. They needed to know what these people were after.

Winston mentioned it might be the Overwatch member data again, making sure to stand guard among the computers to prevent that kind of attack from happening.

Either way, Hanzo wasted no time asking Athena to use the signals from his arrow to locate where these people might be. He had enough to fire them down the halls as needed. So far he hadn’t found anything.

Well, except for Hana.

“Hanzo,” She chimed when she darted out from a room. “I almost thought you were dead with how quiet you were out there.”

“I did not have my voice communicator.” He tapped his ear and kept moving. “Where’s your mech?”

“Pff,” she snorted. “What, you think she can fit through all these hallways? Nope, just me this time around.” She flipped one of her pistols in her hand, almost dropping it in the process. “Why, you’re not going to lecture me about how dangerous it is, are you?”

He’d considered it for a moment, but Hana was more than capable on her own. He’d seen it in the field. Her aim was sharp and she was quick, capable of taking down targets when her mech was being rebuilt.

Certainly her hand to hand combat needed some fine tuning, but she was used to fighting at a range.

“I imagine you are aware of the danger.” He came to a stop when they turned down a new hall. The lights were off, causing it to fade into darkness. “But I ask that you not behave rashly.”

“Fine, fine, ajusshi.”

He fired an arrow down that hall, hearing it thud against a wall he couldn’t see. He waited a few moments, but Athena was silent.

Nothing there either.

There had to be a faster way to do this.

“I’ve located one of our targets.” Fareeha came on. “McCree and I are in pursuit.”

“Finally learning how to use your vision.” Ana commented.

“Yeah, too bad no one was around to teach me, mom.”

“Not now guys.” Winston sighed.

Hanzo was so focused on the conversation he almost missed Hana nudging his arm.

“Did you hear that?” She asked, gaze and pistol pointed down the hallway they just came from.
He hadn’t, but just to be safe he lifted his bow.

Something flashed on his right.

Hanzo ducked, feeling something rush past his head. He lowered his grip on his bow, bringing it up as hard as he could. It cracked against the intruder’s helmet, causing the camouflage to distort before turning off completely. The armor was just like the last one, leaving a number of weak points.

However the hit didn’t disorient them quite enough. They pulled out their pistol, aiming for Hanzo’s face.

Another shot went off, knocking the gun out of their hand. Hanzo didn’t hesitate to slam into them, forcing them against the wall. His arm shot up to press against their throat as he tried to remove the mask.

He felt another pistol press against his stomach.

*Bang!*

For a brief moment he expected pain until he heard the gun clatter to the ground, the target going limp under his grip.

“Sorry, who shouldn’t act rashly?” Hana spun her gun properly this time.

He let out a breath and let the intruder fall to the floor. “Thank you, but with another one dead we still can’t get any information.”

“So what, I should have let them shoot you?”

He didn’t comment on that, working quickly to disarm them again even if they were dead. Most of the equipment was the same.

Hana took some time to study their armor, rolling them to the side a few times. She tapped the buttons along their wrist, watching as the armor shifted colors.

“Vishkar,” She suddenly said.

Hanzo blinked and looked up. “What?”

Hana pointed to a symbol on their shoulder. “They’re from Vishkar, or at least this is Vishkar tech.”

Damn it, of course. He knew leaving Satya here would put them at risk. A company that built everything on light would, without a doubt, have cloaking devices like this.

“Winston, is Vaswani still in her room?” Hanzo spoke into the comm.

“Yes.”

“Get someone over there, now, she has to be their target.”
“They’re Vishkar,” Hana added.

“She’s right,” Fareeha said. “Our target is down, same symbol on their armor.”

“In pursuit out here.” Genji said.

Damn, how many were there?

If only they could find out.

Another flash caught his attention. He looked down the dark hall, for a moment seeing nothing. Then he tilted his head, seeing the light shift around in one location. The shape of a person, arm out, holding something aimed at Hana.

Hanzo couldn’t move fast enough, no matter how much he wanted to. He reached out, hoping he could force her back, cover her, something.

A flash of red caught his eye. Jack’s visor glowed, bouncing off the target right in front of him before the soldier slammed the butt of his rifle down on their head.

The target hit the floor, pistol sliding out of their grip.

“Watch it,” Jack growled.

Hanzo tried to shove his anger back, knowing he should be thankful the soldier showed up when he did, but Hana didn’t share the sentiment. She was on her feet in seconds, pistol still in hand as she stormed over.

“Don’t tell me to watch it,” She jabbed him on the chest, standing on her toes to make herself taller. “Not when you were probably happy just cozying up in your room while this mess was going on.”

“I’ve been searching this entire time.”

“Oh yeah? Do your X-Men goggles give you super vision?”

“They can read heat signals, yes.” He swatted her hand back. “And I’m not the one dropping my guard just because they took out one target.”

“I’m not listening to any lectures from you.”

Hanzo rolled his eyes as he stood up. This argument needed to stop.

“I suggest you start listening, kid. You’re welcome, by the way.”

“Uh huh, sure, thanks dad.”

“Don’t call me that.”

The archer almost smacked his forehead. Saying things like that to Hana only ensured she’d never quit. Especially if she didn’t like you.
“What, dad? You don’t like being called dad?”

“Kid.”

“Then stop acting like one.” She raised her voice. “You’re not my superior.”

Hanzo almost missed when the target was standing up, silently. He opened his mouth to shout out a warning, but it wasn’t necessary. Hana spun around, stomping on their back before reaching down and tossing them against the wall.

“Got another one,” She reported into her comm.

Hanzo considered it was a bad idea, but he stepped over and put his hand on her shoulder. Her head whipped around to glare at him, but her expression softened with a disgusted huff.

The target groaned. Hanzo snapped out an arrow, aiming it at their stomach in case they tried to move.

“We need to confirm their target,” He said. “That and find out how many others there are.”

“You know what we’re after.” The intruder spat, a feminine voice. “Why you chose to hide a traitor here is your foolish decision.”

“You aren’t here to get her back?” Hana frowned.

“No, she made herself a liability.”

Assassins then? Anger rolled around at the pit of Hanzo’s stomach. He could feel sparks emerging at the back of his neck but he settled them down.

“How many of you came here?” He asked.

“Just shoot me.”

Hanzo was tempted, but he refused without an answer to that question.

So Jack did instead.

In the leg to be exact, one shot. The intruder screamed and gripped the wound.

“Answer the question.” Jack pointed the pulse rifle.

They looked up, expression unreadable behind their helmet. “Six, there’s six of us.”

Hanzo had taken one out in the woods. They had just taken down two more, and Fareeha and McCree had a fourth. That left two unaccounted for.

“Six total targets,” Hana reported. “Genji, Lúcio, did you snag yours?”

There was an eerie silence on the line. Hanzo tried not to let it distract him.

“Uh, yeah,” Lúcio said. “They’re uh, they’re certainly down all right.”
Hana frowned. “You okay?”

“He’s fine,” Ana said. “A bit surprised I guess. Genji wasn’t quite prepared for that nanoboost it seems.”

Someone groaned over the line, but Hanzo couldn’t place who.

“Tell me one of you has a way to secure them.” Jack gestured to their prisoner who was still clutching at their wound.

“I don’t carry around handcuffs, dad, not into that.”

The soldier seemed to shoot her a glare. Hanzo just rolled his eyes and lowered his bow. One step had him standing in front of them. He pressed his palm to their forehead and let out a long pulse of electricity.

They screamed for only a second before collapsing on the floor, muscles still convulsing.

“Whoa, I didn’t know you could that.” Hana grinned.

“I prefer not to. We need to secure them and move on.”

“Go,” Hana waved at him.

“Huh?”

“You and dad—”

“Don’t call me that.”

“—have the best ways of finding them. Head for Satya’s cell. They’ll have to show up there, right?”

“If you think you’ll be fine—”

“I’m not the one with an injured shoulder.” She jabbed the wound. Hanzo flinched and stepped away. “I’ll be fine, quit wasting time.”

Hanzo hesitated, staring at Jack. He didn’t particularly like the soldier, much less trusted him, but there were limited options.

He armed his bow before nodding back down the hall. “Let’s go.”

As the pair of them took off toward the stairs, Hanzo tapped back into the comm.

“Does anyone have eyes on Ms. Vaswani?”

“I do.” Lena whispered. “Hiding out near the door.”

“Any hints on our last target?”
“I set up a trap.” Mei said. “We’re standing by.”

Hanzo hoped that would be enough, but he kept moving up the stairs. Lena couldn’t watch the door by herself without some way to detect the target.

“So,” Jack spoke up. “What’s a Shimada like you doing here?”

Hanzo rolled his eyes as he pushed the door open. He fired an arrow down the hall before he continued. “My brother asked me to.”

“That’s it?”

“Do I need another reason?”

Jack didn’t say anything, but the snort he made told Hanzo exactly what he was thinking.

The archer froze and spun around. “Why are you here, Jack Morrison?”

The soldier seemed surprised for a moment. “Jesse threatened to shoot me.”

“Is he still? You’re free to leave as far as I know.”

He noticed Jack’s fingers fidgeting along his rifle. “We should keep moving.”

Dodging the subject, predictable. Perhaps this is where McCree actually learned it from. Still, Hanzo turned back around. “I suggest you cease assuming you know who I am, soldier.”

Neither of them said anything else as they headed down the hall. Hanzo was too preoccupied with keeping his thoughts from wandering.

He could tell what the soldier was thinking. He considered Hanzo a threat due to his past. Trying to make sense of why an assassin would be here.

Because Genji asked. Because they saved him.

Because, really, he couldn’t imagine being anywhere else right now.

“Got ‘em!” Torbjörn shouted.

“Trap success.” Mei added. “We captured the last intruder.”

Hanzo sighed with relief and slowed his pace. While he’d feel better reuniting with Lena there was no longer a need to rush. She was just around the corner after all.

“Where are we putting them?” Hana asked.

“Lock them up.” Winston answered.

“Eh, I mean the others too.”

“Oh, right.”
“I want their tech.” Torbjörn said.

“Outside, for now.” Winston said. “We need to secure the base.”

“I’m gonna toss them out the window.”

“Hana-”

Winston’s voice was cut off by the sound of gunfire. Hanzo’s blood went cold when he realized how close it was.

“Lena,” Jack took off first, rushing past the archer.

Hanzo shook off his shock as he ran after. Was there one more? That intruder lied to them. There could be even more.

Winston asked for a report but Hanzo couldn’t give one. He skidded around the corner, seeing Jack in front of Satya’s open cell.

When the archer reached the door his breath caught.

Lena stood there, both her pistols still in hand. The intruder was on the floor, dead, from two shots to the back of the head. Satya was on her bed, eyes wide in shock as she pressed against the wall. Strange blue threads hung off the mattress and climbed up to the ceiling.

“Lena,” Jack stepped into the room, gripping her shoulder.

She spun around. Blood was spattered on her face, over her goggles.

“Sorry,” She breathed out slowly. “They almost got past me and I... I couldn’t let it happen again.”

“You did good.”

She breathed out again, holstering the pistols. Jack took her arm and tugged her forward. She let him, her forehead bumping into his shoulder.

Hanzo decided to leave them be and carefully approached the frightened architect. She never looked up at him, eyes fixed on the dead assassin.

She was probably putting it all together.

“Are you alright Lena?” Winston shouted.

“She’s fine,” Hanzo answered. “Our informant lied about the number of intruders. Lena took out another one, there could still be more.”

“I’m on it.” Fareeha answered.

“With your permission I’d like to escort Ms. Vaswani somewhere more secure.”

“Granted.”
Hanzo turned his attention to her. She still wasn’t looking at him. He crouched down to enter her field of vision. She blinked, eyes darting up to meet his.

“Ms. Vaswani, we need to move.”

“They tried to shoot me.” Her voice was an eerie calm.

“I know.”

“Vishkar sent them.”

“That is likely.”

She seemed to be closing off again. As much as Hanzo wanted to give her space he knew they didn’t have the time.

“Don’t worry, love.” Lena chimed up. She spun away from Jack, a smile on her face. “I know we’re kind of holding you prisoner, but we won’t let anyone hurt you.”

Satya pressed her lips together before sitting up.

“Flash.” She said.

“Pardon?” Hanzo frowned.

“Taking flash photos reflects off the armor. Can your security do that?”

“I can do something similar.” Athena cut in. “Thank you, Ms Vaswani.”

The architect looked disgusted with herself as she stood up. With a resigned sigh she glanced between the three of them.

“We should go.”

Chapter End Notes

I swear I thought of that invisibility stuff before she was revealed too and I hc that she stole that tech from Vishkar because light
Chapter Notes

Last bit of part 8, part 9 is in the works tho (and I know y'all will love it)

Also that ficlet I mentioned last chapter, I got it done, but it'll be posted on my tumblr on the 20th. Feel free to look for it then. Reminder my tumblr is ceata88.tumblr.com (also feel free to sends me asks whenever, it keeps me motivated)

Thanks again for reading guys!

It took another hour to secure the base. When Satya was secure with Reinhardt and Zarya, Hanzo set off to help scan everything. As soon as the building was found clear they locked it down. Athena kept an eye outside the base while everyone gathered in their makeshift meeting room, including Satya and Bastion.

The omnic had never been in the base before and seemed a bit nervous. They backed away from anyone who stood close to them, and tread carefully through all the doorways. Zenyatta stuck close by them, assuresing them they were fine, even with the dirty looks Zarya shot across the room.

Satya sat immobile in her seat, Reinhardt behind her. Her gaze was fixed on the table, barely registering what was going on around her. Hanzo didn’t blame her for that.

McCree arrived with Fareeha, his hand resting on her head with his palm glowing. It appeared the excessive use of her abilities had given her a headache. She finally waved him off, taking a seat next to Angela who took over the task without hesitation.

“You okay there darlin’?” McCree asked, standing strangely close.

Hanzo frowned. “I’m fine.”

“Eh, if you say so, want me to get that for you?”

He looked down at the injury on his shoulder. By now the blood on it had gone dry and black, red stains blooming on his skin. He’d somehow completely forgotten about it, but he nodded.

Healing it wasn’t necessary right now, but McCree’s flames always put him at ease. The tension left him when the heat brushed over his shoulder. This time it reminded him of being curled up in a blanket as he sat out on the porch, watching the rain fall in the garden.

He’d wondered a lot what these sensations meant. He figured out they were tied to McCree’s emotions as well as his own, but deciphering them was a bit harder.

If he didn’t think it would be selfish he’d ask McCree to use his flames more often.

Hana’s voice distracted him. He turned to see her entering with Genji and Lúcio, bickering with the ninja. She tossed a towel in his face, gesturing to the splatters of blood all over his armor.
Hanzo knew he’d have to ask what happened later. At least none of them seemed harmed.

Hana eventually turned away and wandered off. She found herself standing next to Jack, straightening up to try and make herself as tall as possible. The soldier noticed her but turned his head away a moment later.

Now she was just being petty.

Still, the image made him chuckle and he noticed McCree was still holding onto his shoulder.

Winston’s sigh at the front of the room was all it took to get everyone’s attention. The scientist rubbed at the bridge of his nose, possibly trying to figure out where to start.

So Jack started for him.

“Mind telling me how seven people leaked through your defenses?”

The comment earned him a number of glares. Hana tried to make herself even taller.

“Watch it,” McCree’s grip on Hanzo’s shoulder tightened, the flames burning hotter.

“No,” Winston said. “He’s right. We’ve been far too lax about getting everything up to date. Torbjörn, Hanzo, when we get this mess sorted I’d like your help.”

Torbjörn snorted. “If you think you know it all, Jack, you’re welcome to join us.”

“Yeah, dad.” Hana nudged him.

Jack growled but only stepped away from her.

“That aside,” Winston interrupted. “Ah, Ms. Vaswani?”

Satya seemed to jump in her seat, her gaze snapping up to the front of the room. It took her another moment to respond. “Yes?”

“There’s no doubt they were here for you. I hope you understand the position that puts us in.”

She studied the floor again for a few moments before shaking her head. “I don’t understand what you’re trying to say.”

Lúcio spun around in the chair he’d taken earlier. “Basically if you won’t help us then we have to let you go. But if we do that Vishkar is going to come after you again.”

Hanzo didn’t miss the look she gave him.

“I don’t understand why they’d want me dead.”

McCree shrugged, finally letting go of Hanzo. “You’re a liability. Even if you’ve told us nothing there’s a chance you might.”

The architect spun around this time, glaring. “I’m one of their greatest assets. This doesn’t make
The archer felt the same anger from before rising up in his throat. He couldn’t actually imagine what was going through her mind right now.

Lúcio snorted, his knees bumping into Genji as he turned. “From the Vishkar you know? Probably not.”

“I will not take the word of someone like you.”

The musician jumped up from his chair. His expression was fixed into a hard glare as he moved to the front of the room, running his hands over the holo screen. “Fine, then what about these?” File after file sprang up. Some were news articles, others were lists of names, locations, photographs. They took over the whole screen, covering each other up as they tried to fit onto the screen. “I’ve collected hundreds of them. Data, facts, articles, an endless list of information proving that place isn’t what you thought it was.”

Satya settled down on her chair, gaze fixed on the screen. She didn’t say a word.

Hanzo considered changing the subject, but Hana beat him to it.

“So, um, what are we doing with the other assassins?” She pulled out a few strips of gum. “Because I’m guessing we can’t keep them here.”

There was a horrible silence that followed that question. Hanzo was certain everyone already knew the answer, but refused to say it out loud. He could feel McCree going tense behind him.

He crossed his arms and sighed. “We find out more about who hired them, if there are any others, and then we dispose of them.”

Hana cracked her gum, rubbing it between her teeth. “Guess that’s that then.”

Jack snorted. “What did you think would happen?”

She shot him another glare, the bubble she was staring to form was sucked back into her mouth with a sharp pop. “I guess I didn’t, you know, I figured I’d let the people in charge make that call. Or are you trying to imply I’m stupid?”

Genji reached toward her only to have his arm shoved back.

Jack fixed his stare on her. “I’m implying that you can’t play the hero that gets to save everyone.”

“Yeah, I know that.” She jabbed him on the chest. “Lúcio knows that, we all know that. Or did you forget that I shot one of them already. I’ll shoot these ones too if that’s what it takes for you to shut your mouth.”

“Hana, you don’t need to do that.” Genji was successful at grabbing her shoulder this time.

“Well someone has to right?” She spun around. “Why not me? Maybe then the rest of you will quit acting like I need a baby-sitter.”

“No one’s saying you do.” McCree said.
“You guys kind of do.” Lúcio muttered as he leaned against the wall behind the holo screen.

“And you’re the worst.” Hana spun back to Jack. “Because you seem to act like no one here has any idea what they’re doing. Who died and made you king, huh?”

He hovered over her, shoulders squared. “Watch it.”

Hanzo felt himself already moving, ready to break up the oncoming fight.

It was interrupted when Winston’s fist slammed against the floor. Everything shook and some of the chairs shifted to the side.

“Enough,” He sighed and adjusted his glasses. “If you insist on fighting do it downstairs. Not here. We are not making that kind of decision right now with everyone this high strung.” He turned back to Satya before anyone could raise any objections. “Ms. Vaswani?”

Her gaze hadn’t moved away from the screen.

“Ms. Vaswani.”

She blinked a few times. “Yes?”

“I’m going to let you decide. If you’re willing to help us then we’ll protect you, otherwise we can’t keep you here. It’s an unnecessary risk.”

She looked determined for a moment and opened her mouth, but she stared back at the screen. Front and center was an article of the Calado building explosion. The text itself was too small to read, but she kept staring at the image attached to it.

“May I have some time to think on it?” She said.

“That’s fine.” The tension seemed to leave Winston’s system.

“And may I request those files?”

“Sure,” Lúcio said. “I’ll bring ‘em by.”

With that she stood up, turning to glance at Zarya. “I think... I would like to be alone for a little while.”

Winston nodded at Zarya who gestured to the door, letting Satya walk out first. Hanzo bumped into McCree when he tried to turn, the cowboy gripping his shoulder again.

“You alright?”

Hanzo studied his reassuring smile. He tugged his shoulder away, looking it over. The wound was gone now, just leftover bloodstains lingering on his skin.

“I’m fine.” He said, glancing around the room. Lena still seemed a bit spaced out, cautiously glancing at Jack who’d moved away from Hana. The young lady was being held back by Genji, her eyes still trying to cut into the back of Jack’s head.
Zenyatta hovered near Bastion. The unit was speaking, the sounds muted compared to the rest of the muttering going on. Zenyatta just nodded on occasion.

“I think,” Hanzo said. “We could all use some time to cool off.”

“Agreed,” Athena chimed in. “The base is secure for now. I’d recommend everyone take time to recover.”

“Indeed,” Winston rubbed at his temple. “You’re all dismissed.”

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Hanzo had intended to hole himself up in his room to meditate, but McCree never left his side as they wandered through the halls. Without the ability to go outside the pair found themselves in McCree’s room instead, boxes of Debbie Cakes tossed around the bed. Fareeha had come to join them after McCree sent her a message.

McCree asked Hanzo if he wanted some tea. In the end the archer decided to go get them all some. He honestly just wanted a few moments of silence.

On the trek there he wondered if the dragons planned to say something. He could feel them moving along his skin, hovering, but they remained as silent as ever.

He didn’t really expect the kitchen to be empty. After all plenty of people used food to ease their stress.

But he didn’t expect to see Jack Morrison there without his visor, making tea.

Hanzo silent footsteps didn’t catch the soldier off guard. His eyes even flicked over before he turned, his gaze fixed on the space above Hanzo.

The archer snorted before he opened the cupboard that contained all the teas. “You don’t seem much like the type for tea. Or perhaps Ms. Amari is influencing you.”

Jack kept his eyes up as he stirred the tea bag around. “She does sometimes, but no, this is for Lena.”

Hanzo paused after setting the tea on the counter. “Is she alright?”

“Fine, a little shaken up. I think she’s associating this mess with what happened in King’s Row.”

He paused as he recalled what the soldier was talking about. He hadn’t even known Lena was present for the assassination of Mondatta. It explained quite a bit about her behavior around Zenyatta.

Jack looked back at the tea, squinting and frowning. He brought the mug up to his nose, only to cringe and lower it.

“Something wrong?”

“It’s spiced,” He rubbed his nose. “Sensitive smell.”
“Ah, well I don’t know how black Lena likes her tea but it seems well steeped.”

“Thanks,” Jack went to toss out the teabag.

Hanzo fiddled for a moment before distracting himself with grabbing three mugs. “It’s good to know you’re looking after her.”

The soldier sighed, turning around. “Look, I know I’m a grouchy hardass, alright? But it’s not like I hate everyone in here.”

“You just think we’re foolish.”

“Yeah, sort of.” The soldier glared for a moment before he shook his head. “But I can’t tell any of you what to do.”

Hanzo agreed with that sentiment, but said nothing else. He simply watched as the soldier made his way toward the door.

“Wall,” Hanzo almost shouted.

The soldier stopped short at the corner of the door, letting out a long sigh. “Thanks,” He said loudly before muttering, “Stop screwing around, I’m holding tea.”

The archer frowned, not sure what that meant before turning back to the counter. He reached for the kettle only to be interrupted by his communicator buzzing.

>Hanz, where’s the tea? :C

>I’m working on it.

>Well hurry, and change Fareeha’s to chamomile. She made herself sick again.

Hanzo sighed and opened the cupboard again.
“Oh Clem,” McCree chimed the second the mindscape showed up. For some reason he couldn’t manage to fall asleep, and staring at his ceiling was starting to get to him.

Besides, there’s something he wanted to ask her.

He glanced around the landscape, seeing her flames flash next to her tree. He darted over, only to skid to a stop when he actually saw her.

She had shifted back into a human form, feathers wrapped around her head like a crown. Her eyes were closed as she hummed and twirled, dancing to a tune that McCree had never heard before.

He didn’t realize he was smiling at first, stepping closer and clearing his throat. Clementine came to a stop, meeting his gaze. McCree bowed and held out his hand.

“May I have this dance?”

She chuckled, covering her mouth with the back of her hand. “Why certainly, kind sir.”

Clementine took his hand and curtsied. The moment McCree tugged her into his arms he spun them both around. She laughed before she kept humming, eventually taking the lead.

“Can’t say I know this song.” McCree lifted his arm to let her twirl.

“Gabriel’s mother used to sing it.”

“Didn’t know you liked to dance either.”

“Many of my masters had an affinity for music.” She pulled away and spun on her own. “Would you believe when I was younger I was summoned to perform?”


When she snorted feathers sprouted around her neck.

“Then again, you are a show off.”

“As if you’re one to talk.” She stepped back over to him and gave him a light shove. “All this aside, you wanted to ask me something, yes?”
McCree grinned. “Yeah, you said Gabe could grow wings, right?”

“I did. You wish to learn.”

“Sure do.”

She crossed her arms. “You need more training for that.”

His smile dropped. “But what kind? Give me something to work with here.”

“You need to learn how to shape fire.” She held out a hand, twisting her fingers. The flame that sprouted up curled around into the shape of a flower.

“How do I manage that?”

Clementine shrugged and let the flower drift into the air. “Like molding, I assume, without touching it.”

He scratched at his chin. “Sounds hard.”

“Perhaps, I wouldn’t know. I have used it to maintain my form for ages.”

McCree blinked and studied her. “This one?”

“Any form.”

He opened his mouth and paused.

“You saw the state I was in when I couldn’t control it.” She pointed at the ground.

“So, what, you normally look like a tiny fire?” He tried to show the height with his hands.

Clementine laughed and gave him a grin. “Tiny? Oh no.”

Her form distorted before bursting into flames. Shades of yellow, orange, and red roared out and up. It spread into a makeshift pair of wings, her white eyes still at the center.

By the time it stopped the fire towered over McCree. Ten stories high, he thought, though it was hard to think with the size of it all.

“Holy hell, Clem,” He put a hand on his hat to keep it from falling back. “Didn’t think you could get that big.”

Her laughter now shook the ground.

“Why do you make yourself so small?”

“Because,” She folded her wings before shrinking toward the ground. It took a moment for the fire to solidify into her typical shape. She jumped up, flying onto McCree’s shoulder and nibbling at his ear. “It is easier to show affection this way.”

“Small bird, big sap.”
“Look who’s talking.” She nuzzled under his chin. “Now, you should go get some sleep.”

“This doesn’t count?”

“Not really, but you don’t need to worry about nightmares.”

The wind picked up for a moment. Sand scraped along the sides of his boots before he sat down.

Clementine wrapped around his neck. “Does it bother you?”

“Nah.”

“You shouldn’t lie to me, Master McCree.”

He sighed and ran his hands up his face. He’d been trying not to think about it. There wasn’t much to remember. Two bullets was all it took.

“You could have said no.” She leaned against him.

“And then what?” McCree dropped his hands. “Winston would have had to ask someone else. Hanzo, Hana, Fareeha, shit, at least I’m used to this line of work.”

“You were trying to get out of it.”

“Yeah, well, I can’t. Someone’s gotta do it, right?”

Clementine sighed. “I suppose, but please refrain from burying it. Your teammates are concerned.”

McCree frowned, recalling how much the others had been pestering him the past couple of days. Genji, Hanzo, Lena, those three in particular always seemed to be barging in asking if he wanted to do something.

“Hate talking about shit,” He sighed.

“Oh, I’m aware. Master Reyes was much the same. My lectures were always ignored.”

“Maybe ‘cause they’re annoying.” He lightly shoved her head away.

“Foolish,” She mumbled. “Go get some sleep.”

“I’m fine right here.” He fell back onto the sand, forcing her to fly up. “Couldn’t sleep anyway.”

Clementine landed on his chest, quickly settling down. “Maybe the comforting embrace of a certain someone would help.”


She tilted her head.

“You still got things to tell me.” He ran a hand down her back. “Specially since you got me all curious about your past.”
“It hardly matters. I was very different back then.”

“But that’s why I’m curious.”

“Hmph,” Her feathers rose up for a moment. “Very well. As I might have mentioned before, my purpose used to be very different. I was created as a spirit of war.”

“Whoa, slow down.” McCree lifted his head. “What you were made for? Like someone made you?”

Clementine sighed, “Well yes. Spirits do not form from nothing. Back then, rituals to form us were the common practice.”

“Never heard of those.”

“The tradition died out. It’s hardly necessary anyway.”

“So where did Lúcio’s come from? Or Bastion’s?”

“I do not know,” She pulled at her chest feathers. “There are hundreds of ways we can form. We are nothing more really than concentrations of energy.”

“Huh,” McCree poked her a couple of times. “Guessing you weren’t as potent back then as you are now.”

She nipped at his fingers. “My life has been long, full of changes. For the longest time my only healing was the revival of my masters. My flames were used as a weapon.”

He tried to imagine it, this maternal phoenix wreaking havoc on others. “What changed?”

“A new master. Us spirits can only grow from our bonds with our hosts. My past masters used me as a weapon, but one refused. She stole me, you know, my master before her was trying to conquer her homeland. Once she had me she... only used my flames for warmth. Two generations later I was given charge over my brother.”

“Honestly,” McCree adjusted his hat. “I’m having trouble picturing you being dangerous. Did the switch bother you?”

“At first, yes, I had known nothing but war my whole life, but I would never go back.” She hopped forward and nuzzled his cheek. “To love and heal others is a much better use of my abilities.”

“Sap,” He chanted.

“Perhaps, but in truth those were the days I became as powerful as I am. Not many spirits can boast the ability to raise the dead and heal others.”

“Prideful sap,” He smiled.

“Hush, you got your story. Time to sleep.”
“Aw, come on mom, ten more minutes.”

She pecked him on the nose. “Bed time.”

“Worst mom ever.”

Clementine jumped onto his face. “Bed.”

“Augh! Damn it Clem!”

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“So,” McCree strummed his fingers over the guitar strings. “That’s the one about John Henry.”

Bastion repotted flowers nearby, letting out three beeps.

“Is it true? I like to think so. I guess humans have been fighting against technology for centuries.”

Bastion made a wistful sound.

“Aw man, I should tell you about Pecos Bill. How could I forget him?” He plucked at the strings. “A cowboy raised by coyotes. He used a rattlesnake as a lasso and even used it to catch a twister.”

The omnic straightened up with a loud beep. Then they tilted their head before shaking it.

“It’s true.” McCree laughed. “He rode a cougar. Wrestled a lake monster. Shot the stars out of the sky.”

Bastion sighed and shook their head again. They pointed up.

“They came back.” McCree kept laughing to himself. “Well, even if it ain’t true I loved those stories. Mamá used to tell them to me. I swore to her one day I’d lasso the moon out of the sky.”

The unit chuckled at that and went back to work.

“Hey now, I was only eight.” He plucked a few more strings before setting the instrument down. How long had he been out here? It felt like an hour break turned into most of the afternoon.

He checked his communicator. Three hours. Hanzo sent a message about what dinner was. He could almost smell the curry already and ignored the urge to send a smooching emote.

> Is Satya lending a hand?

> Yes, actually. She said she did not want to loiter around any longer.

The architect had agreed to help them after a few days of doing her own research. While it was obvious she was hesitant to trust any of them she’d gained clearance to move about freely. So far she hadn’t taken the chance to run.

For a moment he wondered how she’d get along with Hanzo. Then he recalled the similar expressions they made when Lena shoved straws up her nose.
They’d get along fine.

McCree considered heading back, watching Bastion breathe new life into a wilted stem. The plant straightened up before its buds bloomed.

He lit a flame in his palm, twisting his fingers. The fire shifted but didn’t change. He didn’t know where to start on keeping it in one shape. The flames wouldn’t stop moving. He twisted again and again, even trying to move it with his other hand. He’d be satisfied if he could make a sphere, much less a flower.

Instead, the fire crawled up and curled around his fingers.

He watched it pop when he sighed in frustration.

Bastion’s curious hum broke him out of his thoughts. The omnic had moved over to the bench, pointing at the flames.

“Trying to shape it. Like uh, molding I guess. Maybe into a flower?”

They sounded excited and stepped closer, holding out their hand. McCree watched as tiny vines sprouted out of their joints and curled up. Bit by bit they twisted together, and elaborate set of knots. When it came to a stop the plants had formed into the shape of a rabbit.

“Whoa,” McCree reached toward it but stopped himself. “You can just do that?”

He couldn’t translate the noises Bastion made as they gestured for McCree to take it. He did, gently plucking it from its stems and studying it. Damn thing even had tiny flowers for eyes.

“Wish you could teach me.”

More beeps as the unit took the rabbit and placed it on McCree’s hat. They kept speaking, holding up a finger, trying to draw something in the air.

“Sorry buddy,” He shrugged. “Without Lúcio I don’t got a clue what you’re trying to say.”

Bastion sighed, their fingers fidgeting as they looked around the cabin. Eventually they whistled out and Ganymede popped out from one of the young trees. The yellow bird tweeted back a reply as it flew over onto Bastion’s shoulder. The unit pointed at him, nodding.

“Uh, you want me to try making a bird instead of a flower?”

Bastion nodded, beeping at Ganymede again. The bird flittered over onto McCree’s arm, chirping at him as it fluttered its wings.

“Still not sure quite what you’re saying here.” McCree frowned. How would making a bird be any easier than a flower? There were more details to it.

Ganymede didn’t stop moving, still flapping his wings.

Right, fire moved.

It didn’t make any sense to try making something solid on his first attempt. Fire wasn’t like ice or
plants. He should try making something with motion.

The bird took off when he started trying again, snapping up the flames and making them big enough to work with. Shaping them took a ridiculous amount of concentration that he prayed got easier over time. He tried doing it two-handed again, pulling the flame out with his palms and letting it stretch out into a thin strand. Amusement made him smile as he watch it spin around and around like a jump rope. Heck, maybe he could use it like some kind of whip. It was worth trying, but not in here surrounded by plants.

He twisted it faster, pushing his hands together and let it turn into a spiral. It seemed to spin all on its own, going so fast it looked like it changed directions. He turned his hands over, moving slowly as he balanced the fire on one finger. Somehow he could feel it now, the shape and the motion, despite it hovering above his hand. He moved his fingers, pressing down on it, watching it change. With his other hand he tugged at the outside, pulling the flames out into vague wings.

He wanted them to move, willed the fire to do it. The fire shook before it flapped its new wings, taking off into the air.

Well, it didn’t look exactly like a bird, but it was a start.

Ganymede chirped and took off after it, herding it away from the plants.

“Uh sorry,” McCree scratched at his head, almost knocking the rabbit on his hat off. “I’m not sure how to control it now.”

Bastion shrugged before pointing to the watering can.

Eventually the flames fizzled out on their own. McCree was about to try again when his communicator buzzed.

> Dinner is almost ready. Where are you?

> omw darlin

“Food’s ready, you coming with?” He asked as he stood up, grabbing his guitar.

Bastion seemed surprised by the question, tilting their head.

“Yes, you. You’re not still banned from the base or anything. I mean, I’ll get if you don’t want to since you don’t eat and all that.”

The unit seemed to hesitate, looking at Ganymede as if the bird had the answer. He chirped and landed on Bastion’s shoulder, urging them on.

Bastion nodded.

“Awesome, I’ll tell you about Paul Bunyan on the way up there.”

The unit beeped in curiosity.

“He’s totally real too, by the way.” McCree snickered as he headed outside, already forming another flame on his palm. He tried to shape it into bull horns.
They seemed to snort at him.

“I ain’t a liar. We can ask Athena when we get in.” He kept laughing to himself.

The beep that followed made it sound like Bastion planned to do just that. McCree knew the omnic wasn’t fooled, but it was fun to egg them on anyway.

The fire had taken the shape of a pair of horns. He flicked his fingers to distort them again.

Time to aim for a whole bull.

Chapter End Notes

Some bonus stuff for y’all

Smol doodle of White Fang if you like

Also if you missed them I wrote some ficlets of Jack and Gabe in this AU Here and Here possibly will have some more in the future
Man I just?? Love Winston and McCree

The smell of peanut butter drove McCree insane as he headed down the hall, tin in hand. It didn’t help that the cookies were still warm, feeling the heat against his right hand. Oh how tempting it was to open the tin and sneak a few.

No, no, he couldn’t do that. He convinced Hanzo and Reinhardt to make them so he could make up for the ones he stole. It wouldn’t work if he just stole more of them.

Though he didn’t think Winston was actually that upset by it. The scientist hadn’t mentioned it since that time in the elevator.

But McCree still felt a bit guilty.

Besides, he figured the big guy could use a pick me up. The two times McCree had gone to visit before he found him passed out in his lab. The work to reinforce the defenses was one he took seriously, making sure all the tech was running and capable. He’d heard a rumor from Mei that Satya had even lent a hand recently at developing the shield, but she couldn’t confirm if that’s what it was.

New defenses for the base, mapping out their attacks on Talon in England, trying to track down Reaper’s location, keeping a half eye on Vishkar, those alone were enough to make McCree’s head spin. How Winston dealt with it all was beyond him.

He peered into the lab’s open door to at least find him awake this time. The prototype shield was glowing in front of him, apparently stable this time around.

“Knock knock,” McCree said as he tapped his prosthetic against the side of the door.

Winston shut the device off before he turned around. “Ah, McCree.”

“Winston, what did we talk about.” He smiled as he stepped into the room.

“Right, pardon me, Reyes.”

McCree tripped over his own feet, tried to blame the wires instead while he sputtered. “What?”

Winston was chuckling as he stepped away from the desk. “You did say your full name was Jesse McCree Amari Reyes, didn’t you?”

“You cheeky bastard.” McCree tried to laugh it off but someone actually using that name left an uneasy feeling in his stomach. “You can just call me Jesse, you know.”

“I know, but I forgot.”
He tsked as he finally got close enough to hold out the tin. “Here, these are for you. Make up for the ones I stole.”

Winston was possibly a little too eager with opening the tin. He seemed to study the cookies way longer than was necessary. “Did you make these?”

“I helped, but it was mostly Reinhardt and Hanzo.”

“Thank you Jesse,” The scientist was already nibbling. “This wasn’t necessary.”

“Naw, but I still felt a little bad about it.”

“A lot of us eat when we’re stressed.”

“What? No, that wasn’t it.” He put his hands behind his head as he wandered over to the console. Plenty of files were strewn about, possibly organized but not in a fashion that he understood.

“Hmm,” Winston hummed as he ate another cookie. “So you ate through half a cheesecake the other day because you felt like it?”

“You know Winston, you should really just socialize with the base instead of watching them through cameras.”

“Lena told me about it.” The scientist stepped over to stand next to McCree. “I’m still sorry for asking you to do that.”

“I agreed to it.”

“I know but,” He stared at the tin before actually putting the lid back on it. “Honestly, I’m not built to make calls like that. I’m not meant for a job like this.”

“You’re doing fine.” McCree slapped his shoulder. “I mean, tough calls aside I can’t fathom how you manage all of this.” He gestured to the screens. “Just thinking about it gives me a headache.”

“The computer does most of it,” Winston adjusted his glasses.

“Yeah right, look don’t stress too much. We all trust you to make the right decisions.”

“I know,” He sighed. “But I’m not sure I’m worthy of that trust.”

McCree frowned and looked back at the data on the screen. Sometimes, even with their family as big as it was, it also seemed too small. If their entire operation wasn’t illegal they could afford to reach out and find more people.

“Maybe you just need some help. A second in command.”

“Huh?”

“I mean, obviously you can’t run everything by yourself. And who’s in charge when you have to go somewhere? And no, Athena doesn’t count. No offense ma’am.”
“Non-taken.” The AI spoke up.

“I suppose you’re right. Do you think anyone would even want to take that position?”

McCree shrugged. “You can always ask. Think about it. In the meantime you got anything new?” He let his curiosity get the better of him, tapping on one of the articles featuring Reaper. There was no photo attached, just a list of victims. McCree didn’t recognize the names but apparently they were previous members of Overwatch.

Why did Gabriel—no, that owl—want to go after them?

“In terms of something useful? No.” The tin was open again. Winston stuffed two cookies in his mouth before he held it out to McCree.

He wanted to insist they were Winston’s, but if the scientist was offering he’d take one.

“I’m barely sure where to start with this mess. But I think taking out those Talon bases in England is a good start, if they’re still there.”

McCree shrugged. “There or not we might be able to find something useful by digging into them. I’m all over it.”

“You sure?”

“Yup, stealth is my thing after all. In fact I bet Genji and me can knock them out before you know it. Just give us the locations and a plane ride.”

Winston frowned. “Jesse, I know smaller groups are better for stealth but I am not sending the two of you over there by yourselves. Especially not after what happened on your last stealth mission.”

He cringed, wondering how to backpedal from that. Winston wasn’t wrong. If Reaper or any other large threat showed up they might not manage to escape.

“We’ll decide on others to go on stand-by.” Winston compromised. “And later. I’m not sending anyone out until our defenses are up. We can’t risk having anyone come after you.”

“You got it, sir.”

“I don’t like that one either.”

McCree chuckled. “Hmm, how about Professor?”

“That just sounds weird.”

“Come on, Winston. Give yourself a little credit. You’re in charge of Overwatch and a very potent scientist. We have to have some kind of title for you.”

Winston seemed to muse over the idea but didn’t reply as he ate another cookie.

McCree dropped the subject, glancing back over the files before his gaze fell on the photos next to them. He noticed there were a few more since last time. One was a cramped group selfie they took after they first responded to the recall. Winston was in the middle with McCree, Genji, Zenyatta,
Reinhardt and Lena holding the camera. Still, his gaze drifted over to the older ones. He gave a fond smile at the one of Angela and Torbjörn, wondering when they could have a costume party next.

Then he looked at a much younger Winston with his mentor—father—McCree had never been clear on which it was.

“You know,” He tapped the photo. “I don’t think I know much about your dad.”

“Mentor,” Winston corrected.

“Eh? Is that so? At least what I did hear it sounded like he was more than that.”

The scientist put the tray of cookies on the desk. “I never really got the chance to call him that.”

“Oh,” McCree cringed and scratched his cheek. “Sorry.”

“It’s fine, it was a long time ago.” He sat down. “What did you want to know?”

“Ah, I don’t know. I... How did that even start?”

“I couldn’t tell you.” He nudge the tray of cookies over. “I heard once that my curiosity granted me greater learning capabilities, and they wanted to test it. But remembering the things I did learn, I assume I reminded him of his family.”

“Eh?”

“He had one once, I saw a photo of them before in his office, but I never saw him talking to them or about them. I have no idea what happened to them.”

McCree took a shaky breath and grabbed one of the cookies. At least the chewing kept him from getting out a cigar.

“Ah, he started teaching me after I stole his glasses one too many times. He got books, toys, even one of those beginner’s chemistry kits. After a while they let me into the lab and I even got to assist him and the other scientists with their work.”

“Aw,” McCree looked back at the photo. “I’m trying to imagine tiny you climbing up on the counters to read science papers.”

Winston snorted and gave him a light shove. “I had gotten a little bigger by then.”

“Just a little? Jeez Winston how much growing did you do?”

The scientist ignored the question. “Harold was always telling me stories of Earth, its history and its science.”

“You ever hear about Pecos Bill?”

Winston gave him a strange look. “That cowboy legend?”

“Ah-ha, you have. Oh my gosh.” He grinned. “No, no, we can talk about it later. I never even knew his name was Harold.”
“Yes, Harold Winston.”

“You took his name too, huh?”

“Well, I needed a last name. I was never assigned one.”

McCree almost choked on his cookie. “Wait, last name? Like you have a first name.”

Winston glared at him. “Yes.”

“What is it?”

The glaring continued. The scientist glanced up and down, clearly debating telling it in the first place. “It barely qualifies, so I don’t use it, but back then the scientists used to just call me Buddy.”

McCree had to put his fist over his mouth to keep himself from spitting out crumbs. A sharp inhale sent them down his windpipe instead and he started coughing while melting into a fit of laughter.

Winston grumbled something.

“Buddy? Your first name is Buddy?”

“Don’t.”

“Oh my god, and I thought—”

“Jesse, I don’t need math to figure out how fast I’d be able to break your neck.”

He snapped his mouth shut, knowing the scientist was partially kidding. There’s no way Winston would kill him, but pushing the joke too far might result in him getting tossed across the room.

“Sorry,” He cleared his throat. “Won’t tell a soul. You have my word.”

Winston snorted and turned away.

McCree could feel it, the inevitable question hanging in the air. He wondered if Winston did as well.

What exactly happened on that moonbase? He’d only heard the one sentence version of it. Everything else about it had been classified.

But it wasn’t his place to ask.

“I suppose,” Winston put the lid on the cookies. “Because of how the scientists treated me I never had the desire to revolt with my siblings.”

“Was... there no way to escape?” McCree supposed it was a stupid question.

“No, launching a rocket isn’t like working a plane. It requires a lot of math in place, all of which you have to set up on the console.”
“But you built one of those yourself?”

Winston shrugged.

“Don’t shrug at me, what the hell.”

“All I had to do was find the parts and some schematics.”

“Nah, nope,” McCree clutched his head. “I can’t even begin to figure it out.”

“It took me months to actually finish.”

He frowned at that. “How come the others didn’t attack you too?”

Winston’s expression didn’t change, yet suddenly all McCree could read in his eyes was loss.

“It... all happened rather fast. Harold and I managed to get away, but there was nowhere to run. I knew it. He knew it. He... We were at least trying to lock ourselves in the communication hub to report what was happening. He locked me out.”

“What?”

“He knew if the others found me helping him they’d kill me too. So he shut me out, begging me to play along and stay alive until I could get out of there.” His eyes were so distant now, fixed on a spot on the ceiling. “He forgot to lock the opposite door.”

McCree felt his throat go dry. Everything in the room seemed to slow down to a halt.

Winston seemed to see right through his expression. “No, the door wasn’t sound proof.”

God, oh god. His skin felt numb as he looked back at the photo. No damn wonder Winston was so attached to his glasses.

At least McCree had been miles away when the Swiss HQ went up in flames.

A slap on his back brought him back to reality. Winston had a sad smile on his face. “Don’t feel bad over it Jesse, it was years ago.”

“Yeah but-”

“It was hard, but lingering on it was useless.” His stare turned firm. “And listen, I’m not much for life advice. I mean, I’m not even really human but... My mentor wanted me to stay alive. That’s why Reyes gave you that phoenix, right?”

McCree swallowed. “Yeah.”

“Then you shouldn’t feel guilty, not about the sacrifices other people choose to make. My mentor—my father—wanted me to live and see the Earth, so I did. What are you going to do?”

He blinked, not sure how to answer that question. All Gabriel had asked him to do was stay alive, that was it.
“You have to stay alive for that.”

He never understood the man’s motivations. Why on Earth would you give a powerful spirit to a kid you’d picked up off the street? Even if Gabriel saw him as his kid it never explained why.

Why.

Why him?

He glanced back at the screen. The article was still floating in front of him. He read off a few of the names before letting out a breath.

“I’m going to save Gabe.”

“Well,” Winston adjusted his glasses. “When you find a way let us know. We’ll be right behind you.”

He couldn’t help but smile, leaning his shoulder against the gorilla’s.

“Thanks big guy.”
McCree idly blew at the hot mugs of tea in his hands, though he wondered if it would have much effect in the long run. His warm grip tended to affect whatever he was holding. Still, it’d be nice to not have steam blowing in his face as he headed for the training room.

“Mornin’ Hanzo,” He actually practiced the line as he held out a hand. “Tried some tea again, tell me what you think.” He frowned and shook his head. “Nah, no way, that’s too simple.”

“**Good grief child.**”

“Hush, it’s all about delivery.”

“**Just ask him on a date, you coward.**”

“Nope, was hard enough to make it this far.”

“I’d do it for you if I could.”

McCree laughed as he lingered outside the door. “Are you trying to say you want to be my **wingman**?”

Clementine squawked at him, making him laugh harder. When the door opened he took a deep breath, ready to deliver his line, but stopped short when he realized Hanzo wasn’t the only one in there.

“**Jesse,**” Mei waved. “I’m glad you could make it. You never responded to my message.”

Message? Shit. He left his communicator in his room.

She must have noticed his expression, shaking her head. “You didn’t get my message, did you?”

“Aha, sorry. Got wrapped up in other things. What’s going on?”

“Training,” Her eyes glittered. “We figured it’d be a good idea to help everyone get familiar with their spirits.”

“You too?” McCree looked at Hanzo.

The archer nodded. “Ana requested my assistance. I agree that it would help the team if we could expand our abilities.”

McCree ignored the twinge of disappointment. They were right, after all.
“Don’t worry,” Ana spoke up the moment she came in. “I’m sure you two can find something even better to do.” She grabbed McCree’s shoulder and laughed.

He didn’t dare ask what she meant by that.

“Aw, is this for me? You shouldn’t have.” Ana snatched the mug out of his hand.

“I didn’t, they were for me and Hanzo.”

The archer shrugged. “She may have it, if she likes.”

“ Heck no,” McCree strode over to him. “She can have mine. You gotta tell me how I did.”

He ignored Mei’s giggling, not missing the symbol she drew into the air. Hanzo took the mug and inhaled some of the steam before taking a sip.

“Hm, a bit strong, but much better than last time.”

McCree grinned. “Told you I’d figure it out.”

“I never truly doubted you could.”

The comment took him off guard. His smile fell and he found himself staring at Hanzo, studying the light curve of his lips.

His trance was cut short when the door opened. Lúcio stood there with Genji and Bastion behind him.

“Hope we’re not too early.” The musician was grinning. “Bastion was excited.”

The omnic waved. A whole row of flower crowns hung from their other arm. McCree guessed they wanted to make a good impression.

“You can never be too early.” Ana sipped her tea. “It’s nice to see you all.”

Bastion beeped a greeting and held out one of the crowns. Ana took it with a smile, putting it on her head.

“Hm, you teaching.” Genji made his way over to Hanzo. “I imagine this will be quite interesting.”

“I have taught before.”

“Did you?”

“Yes,” He narrowed his eyes. “Back when you’d always skip training.”

Genji laughed. “Ah, yes, that is true.”

Fareeha and Angela showed up together. Ana briefly teased them, causing Fareeha to wander over to McCree.
“At least she’s finally teaching me, I suppose.”

McCree shrugged, taking a flower crown from Bastion and handing one to her as well. “I look forward to seeing what else you can do.”

“Oh, wait until you see the new trick I learned.”

He didn’t get a chance to ask. The door opened once more to reveal Satya and Brigitte. The armorer seemed to be talking about something, Satya nodding along.

Ana greeted them both and McCree didn’t hesitate to head over.

Satya eyed him with caution. He kept up his grin, tipping his hat. A few petals from the crown fell off.

“Howdy, don’t think we properly introduced. I’m-”

“Jesse McCree,” She said. “I have heard.”

“Oh? From who?”

“Ms. Oxton likes to talk.”

McCree laughed and held out his hand. “That she does. Nice to meet you all the same.”

Satya stared at his prosthetic, her expression briefly changing before taking it. Their hands clacked together, a contrast of grey and white.

“Your arm is...” She narrowed her eyes. “Rather unrefined.”

He blinked before laughing again. “Yeah, suppose it is. But if it ain’t broke don’t fix it.”

“But it could be improved.”

“I’m sure,” He let go of her hand. “But it’s not a priority right now. Thank you, though.”

She studied him before nodding.

“Okay,” Mei clapped her hands. “I’m glad you’re all here.”

McCree snorted, letting Satya have her space. “Jack’s not.”

“I tried,” Ana shrugged. “Shame really, but no matter. If you would, Mei.”

“Right, um,” She cleared her throat. “I guess first, I know these spirits can be a bit confusing. If you guys need answers feel free to ask me. I should have it, somewhere.” She fidgeted for a moment. “Spirits are varied on their power and abilities, so training will have to be a bit varied. But first,” She clapped her hands again. “I’d like to see what you’ve got. It’ll give us a place to start from.”

Genji gave Lúcio a nudge. “Show them that trick.”

“Too late,” McCree said. “We’re all curious now.”

True enough, everyone’s gazes were fixed on the musician with anticipation. For a moment, he seemed uncharacteristically shy. Then he cleared his throat.

“Okay then, ready?” He straightened up and put a hand over his eyes.

“Hey!” Jack’s voice came out. “Will you shut that crap off?”

Ana almost spat out her tea. Genji was already laughing, gripping Hanzo’s shoulder for support.

“Oh my god,” McCree grinned. “It sounds just like him.”

“Do Reinhardt.” Brigitte shouted.

Lúcio puffed out his chest and crossed his arms. “My friends, can I interest you in a few rounds of Dynasty Warriors?”

More laughter erupted.

“Do my mom.” Fareeha shouted.

“Do my daughter.” Ana countered.

The musician grinned. “‘I can’t believe you. That nutty buddy was mine.’ ‘I didn’t see your name on it.’ ‘I thought you wanted to get on my good side.’”

It was flawless. McCree had to grip his side to keep himself upright.

“Do Hanzo.” Genji’s visor kept flashing.

Lúcio’s expression turned serious. “Genji, you should not behave so shamefully. It reminds me of how single I am.”

Hanzo didn’t seem impressed, but Genji was laughing so hard he had to drop to the floor.

“Holy shit,” McCree wheezed. “Why didn’t you show us this before?”

“Cause,” Lúcio used the cowboy’s voice to respond. “I didn’t think it was important.”

“Actually,” Ana became serious now. “If we ever hack into an enemy’s line you could easily confuse them.”

“Maybe,” Lúcio glanced to the side. “Problem is I can only mimic voices I’ve heard, and then it takes practice.”

“It’s an idea.” Mei encouraged.

“I can also scream really loud, uh, probably shouldn’t test that. And I can sort of hypnotize people?”
Satya made a noise of disgust. McCree glanced at her to see her left hand moving, weaving it seemed. He caught a glimpse of a thin, gold light.

“So yeah that’s- whoa!” One of Lúcio’s legs jerked forward, causing him to land on his back with a sharp thud. Genji was by his side in half a second.

McCree was going to ask what happened but a soft chuckle answered his question. Satya hand a hand to her lips to hide her laugh. A bright gold thread dangled from her fingers and trailed along the floor over to Lúcio’s left leg.

“Hey,” His expression was a strange blend of a pout and anger. “What was that for?”

Hanzo shrugged. “We did ask all of you to show your abilities.”

“You’re just taking her side because I made fun of you.”

The archer didn’t answer that.

“Oh, I’m sure you’re fine.” She was still smiling as she pulled the threads back.

“They’re very lovely,” Mei smiled. “What else can they do?”

“Construction, mostly, they can help with bonding or shaping.”

“You should see that bonding.” Brigitte grinned. “That stuff is wicked strong, sticks to almost anything too.”

Satya seemed to glow from the praise but didn’t say anything else.

“And what does yours do?” McCree leaned toward Brigitte. “I didn’t even know you had one.”

“Sure do, Reinhardt gave him to me a while back. Said he’d be more useful in my hands. He helps me, um.” She glanced around the room for a while, her face brightening when she spotted the utility closet. Everyone watched her dart over to it, tossing the doors open and rummaging around inside. After a few seconds she emerged with one of the spare arms of the training bots. “Check this out.”

At first McCree couldn’t see anything as she twisted her palms around the metal. Then he saw it moving, crushing down like putty between her fingers. Somehow he wound up hiding his left hand behind his back. He’d have to remember to shake with his right one when it came to her.

“So you can bend metal? Just like that?” Fareeha’s eyes were shining.

“Bend it, melt it.” A piece of the arm dripped onto the floor. “Reshaping it is the best part.” She slid her palm along the length of it. All the components flattened out into the shape of a sword.

“A versatile weapon,” Hanzo said.

“I have one in the works, actually. I’ll bring it next time.” She tossed the arm to the side. “That’s just about all I use him for right now. There’s some magnetic abilities but they’re just a hazard to use in my work space.”

McCree chuckled at the image of her covered in scrap metal.
“Practicing the other day let me see invisible people.” Fareeha smiled. “And recently I figured out how x-ray vision works.” She put her fingers against her temples and squinted, slowly turning toward Angela. “It lets me see through walls and even clothing.”

Angela gasped and swatted her arm.

Fareeha laughed. “Kidding, mostly. I can’t see any colors or clear shapes when I use it. Being able to see through three floors gives you quite a headache too.”

“Psh,” McCree nudged her. “Imagine you working at the airports.”

“Well they’d save a lot of money on equipment.”

The pair of them were laughing until Lúcio interrupted them.

“Hey, check Bastion out.”

Everyone turned to look at the omnic. Leaves and flowers had already covered most of their body.


“Oh I’ve seen him sprout whole trees before. Not sure it works on metal though.” Lúcio tapped at the floor.

“Little rodent packs a big punch doesn’t it?” McCree recalled how small and new that squirrel was.

Bastion laughed, flowers sprouting all over the layers of vines on their shoulders. Then they gestured to McCree, pointing at their hand.

“Oh that, huh? Well I made a little progress. I think you’ll like this one.”

He lit the flame in his palm, swirling it around as he made it shrink. He pinched it between his fingers before he pulled it up into a thin line. When he opened his hand the remaining fire took the shape of a bulb before slowly opening into a flower.

Bastion gave a thumbs up. Mei clapped again. McCree couldn’t help but glance at Hanzo to gauge his reaction.

The archer seemed almost entranced by the flames, but after only a moment he glanced up to meet McCree’s gaze.

The flames immediately popped and fizzled out.

“Aw,” Fareeha said. “I wanted to try and pick it up.”

McCree barely heard her. He was still staring at Hanzo. What was wrong with him?

The sound of a sword finally caught his attention. Genji stood behind Hanzo, blade already glowing.
“Did you guys know if I throw my sword my dragon will follow it?”

Hanzo turned around to glare. “Be serious.”

“Aw, come on, it’s funny.”

“You are not throwing your sword in here.”

“I know how to aim it.”

“Um,” Mei interrupted. “I’d love to see it, when we set up some targets. Until then, how many of you know how to summon your spirits?”

Summon them? For an attack? That was the only time McCree had managed it. If there was another way he’d never heard of it.

Then again Gabriel had once, before he handed the phoenix over.

“So not many of you,” Mei brought him out of his thoughts. “That’s okay, it’s not difficult. It’s like um... hm...”

“You draw their energy out.” Hanzo said. “Call their name in your mind, feel their presence around you. Gently pull on that until it materializes.”

“Poetry,” McCree smiled.

“That was hardly poetic.”

“Don’t take it too seriously Hanzo,” Fareeha said. “The closest thing to poetry Jesse’s read is the lyrics to folk music.”

“Hey now,” He spun around. “Those are good songs.”

“Oh yes, with such stirring lyrics like ‘little red wagon painted blue’.”

“Hey don’t talk shit about Skip to my Lou.”

“Enough,” Hanzo interrupted. “Both of you need to focus.”

“Hey I got it,” Lúcio shouted.

McCree leaned around Hanzo to see a bright green bird perched on the musician’s shoulder. It chirped away for a moment, a few hellos finally followed by a shrill, “Genji!”

The bird immediately hopped onto the ninja’s shoulder.

“Ah, hello,” Genji offered it a finger to nibble at. “It is nice to meet you.”

“Where’s the dragon huh?” Lúcio nudged him. “How come you never showed me before?”

Genji sighed. He put his sword back, the green glow from it glowing even brighter. As he pulled his hand back the light trailed through the air, turning solid before it moved and curled up his arm,
taking shape.

It was much smaller than it usually appeared, cuter too with its big eyes. It nudged the bird once before shooting towards Lúcio.

“Whoa!” The musician jumped as the spirit snaked around his torso and up to his neck. “Friendly.”

“Be careful he doesn’t climb in your shirt.” Hanzo smirked.

The dragon looked up at Hanzo, sticking out its tongue a bit before it hovered over. Hanzo went tense for a few moments until it curled up on the top of his head.

“Aww,” Genji said. “He still likes you.”

Hanzo just snorted.

A click of hooves distracted McCree. Angela’s unicorn had shown up, trotting proudly around the room. It nudged Fareeha before moving over to Bastion, sniffing at the flowers.

“How did you do that so easily,” Fareeha was pouting.

“Ah, well, I’ve actually done it before when I was younger. It’s not that hard.”

“Incoming,” Brigitte stomped on the floor. The space in front of her seemed to shift into a liquid, a silver light slowly rising up. McCree recognized the mane of a lion right away, although it’s hair seemed thick and sharp. Its face looked more like a mask, eyes glowing a bright orange. The beast was huge, towering as tall as Jack’s wolf.

Then, as soon as it appeared, it flopped down onto its side and yawned.

“Oh come on,” Brigitte tried to shove it. “Get up.”

The lion flicked its tail once but didn’t move.

“I swear he’s impressive when he’s not sleeping.” She slid down onto the floor, elbowing it once in the stomach. The contact made a loud clang but she didn’t seem to be bothered.

“Well he’s very pretty.” Mei said.

“Are you going to let me out?” Clementine nagged in the back of his mind.

Right, he should at least give it a shot, but he wasn’t sure where to start. He remembered when he fired his gun the heat started in his shoulders. Heck, it always did. He recalled the tattoo, remembered Gabriel used to have one very similar. After McCree got Clementine he wanted one.

*Tattoos aren’t part of having a spirit, are they?*

“No, but they help give a point of focus.”

He considered that, picturing the wings on his back. His shoulders already felt warmer, Clementine’s feathers brushing across his neck. All it took was imagining her taking off and
suddenly the heat was gone. He glanced up to see her flames taking form above him, and he didn’t hesitate to hold out his left arm.

She fluttered down with absolute grace–showing off no doubt–and perched on his arm.

“Just like I remember,” Ana smiled.

“All right everyone,” Clementine chimed. “You may call me Your Majesty.”

McCree rolled his eyes and shook his arm. “Knock it off you overrated swan.”

Upon losing her balance she took off, moving her perch to Hanzo’s shoulder instead. “And hello to you, dragon child.”

Hanzo frowned at the spirit, sparing a glance at the dragon that had fallen asleep on his head. “Hello.”

McCree didn’t miss the sly look she gave him as she let her tail feathers curl around Hanzo’s neck, nuzzling up against his cheek.

Mei and Ana were both giggling.

_Knock it off_. McCree hoped she could still hear him this way.

“Didn’t you want me to be your wingman?”

He tugged his hat down before his cheeks could turn red.

“Finally,” Fareeha distracted him. He glanced over to see her falcon on her own arm. The creatures feathers were a mixture of black and gold, its eyes shining yellow. “It’s about time you-”

“Hello,” The bird suddenly took off, jumping on McCree’s hat and pecking at it. “Oh it is good to see you, after so long, sibling? Friend? I can never tell. And oh Angela,” It took off again. “Lovely as ever darling, shining like the water in the morning sun.”

“Oh,” Angela seemed stunned.

“Oh god,” Fareeha buried her face in her hands. “Next lesson, how do I get him back?”

Mei frowned. “You should just be able to ask him to.”

The bird had already taken off again, landing on Ana this time. “And you, how dare you, leaving me with her like it was your duty that was so senseless, and far away too, what was she supposed to do with me I ask you. As if I can teach her how all of this works you were always better at that than I-”

Ana pinched his beak shut. “Quiet.”

“Yikes,” Lúcio cringed. “He’s noisier than mine.”

The bird in question had made hardly a noise the entire time, nibbling at the edges of Genji’s visor.
“Satya,” Mei said. “Would you care to show us yours?”

McCree had almost forgotten she was there, she’d been so quiet, but she was still standing in the same place. Her arms were crossed, eyes darting to the chaos around her. It almost seemed like she would bolt.

Then she sighed, using her arm to draw out the faint pattern of a spider before tossing it into the sky.

The shape grew. Huge, too huge. It’s two dimensional appearance stretched and shifted as the legs came down one by one, surrounding everyone in the room. They turned from a light blue to a dark black, the color crawling up into bright yellows. While it’s head was also black it’s abdomen shined like gold, so clear McCree could see his own frightened expression.

Angela and Lúcio screamed. The both clung to their partners as if that would somehow protect them.

McCree tried to press his fear back, glancing at Satya again. She definitely seemed closed off now, almost backing out of the room.

A soft beep interrupted her. Bastion had torn free of the plants around their joints, patting one of the spider’s legs. Their noises were cheerful as they gave a thumbs up.

“Uh,” Lúcio fumbled with his visor. “They say it’s really cool. They like spiders. Protect the plants.”

Satya seemed stunned for a moment before she actually smiled.

“Um, good work everyone.” Mei was shaking a bit. “I think uh, I think that about covers it for now. We’ll start the real stuff next time. Or one on one training if you think that’s better I mean.” She cleared her throat and looked down. “You’re dismissed.”
McCree was certain by now he knew the real meaning of the term “burnt out”. He’d spent the past three hours after dinner trying to shape his flames again. Granted, he had improved, but all he could smell was smoke and ash. He could feel it on his tongue. Somehow rubbing his bare fingers together felt grainy.

Burnt out.

He’d probably try again later, but right now he needed a break and some fresh air. His walk to the balcony was slow, the hallways empty as most of the other members had huddled away in their rooms after dinner.

He started to yawn–frustrated with the fact he was already sleepy–when his communicator buzzed. It was a message from Mei.

> Sooooo can I start planning the wedding yet?

McCree glared at the device as he made his response.

> Very funny, there’s nothing going on. She was just messing around.

> On your behalf I imagine.

> Shush.

> I’m pretty sure he was blushing.

> Wait really?

He could practically hear her laughing with the amount of emojis she sent in response to that.

> It is too bad he never summoned his spirits. Would be interesting to see their response to you.

> You didn’t summon yours either.

> Well he’s too social and noisy, like Fareeha’s.

McCree recalled the amount of fuss the falcon had kicked up. As soon as Ana left him alone for too long he was back to mouthing off and flying around. After a few desperate tries Fareeha had managed to summon him back.
I can let you meet him next time, if you like. Still training?

Nah, took a break. Going outside if you care to join.

Nope, doing some more defense work. Torb is helping me design some ice traps.

Sounds slick.

Ooooh that was terrible.

Idk I think it was pretty n-ice

Careful, you’re on thin ice

Aw, that’s snow problem

Another wave of laughing emotes was the reply. He sent a quick message for her to get back to work, about to head outside, when he got a different message from Hana.

Heeeeey ur not gonna guess what happened

??

Mister stale pizza crust is teaching me hand to hand combat

McCree snorted at the nickname.

U mean Jack?

Yup

How did you manage that?

I found him in the training room and tried to punch him.

He burst out laughing this time, leaning against the door as he tried to imagine that.

Did you get him?

:( No, he dodged it. Even without his visor he has some crazy psychic power or something.

And you convinced him to teach u?

I told him if he wanted to critique my technique so bad he could teach me a new one soooo yeah.

I’ll take it, gives me more chances to punch him.

McCree smiled as he opened the door.

Be careful, I know he doesn’t look it but he’s still built like a brick house.

Yeah well I’m a WRECKING BALL.
He was laughing again as he stepped out, ready to type in a reply.

“Hello, McCree.”

The voice startled him bad enough that he almost dropped the communicator. He scrambled to catch it, glancing over to see Hanzo sitting there, sake bottle in hand.

“Howdy, didn’t realize you were out here.” He tipped his hat. “We haven’t met out here since uh...” He glanced at the bottle.

“I’m aware.”

McCree frowned and put his communicator away before sitting down next to the archer. “You okay there, darlin’?”

Hanzo narrowed his eyes, thinking about the question. “I am not... doing bad.”

“But not really okay?”

He nodded.

“Penny for your thoughts.” McCree smiled. “Two pennies for that and a bit of that sake.”

Hanzo didn’t hesitate to hand the bottle over. McCree took a long sip before he thought better of it. No reason to over-do it.

Yet.

“Genji’s dragon was not afraid of me.” Hanzo said.

“Huh? What does that mean?”

“A spirit’s feelings toward others is directly tied to their master’s. Genji’s dragon has always been... rather obvious. My brother may have learned well how to hide his thoughts but his spirit did not.”

“Okay yeah but, why does this bother you?”

Hanzo’s fingers fiddled around until McCree handed the bottle back. “After what happened between us I expected the spirit to avoid me. Not take a nap on my head.”

“Aw Hanzo,” McCree risked grabbing his shoulder. “I already told you Genji forgave you. Hell, he loves you, so it makes sense, don’t it?”

The archer stared in the bottle like it was a magic eight ball. Any minute the blue triangle would pop up and tell him “don’t count on it”.

“You believe that, don’t you?” McCree tightened his grip.

“It is not always an easy thing to believe.” Hanzo lowered the bottle. “As much as I try.”
“Well, knowing his dragon isn’t scared of you makes it a little easier right? No one here hates you Hanzo, heck I’m not sure even Angie does anymore.”

Hanzo didn’t reply to that, putting the cork on the bottle.

“Stuff can change you know?”

“I am aware.”

“You sure?” He poked Hanzo’s temple. “Cause it seems like you’re stuck in the past again.”

Hanzo swatted his hand away.

“We’re all happy you’re here. I know I am.” He snapped up a flame. “Never would have gotten this far without you.”

The archer exhaled, his eyes fixed on the light. “I am... glad you’re here as well.”

“Eh?” The fire flickered.

“It is very easy to be honest with you.”

McCree laughed to ease his nerves. “That’s probably ‘cause when we first met I called you a ‘cold blooded tiger shark’ and you called me a ‘frivolous wanna-be movie trope.’”

Hanzo chuckled. “Was that it? I seem to recall calling you a ‘two legged sloth.’”

“No, no, that was the time I called you ‘Legolas’s ugly twin.’”

Hanzo’s laughter grew louder and he failed to cover up his grin. “I forgot how creative you could be with insults.”

“Aw, why thank you kindly, you ninety year old pillow case.”

“Of course, you grime filled drain pipe.”

He enjoyed Hanzo’s quiet laughter, considering how rare it was. The cowboy sighed and leaned back against the wall.

“You know Hanzo I...”

_I think I love you._

The words fell short and his mouth went dry. The hell was he thinking? He couldn’t say something like that.

“What?” Hanzo’s expression had turned serious again, but that softer kind of serious.

“I uh,” Shit. Needed a save. What could he say? “I have to show you more of that fire trick.”

Nice.
“Oh?”

“Yeah, I practiced it some more.” He made the flames in his palm bigger, desperate for them to stop flickering. “You gotta see this one.”

He pulled the flame up in a spiral, letting it turn more solid before he kept going. One end narrowed out while the other grew larger, opening a mouth to reveal rows of teeth.

“Look, I figured out dragons.” He let the flames go. The small serpent slowly flew around his head.

Hanzo watched it for a moment but once again his gaze fell to McCree’s. The cowboy’s heart stuttered and the dragon vanished.

“Hanzo?”

“Did you know,” The archer tilted his head. “That sometimes when you use those abilities your eyes glow.”

“What?” McCree blinked and touched his cheek. “Glow like how?”

Hanzo narrowed his eyes. “Glowing like... fireflies on a warm summer evening. Or perhaps like the lanterns at a festival.”

“Poetry,” The word fell from his lips without his usual sigh. Right now his chest was too light for that. The heat in his cheeks spread all the way down to his stomach.

*Holy shit.*

New topic. His nerves were screaming for a new topic. Find something else to talk about.

“How come you didn’t summon your dragons?” The question more-or-less spilled out of his mouth.

“What?”

“During practice. You can summon them all small, right?”

The archer glanced to the side. “They are... rather aggressive spirits. I prefer to keep them to myself.”

“Maybe they’re just bored.”

“Jesse-”

“Come on, there’s no way they’d hurt me right?”

Hanzo huffed and glared at him. Then he held out his left arm. The tattoos glowed just like they did when he prepared an attack. This time, however, they moved much slower as the lights emerged and curled around his arm.

The second the dragons fully formed they shot over to McCree. He flinched, but nothing actually
hurt. He felt one gently slide around his neck, the other around his waist.

“Uh...” He glanced down at them. The lower one was already asleep, using his legs as a pillow. The other stared up at him, much less intimidating at this size. A faint sensation of static ran over his skin.

“I... was not expecting that.” Hanzo raised an eyebrow.

“So they like me?” McCree couldn’t keep himself from grinning.

“I suppose.”

“So that means you like me?”

“We’re friends, of course I do.”

McCree’s mind had a hard time deciding if it was overjoyed or disappointed by that answer.

Silence fell between them for a while but McCree didn’t mind. He expected Hanzo to call the dragons back but he left them there. The one around his neck had moved a couple of times, eventually its head resting close to his ear.

Was it purring? Well, it didn’t quite sound like a purr, but it certainly wasn’t a growl. McCree ran the risk of reaching up to give it a light pat. The noise got louder.

Were they always this damn cute?

He tried shaping his flames again, disappointed by how quickly the dragon had gone out. After a few resets he managed to get down the shape of a stallion, its mane and tail burning bright. McCree let it gallop out of his palm, somehow running through the air leaving tiny, temporary flames where its hooves touched. His gaze followed it as it ran over to Hanzo, who looked away from the sky. He smiled at it, holding up a hand and the creature didn’t hesitate to trot onto it, coming to a stop.

The dragons suddenly pulled tighter around him, not painfully but it was noticeable. The sparks made the hair on his neck stand up. That strange noise got even louder.

“Geez, they’re going like a pair of swamp boats over here.”

“What?” Hanzo’s expression dropped as his hand did, the flames going out.

“Yeah, I guess they’re purring or something? You can’t hear that from there?”

Hanzo scooted closer, leaning over enough that their shoulders brushed together. McCree held his breath to keep himself from screaming.

“I... have not heard that sound in a long time.” Hanzo mumbled as he pulled away.

“Guess I must be really special.” McCree stretched and found himself yawning. That feeling from earlier was weighing down on him again. Trying more fire tricks when he was supposed to be on break was probably a bad idea.

“Tired?” Hanzo said.
“I guess you could say I’m feeling a little burned out.”

The archer rolled his eyes but smiled. “You should get some sleep then.”

“Maybe I’ll just sleep out here.” When he tipped his hat over his eyes and slide down the wall, the dragons moved. Both of them climbed onto his chest, curling up on top of one another.

“Fine, but I am not carrying you back.”

“What? Oh come on. You owe me for last time.”

“I do not. You were being rude.”

McCree slid his teeth together. “Yeah, you’re right. What about you two, would you carry me in?”

One of the dragons picked their head up, looking at him like it couldn’t believe he said something that stupid.

“You weren’t kidding, quiet little bastards.”

“Both of you,” Hanzo held out his arm. “Come.”

They both looked at the archer for a moment before flying toward him. Their forms faded into light as they lined themselves up with the tattoo, vanishing.

McCree really didn’t want to go inside right now. He was enjoying the safety of this silence. However, another yawn escaped and he felt drowsiness bearing down on him hard.

He was pretty sure Hanzo was serious about leaving him out here.

“Ugh,” He forced himself up. “Yeah, time to sleep. Gotta be refreshed to practice more tomorrow.”

“You’re training quite hard at this.”

“Hah, wait until you see why.” He stood. “See you tomorrow, Hanzo.”

“Goodnight, Jesse.”

McCree stepped back inside, the click of the door echoing in his mind when he finally realized. He looked back, static burning over his skin, despite the fact the dragons were gone.

“He just... Did he just call me Jesse?”

“You only just noticed? He used it earlier.”

No, McCree hadn’t noticed. How the hell had he missed it? Now he couldn’t get it out of his head. Hanzo’s voice kept buzzing around and gods, the name Jesse had never sounded so good.

This was bad. This was so bad.
“Or it’s a good thing, you pessimist.”

“Shove off Clem,” He kept his pace quick down the hallway. He needed to get to his room fast. “When have you been in love?”

“Honestly? I’m still in love.”

He stopped. “What? With who?”

She giggled. “A certain wolf you know.”

“You have got to be kidding me.” He was almost running now. “Him?”

He could almost feel her shrug. “Relationships between spirits when their hosts are in one is rather common.”

“Jack is like... my step-dad.”

She was laughing again. “Relax, it’s nothing for you to worry about. Spirit relationships never last anyway. They can’t.”

His pace slowed down again. He expected to feel a bit of sadness from her but there was none. “That sucks.”

“It’s how things are. And we aren’t talking about me. We’re talking H-a-n-z-o.”

“No we’re not.” He sprinted down the hall, as if he could get away from her. “You knock it off.”

“Ah, what’s one of those songs you like to sing. Froggie Went a Courtin’?”

“Clem, don’t you dare-”

Too late, she was already singing out the tune.

McCree couldn’t wait to get to his room and bury his face in his pillow for three days.

Chapter End Notes

*to the tune of Step In Time* What's all this, what's all this, what's all this
HAPPY VALENTINE’S Y’ALL! Hope you have/had a good one.
And remember, self love is the most important kind you can have so TREAT YO’ SELF
Or let me treat you, cause I love y’all...
*N-Sync voice* It's gonna be GAY

It had been a week.

Only a week, and Hanzo knew he shouldn’t feel as exhausted as he did, but he did. The first few days he didn’t notice, but it seemed like lately the only time he saw Jesse was during training. Trying to catch the cowboy alone was proving impossible and Hanzo wanted to know why.

Jesse had to be avoiding him, had to be. Most days he couldn’t get the cowboy to leave him alone. There had to be some reason he suddenly wasn’t showing up.

Did Hanzo say something wrong?

He had to admit the last time they talked had been strange. He wasn’t unaware of what Jesse’s flickering flames meant. It meant he was nervous, uneasy, and that had occurred multiple times that day.

Every time he looked at Hanzo.

He must have said something wrong, done something wrong. He inquired with a few people if they knew anything but none of them did.

Fareeha was the only one who had any advice.

“Look, make sure you don’t take it personally.” She said. “It probably has nothing to do with you, and he’ll tell you when he’s ready. And if he doesn’t, yell at him for a bit.”

Hanzo would, but that would first require getting Jesse alone.

Sometimes the evenings got too quiet, even for him.

He could just message him, but the first one had been ignored followed by a response seven hours later that he’d left his communicator in his room again. Hanzo knew it was probably true, but irritation kept him from replying to that.

This was a mess. He was tired of it. Jesse was acting weird and he wanted to know why. If something was wrong he wanted to help.
He wanted to...

Hanzo stared blankly at his communicator before glancing up at his bedroom ceiling. Why was it so cold in here? Why was it so cold anywhere? It never used to bother him this much.

He tried to remember the sensation of the fire horse standing on his palm. It felt energized, happy, reminding him of the days he used to chase Genji around the garden. How one day when they were doing it Genji ran clean into one of the statues, knocking it down. The pair of them had tried so hard to fix it, only to get caught.

But their father’s laughter had been warm, more concerned about Genji’s bruised forehead than a broken statue.

Hanzo always wanted to ask Jesse how he did that. He’d been trying to place a pattern for ages now, on the sensations and memories that fire gave him. He knew it had something to do with Jesse’s emotions, but what about them drew out his own fond memories?

What was Jesse thinking?

He needed to know.

He took a deep breath and looked back at the communicator. He couldn’t put it off any longer. He needed to get to the bottom of this and if Jesse didn’t reply then-

It buzzed and he jumped in surprise.

It was Jesse.

> Heeeey can u meet me outside by the cliff in like ten mins?

Hanzo glanced at the time.

> It is past ten

> Soooo is that a no? I promise it’ll be cool

Of course not. It was the first chance he had to talk to the man all week.

> I am on my way.

The winking emoticon that was sent in response only made Hanzo frown as he put the device away. He didn’t waste any time heading out the door, but a voice made him pause.

“You should tell him.” Tsuki hummed.

Tell who what?

“How can we know and you not?” Umi growled.

Quit speaking in riddles.
“Come now, Hanzo,” He felt Tsuki hovering around his neck. “Why do you think we love him so much?”

He didn’t take the time to entertain what they were implying as he kept moving. Maybe he didn’t know how he felt about Jesse, had never given it much thought. So far their friendship was more than he deserved. It felt genuine and safe, and sometimes it frightened him. Sometimes he was certain Jesse would realize what a waste it was to spend time with someone like him.

No. He needed to clear his mind. Right now this was about the reasons Jesse had been avoiding him.

And whatever “cool thing” the man insisted on showing him.

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McCree tried to ease his nerves as he stretched his back. It was dark out, the moon not showing itself yet. The light from the base was minor, not providing much.

It was perfect.

“You ready for this Clem?”

“I can’t believe how excited you are.”

“Well I’ve only been practicing my ass off for a week. God, I wonder what he’s going to say when he sees these babies.”

“Please be careful. And don’t pull any stunts, they aren’t strong enough to fly with yet.”

“Yeah yeah, whatever mom. Just don’t suddenly cut me off in order to embarrass me.”

“I would never.”

“You would too.”

“Jesse.”

His name startled him, but not quite as much as turning around to see Hanzo’s hair down. He opened his mouth to ask but closed it, at the risk that the archer would fix it.

“Huh,” He rubbed his neck. “So calling me by my first name wasn’t just an accident.”

Hanzo blinked. “Of course not. Is that why you’ve been avoiding me all week?”

“What?” McCree only just realized how little he’d seen the archer outside of training. “Aw, shit, I’m sorry darlin’. That wasn’t my intention. I got wrapped up in figuring this thing out.”

“Don’t lie to me.”

“I ain’t. I swear.” McCree held up his hands.

“Something is bothering you.”
Shoot, he should have guessed Hanzo wouldn’t miss that. “Look, it’s not a big deal I swear. If you want to know I’ll tell you but... after I show you this.”

Hanzo crossed his arms. “Very well.”

McCree forced his nerves back. He needed to concentrate. “Alright Hanzo, hang onto your hat.”

“I am not wearing a-”

He summoned all the heat he could muster to his shoulders. He could feel the flames rushing out of his back, lighting up the area with hues of orange. The makeshift wings fanned out as their feathers took shape. It took McCree almost thirty minutes to manage the first time, now it only took seconds.

He glanced up at them, making sure they were solid. The colors on the feathers shifted from yellow to red, small bits of flame sparking up from the ends.

McCree grinned and looked back at Hanzo. The archer’s expression had certainly changed, eyes wide and mouth hanging open slightly.

“See? Told you it was cool.”

“They’re... you...” It was the first time he’d heard Hanzo stutter. “You managed all this in a week?”

“Told you I was working hard. They’re not perfect yet, still some tweaking to do but at least you can see them.”

“Can they fly?”

“No.” Clementine snapped.

“Theoretically, haven’t tested it yet.” He stepped backwards toward the cliff.

“Master McCree you haven’t practiced.”

“I highly doubt this is the place to try.” Hanzo looked worried.

“Listen to him.”

“Aw, come on, I’m sure it can’t be that-”

Something latched onto his hand and jerked him forward. McCree found himself close to Hanzo, too close, the archer glaring at him.

“Do not do something so foolish. That could seriously harm you.”

“Okay, okay, relax.” McCree had to move away from the cliff before Hanzo would let go. “Guess I’ll have to try jumping off Bastion’s roof tomorrow.”

The archer sighed and shook his head. He rubbed the bridge of his nose like he had a headache.
McCree moved one of his wings over, bumping Hanzo with it.

He jumped, looking afraid for a moment before he ran his fingers gently over the feathers. “Can you feel this?”

“Eh, sort of. More like a vague tingling in my shoulders.” McCree shrugged. “Bird mom says they can work like a shield and a healing cover too. Pretty wicked right?”

“It’s... incredible.” Hanzo got bolder, letting his fingers run all the way to the tip of the wing. “But I wonder what this means for your title.”

“What?”

“Well, aren’t cowboys meant to ride off in the sunset?” Hanzo was smiling now, shooting him a sly glance. “It’s hard to do that when you are one.”

The colors on his feathers rippled with the increase of his heart rate. He took a deep breath to keep them from falling apart. He tried to think of a comeback but none of them left his lips.

Hanzo went back to studying the feathers, able to pull at them individually. When he tugged hard enough McCree could actually feel it on his shoulder blade. It was never enough to hurt but enough for him to roll his shoulder, making the wing move.

“Does this not wear you out?” The archer frowned.

“Eh, it might. I’ve been too excited to notice lately.”

“Don’t overwork yourself.”

“Aw, I’m touched.” McCree let the feathers curl around Hanzo’s fingers. “If I pass out just throw some water on me, ‘kay?”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” His smile grew softer as he watched the fire shift. The orange light lit up his face, his eyes. McCree found himself studying the shadows on his cheeks.

Then suddenly Hanzo was giggling, trying to cover his face before it turned into open mouth laughter. It was loud, louder than McCree had ever heard.

“You okay there?” He had to ask. He was pretty sure he didn’t say anything that funny.

“I am fine, it’s just your wings.” The archer leaned forward, letting his forehead brush against the flames. “They’re warm and light. They make me feel the same.”

McCree swore he might pass out with how fast his heart was going. Keeping his wings intact was almost impossible. But he wanted to, he had to, if only so he could keep watching the different shades of light dance over Hanzo’s skin.

The archer kept on giggling. “If I’m honest, it has been so long since I’ve felt this way. I completely forgot what it was like.”

“Hanzo...”
God. McCree wanted to reach out and hold him. Run his thumbs along his cheeks and kiss his forehead. Let these wings wrap around the both of them, forgetting anything outside of them existed.

He wanted to.

But he didn’t move.

Then suddenly Hanzo stopped laughing. His eyes went wide, mouth open yet again as he turned to look at McCree.

“Uh? Darlin’?” He could feel himself shrinking under Hanzo’s gaze, which seemed to be studying every inch of his face.

Then slowly his eyes narrowed, mouth turning up in a smirk as he pulled away from the wing. “You know, I’ve wondered for a long time what the sensations from your fire mean.”

“Pardon?”

“Your flames react to your emotions, some more obvious than others.” The archer stepped forward. “This one was quite obvious.”

What? What the hell? Was that part of the reason Hanzo why was always touching the flames? The guy really wouldn’t be satisfied until he could read McCree’s mind. He stepped back, but paused when he remembered that’s where the cliff was.

“I think,” Hanzo kept moving closer. “I figured out what’s been bothering you.”

His wings flickered and popped and he swallowed to keep himself from running. “That so?”

“Mm,” The archer’s hands were sliding past his shoulders.

“Y-you sure?” He forced on a smile. “What did you even feel this time?”

“I would describe it as... the feeling of a lover’s embrace.”

Heat rushed out to his wings, making them grow and turn yellow. The outside air felt unbelievably hot.

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“I would describe it as... the feeling of a lover’s embrace.”

Heat rushed out to his wings, making them grow and turn yellow. The outside air felt unbelievably hot.

“What did that mean? Did it mean what McCree thought it meant? He opened his mouth to ask but he never got the chance.
Hanzo was kissing him.

It took far too long to even register, but when it did his wings went out with a loud pop. It felt like fireworks on his shoulders, but he couldn’t mind the absence of light as his eyes fell shut. When it was clear Hanzo wasn’t going anywhere McCree wrapped one arm around his waist, pulling him closer, while his right hand trailed over his cheek and into his hair. He could feel those familiar sparks dancing in the strands.

Then they travelled down his arm, across his neck where Hanzo dug his nails in. From his lips and over his cheeks when the archer bit down for a brief moment. The electricity was warm but Hanzo’s fingers were colder, his other hand moving over McCree’s scalp. He was suddenly reminded of a breeze, no, a torrent of wind. The sensations seemed to suck the air right out of him.

So he had to pull back, trying to catch his breath, but hovering close in case he got lucky a second time.

He wondered if he was the only one who felt that, but judging from Hanzo’s red cheeks he guessed not.

“Uh, damn Hanzo,” He mumbled. “That was... something.”

“The sentiment is shared.”

“Your static was going all over the place.”

Hanzo glanced up and actually snorted before he laughed. “I can see that.”

McCree glanced to the side and pulled his hand back to touch his hair. He could feel the strands floating, clinging to his fingers.

“Oh yeah? Well you should see how red you are. In fact I’d swear you’re almost sweating.”

“Do you realize how much your body temperature rises?”

“What’s the matter Hanzo,” McCree tugged him closer. “Too hot for you?”

The archer kept laughing and jokingly tried to shove him away. “You’re unbelievable.”

“Aw, I’d say you’re warming up to me.”

“Stop it.”

“Don’t these puns spark your interest?”

Suddenly Hanzo jerked him down into another quick kiss, effectively silencing him. “No, in fact I’m certain you’re just blowing smoke.”

McCree’s mouth dropped open before he grinned. “Hell Hanzo, I’m pretty sure I’m falling in love with you.”

Hanzo smiled and kissed him one more time. “That sentiment is also shared.”
Chapter End Notes

*slides herself under the sofa*

Oh yeah tho, I wrote some more Jack and Gabe if anyone wants *slides it out*

I love u guys
Bonds 10-1

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for your patience guys, swear on my life the next part will show up quicker (I mean I already got section 1 done yay)

Part 10, or as I also like to call it "Hanzo and Jack argue a lot" (Idk how this happened but it did)

OH I'm gonna note too that Hanzo's dragons are both bigender so if you wonder why they have different pronouns in some scenes that's why

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Where exactly was he?

Hanzo was trying to place the location. It felt familiar, a slow river surrounded by cobblestone. It looked like a park, near a street perhaps. It seemed like the fences on either side were too tall to peek over. He couldn’t see any buildings.

“Howdy.”

He turned toward the familiar voice. Jesse stood only a few paces behind him, fingers on the brim of his hat.

Hanzo didn’t hesitate to step over, standing close enough that he had to tilt his head back to look Jesse in the eye. It was something that used to bother him so much, that this fool was able to look down at him.

But that smug expression had vanished ages ago. His brown eyes were soft, gentle, affectionate. Somehow it all seemed so obvious to him now.

“Gonna just stare at me all day darlin’?”

“Hm,” He pretended to consider the idea. “I might.”

Jesse laughed before letting go of his hat and holding out his hand. “You can do that while we walk.”

The cowboy’s hand was warm and Hanzo let him lead them down the path. There was no telling where it went, but it was peaceful. Birds chirped from somewhere, a soft tune that seemed to dance over the water. Hanzo glanced at it, watching a pair of leaves slowly twirl in a circle around each other.

It was still strange. Less than a month ago the concept of having romantic feelings for Jesse would have sounded ludicrous. The concept of him returning those feelings even more so.

But again, now it all seemed obvious. It should have been obvious that day when Jack and Ana
arrived. He never forgot how warm that flame was against his palm. How much warmer it was brushing against his forehead, a soft voice telling him they’d be okay.

It should have been obvious when Jesse lent him the serape overnight.

It should have been obvious when he got that flower crown.

It certainly should have been obvious when his dragons latched onto him so closely. Hanzo had blatantly ignored that possibility, not wanting to toy with the thought. It would just lead to disappointment, wouldn’t it?

But those wings, that was something he wouldn’t soon forget. That bright orange suddenly appearing in the dark, lighting up everything. McCree’s silhouette and his beaming smile.

The feathers had been soft, making his nerves tingle as energy rushed through him. For a moment he felt like he could fly himself.

Then the sensation had shifted. That weightless feeling vanished when a strong pair of arms wrapped around him. Warm, safe, fingers trailing over his shoulder and lips brushing against his ear. Skin on skin, he felt whoever it was breathing in before they whispered something.

*Love.*

Jesse loved him.

Hanzo couldn’t let himself doubt it this time. Those flames hadn’t lied to him once.

He had considered that maybe the emotion had risen in the moment, something that would eventually pass, but not until long after he’d made the rash decision to kiss the cowboy.

He couldn’t deny that he was afraid. That this would all go south and he would lose one of the most valuable friendships he had.

A gentle squeeze to his hand drew him out of his thoughts. He looked up at Jesse’s reassuring smile.

“You don’t need to worry darlin’. We’ll figure it out.”

“You seem quite sure of that.”

“We always do, don’t we?” His prosthetic brushed against Hanzo’s cheek. Even the metal was warm as it hovered over his bottom lip.

He let Jesse move closer, longing to repeat that sensation more than he’d ever admit. The gentle scrape of his beard, fingers sliding through his loose hair, the gentle gasp when Hanzo bit down, as if those weren’t enough. The heat that erupted from the contact left him dizzy as it curled around in his chest. For a moment he wondered if he’d exhale smoke.

He never liked cigars, but the taste of it on Jesse’s lips certainly left an impression.

“Hanzo,” Jesse hummed and kissed the corner of his mouth.
A roar of thunder sounded behind him. He let go and spun around, only now aware of the dark storm clouds above him. Where had those come from? The wind rushed by him violently, churning the water in the river. He reached back for Jesse, only to find that the cowboy was gone.

Nightmare. It was turning into a nightmare.

It would figure, wouldn’t it. These dragons were never content to let him dream peacefully.

Lightning flashed across the sky with a violent crack. He felt the water from the river brush against his ankles as it rose higher and higher. He foolishly tried to run, tried to find higher ground. If nothing else it would give him time to try and wake up.

Water rushed past his calves before suddenly shrinking back. He turned to see it all rising up into a wave. There was another flash of lightning before it rushed toward him.

There was no time to move. The force of the water slammed him into the ground before it swelled up, lifting him with it. Hanzo tried to reach the surface but the current shoved him back down.

No, he had to get out of this before he sunk any deeper.

He could already hear the sound of rain.

Hanzo kicked and pulled at the water. He shoved against the current as he desperately tried to reach the glowing light above him. He had to get out of here. He had to get out. He refused to drown in his memories again.

The second his hand broke the surface it searched for something to grab onto. He felt a familiar stone under his palm as he pulled himself out. He gasped for air, the water still on his skin felt thicker than usual, sticky and heavy like it was trying to drag him back down.

Instead he pulled himself onto the rock before he collapsed, willing his heart to slow down. The river from his mindscape churned around him, the current sweeping past him in shades of white and grey.

“Impressive,” Tsuki taunted as he hovered past him.

Hanzo wanted to retort but he was too winded to come up with the words.

“What’s the matter?” Umi said.

“We thought you liked that one.”

“With how often you think of it.”

“Stop,” Hanzo ran his hands over his face. “This has to stop.”

“Does it?” Tsuki hummed.

“Yes,” He shouted. “There is no purpose in tormenting me like this. I already told you this.”

“And yet you do not believe it.” He hovered closer. “You think we are the only ones who bring you such visions?”
“You think we act alone on our feelings?” Umi curled around the rock once.

More riddles, more frustration, why couldn’t these creatures just say what they meant? Why couldn’t he understand them?

“Our feelings are yours as well, Hanzo.” Umi was growling now.

“You also think you deserve this.”

“No.” Exhaustion was tugging at him now, almost luring him back into the water.

“You do,” Tsuki twirled upwards.

“Even with Genji’s forgiveness.” Umi followed.

“Even with the love from him.”

“From Hana.”

“From Bastion.”

“And of course that cowboy.”

“Jesse,” They both hummed at the same time.

When Hanzo blinked he found himself in his room. His arm dangled over the bed, neck aching from being twisted to the side. He rubbed it as he sat up, waiting for the grogginess to wear off.

Jesse. The name kept buzzing around in his head. He couldn’t tell if the dragons were chanting it or not. He checked his communicator for the time. Four in the morning. Too early to get up but too late to bother trying to sleep again. He didn’t feel like having another dream ruined by the two of them.

Jesse. The chanting continued. Hanzo forced himself up, loosely tying his hair before grabbing his robe. He couldn’t stay in here. It felt like the walls were trying to suffocate him.

Jesse. It didn’t stop even as he stepped out into the hall. He considered for a moment, knocking on Jesse’s door. Without a doubt the cowboy would be willing to listen, even help him sleep. But he didn’t dare, not at this hour.

Jesse. Why wouldn’t it stop? He tried to distract himself, think about something else, anything else, but his thoughts drifted back to the cowboy anyway.

“So, uh,” He was stuttering as the pair of them headed back to the base. “Does this mean we’re a thing now? Or do you want to wait on that.”

“Did I not make my intentions clear enough?”

“No, no darlin’ you certainly did I just... Seems like it came out of nowhere.”

“No, not nowhere. I simply never thought long on it until now.”
“But you are now?”

Hanzo had studied his eyes, his face. He was nervous, but of what Hanzo couldn’t tell. “Yes, to not do so when I know your own feelings would be rude.”

“Psh, gotta be proper about everything, don’t you?”

“Would you have rather I said no?”

“No! Not at all. Just having a hard time believing this is happening I guess.”

Hanzo hummed and resumed walking. “That sentiment is shared.”

Because he didn’t deserve it.

He stopped walking for a moment when that thought crossed his mind. He didn’t deserve Jesse McCree. He didn’t deserve his patience or his open mind. He didn’t deserve the gentle heat from his flames.

He didn’t deserve any of this.

Why did Jesse love him?

He should have asked that question earlier.

Hanzo shook his head and kept walking. He couldn’t keep thinking that way. Jesse didn’t need a reason. He could do what he wanted. He could love Hanzo if he wanted to.

But why would he want to?

Hanzo groaned, clutching the sides of his head as he headed into the living room. He almost cursed himself for still thinking about it until he noticed he wasn’t alone.

Jack Morrison was curled up on one of the sofas, tightly clutching the pillow under his head. It was the first time Hanzo had seen him without his visor, studying the scars on his face.

Why was he sleeping in here? Again? Hanzo had heard about it from Hana before, that almost every night she swung in here for a late night snack he was there. Some nights he was awake, scolding her away from the fridge.

Maybe Amari was an impossible person to sleep around.

Hanzo tread quietly to the kitchen, the light still on like always. He wasn’t sure what he was doing in here. It’s not like he needed tea.

Small comforts were better than nothing.

He moved as quietly as he could, grabbing his things from the cupboard. He worried the sink might be too noisy as he filled up the kettle but he didn’t hear the soldier stirring.

Waiting for the water to boil seemed to take ages. Exhaustion was creeping back up on him as he
stood there, trying to keep his head clear.

He failed.

“See you tomorrow, yeah?” McCree was fidgeting outside of Hanzo’s door. At least now Hanzo knew what that kind of grin meant.

“Of course, if you want to practice your flying.”

His nervousness stopped. “Yeah, hopefully I won’t crash too much.”

Hanzo rolled his eyes. “Go and get some sleep.”

The fidgeting returned as he glanced around. “Yeah, yeah, I will. But uh... do you think... could I kiss you again?”

Hanzo smiled, not honestly wanting to risk that. He knew if that started again he might not let go. Instead he leaned forward, fingers lightly pressed against Jesse’s cheek as he kissed the other one.

“Goodnight, Jesse.”

For a moment the cowboy stared at him, eyes wide. Hanzo swore he saw them sparkle when he grinned. Then he leaned forward, letting their foreheads bump together.

“Night Hanzo.”

The click of the kettle broke him out of the memory. The warmth on his forehead faded.

He sighed and filled up his mug and focusing on the aroma. The steam brushed across his face, a temporary substitute for the warmth.

He let the heat seep into his fingers before he turned to head back to his room.

The mug almost slipped out of his hands when he saw a pair of eyes watching him from beyond the doorway, glowing a pale green. His heart stopped.

Then they blinked before stepping closer. Jack Morrison’s features finally became visible in the kitchen light.

“Tea, huh?” Is all he said before leaning against the door frame.

Hanzo swallowed to get his heart to slow down. “I am sorry for disturbing you.”

Jack snorted, his eyes glancing above Hanzo again. “It doesn’t take much to do that, so don’t apologize.”

The conversation came to a halt, but Jack was blocking the exit. Hanzo had to assume he wanted to discuss something. Instead the soldier just kept staring toward the ceiling.

“Perhaps I am simply exhausted,” Hanzo tried. “But were your eyes glowing?”
“Yeah, used to have night vision.”

“Not anymore?”

Jack almost smiled at that as he finally looked down, his gaze staring past Hanzo. “Don’t pretend you haven’t noticed, Shimada.”

“It seemed rude to bring it up.”

Jack shrugged and turned his head. “It’s not rude until you start flipping me off during conversation.”

Hanzo considered cracking a joke but instead he found himself staring at the faint marks on Jack’s temples.

“Young dragons seem irritated about something.”

He noticed Jack was staring up again. Was that what he was looking at? Hanzo had never even considered that his lack of vision would make it easier for him to see the spirits.

“That would be none of your concern.” He said.

Jack hummed and finally stepped back from the door. “Maybe not. Plenty of things aren’t. But you might want to shower in the morning.”

Hanzo squinted when he frowned. “Pardon?”

“McCree’s cologne has a pretty unique smell.”

The heat in Hanzo’s cheeks somehow managed to burn hotter than the mug in his hands. Before he could think of a retort Jack turned around and vanished into the dark living room.

Damn it. He needed to get rid of that. He wasn’t fond of the idea of everyone on base knowing just yet. Without a doubt they’d be flocking around them with all kinds of commentary.

No, no, Jack probably had some sense of super smell didn’t he?

Better safe than sorry, he supposed.

Hanzo made his way back to his room, ignoring the pair of eyes that followed his movement.

Next time he came in here he was turning on the lights.

Chapter End Notes

Did u know thanks to Jack’s eyes taking flash photos of him is the funniest thing ever he gets fuckin laser eyes

Also SOME ART Because I got some rad fanart recently from Azzi and
Skydidthething, I also doodled the spoopy owl spirit if anyone would like.

I have sometimes considered making a side blog for this fic, place to ask questions or just wait for me to rant about what I'm writing, might even post previews?? If enough people wanted tho
“Hanzo,” Genji hummed the moment he appeared, following Hanzo outside. “Where are you headed?”

“Out to Bastion’s greenhouse.” He raised an eyebrow, already suspicious of his brother’s tone. “Do you wish to join me?”

“I was just curious about something.”

Hanzo sighed, picking up his pace towards the woods. “What is it?”

“Jesse was in quite a good mood this morning, but he wouldn’t say why. You don’t have anything to do with that, do you?”

“No,” He said as flatly as he could. Genji was the last person who needed to know about this. Hanzo shivered at the memory of his younger brother pestering him non-stop for two weeks over a crush he had at fifteen. “He’s been practicing some new techniques. Perhaps that is the cause.” He walked even faster, doing his best to leave Genji behind.

He didn’t look back until he reached the trees. His brother was nowhere in sight.

That did little to actually make him relax. The only Genji you should really be afraid of is the one you couldn’t see.

“Hanzo!” Jesse’s voice distracted him from his search. The cowboy was running down the path, grinning as he held his hat down on his head. When he came out from the shade of the trees the sunlight seemed to make him glow.

Hanzo was about to offer a greeting, but Jesse practically crashed into him. It took a few moments to decide if he appreciated the sudden contact or not.

As that familiar warmth melted over his skin he decided that yes, he did.

Jesse kissed his cheek once, twice, before pulling back. “Good to see you.”

Hanzo would have agreed but a horrible, familiar laugh interrupted it.

“Oh, I knew it.” Genji hung from one of the trees. “I should have known that was it.”

“Aw, shoot,” Jesse cringed and took a few steps back. “Hanzo, why didn’t you tell me he was here?”
"You did not give me much opportunity." He crossed his arms.

Genji jumped down from his hiding spot, sauntering over to Jesse and leaning against him. "Nice going."

"Oh, hush your mouth." Jesse pushed him off. "What are you doing out here anyway?"

"I told you this morning, if you don’t plan to tell me why you’re in such a good mood, I will find out."

"Genji," Hanzo rubbed his temples. "Go back to the base."

"I can go wherever I like, Hanzo."

"Then stop pestering us."

"Not until you give me some details." Genji was leaning against him now. "Come on, when did this all start?"

"Last night," Jesse said.

"Jesse, do not indulge him." Hanzo shoved Genji back.

"You know he won’t leave otherwise."

"He will if you ignore him long enough."

"Hey," Genji said. "You don’t get to do that. Not after teasing Lúcio and I."

"He’s got a point there, Hanzo." Jesse shrugged.

The archer growled as he stomped into the woods. "Fine, but please refrain from making it public for now."

After Genji agreed Hanzo chose to ignore his chatter. Jesse seemed more than happy to share the details, some of which kept making Hanzo’s cheeks burn.

He was grateful they were walking behind him.

"Hanzo," Genji chimed. "You made a pun? In english? You must be in-"

"Silence." He spat, refusing to turn around.

"Hah, you’re just as easy to tease as you were back then."

"Believe it or not," Hanzo stopped in front of the garden path to the greenhouse. "We’re here to do some training."

"Oh I’d believe it." Genji crossed his arms. "Even your dates have to be work related."

"It is not a date."
“Okay.”

Hanzo was going to keep arguing until a familiar greeting chimed in. Bastion emerged from the greenhouse, a flower crown already in their hand. He smiled at the gesture, carefully putting on his head.

“Thank you, my friend, but how did you know we would be here?”

“Jesse told me this morning.” Lena hopped outside, scrambling up on top of the omnic. “Said he was gonna do some training with you.”

The archer glanced back at the cowboy and his brother. Genji was clearly trying to keep himself from laughing. Jesse just shrugged.

“Yes, that was the plan.” He rubbed the bridge of his nose. “He wishes to learn how to fly.”

“What?” Lena laughed. “How’s he gonna do that?”

“Check it out.” Jesse boasted. The wings sprouted out from his back, even faster than before. The colors weren’t as detailed in daylight but they contrasted beautifully against the green from the trees.

“Whoa,” Lena almost fell off Bastion’s shoulders. “When did you get those?”

“Pretty much last night,” Jesse laughed. “Figured Bastion’s roof would be a safe height to jump from.”

“No,” Satya’s voice made Hanzo jump. He saw the architect step out from the greenhouse, a number of flowers in her hair. “This structure is not sturdy enough to stand on.”

“Aw man,” Jesse’s wings drooped. “So much for that idea.”

“We could… possibly build one for you.” She glanced up at Bastion. “Although I question why you didn’t do this indoors.”

“Can’t fly far indoors. When I figure out how to do it I’ll just hit a wall, and that’s no fun.”

Satya put a hand to her mouth, as if hiding a laugh. “I see. Come along Bastion, we need to find the proper space.”

Lena climbed down from the unit before they began to follow Satya into the woods. She hopped over to Jesse with a huge grin.

“Last night huh?” She said as the group began to walk. “Why didn’t we hear about this?”

“Because,” Genji said. “He was too busy showing off to my brother.”

The heat returned to his cheeks and he bit back the urge to hurl his bow at Genji’s head.

“Hanzo gets the lucky sneak peeks huh?” Lena flashed over to where he was. “Make you feel pretty special?”

He glared at her, refusing to crack that easily. If she found out it would only be a matter of hours
before the entire base found out.

Time to use one of Jesse’s tactics.

“What were you and Ms. Vaswani doing out here?”

Her expression shifted to surprise, a light blush on her cheeks. “Well, she wanted to get out you know. Was asking where Bastion was since they’ve been getting along during training so I brought her out here. They uh, actually she was helping build them some lamps and special trays for seedlings. They were having a lot of fun actually.”

“It is good she’s getting along with everyone.”

“Well, not everyone. Seems like her and Lúcio will pick fights about anything. Also heard her and Torbjörn shouting at each other once or twice. Something about design choices.”

She flashed around to his other side. “Why don’t you talk to her more? I’d think you’d get along great.”

“We do,” Hanzo shrugged. “I suppose we’re both too quiet natured.”

“Yeah,” Genji said. “But maybe we can put them on the same team during simulations.”

Hanzo smiled when he turned. “That will be your mistake.”

“Oh yeah? You’re both defensive battlers. I’d like to see you handle being cornered.”

“Hey now,” Jesse nudged Genji. “We haven’t even seen what she’s fully capable of. Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.”

“You can bet on the outcome of a simulation match later.” Satya interrupted the conversation. She stood in a clearing with Bastion, putting the finishing touches on a hard light platform. It sat on the ground for the time being, the corners of it glowing blue. “Although, I believe I will take that gamble against you.” She smirked as she stared at Genji. “I would not lose to someone who so recklessly charges forward.”

“Oh snap,” Lena laughed. “I think it’s on now, isn’t it.”

“I am staying out of this.” Jesse held his hands up. “I’ll just recklessly jump off this platform thank you very much. Speaking of which.” He wandered forward and tapped his foot against it. “I expected it to be a bit uh, higher.”

Satya nodded and gestured to the platform with a glance at Bastion. The omnic beeped and gave a thumbs up before scattering a number of seeds around it. It’s eye flashed as it leaned down slowly, one finger out that lightly tapped against the soft soil.

That’s all it took.

The ground shook. Jesse stumbled back into Hanzo who hung onto him. Suddenly a pair of trees burst out of the ground, carrying the platform up into the air. Sets of vines followed after, coiling around the trunks of the trees and chasing after the platform. When it came to a stop the vines gently curled their way into the handles built onto the platform, securing it in place.
“Damn,” Jesse said. “Seriously, what the hell do you feed that squirrel?”

Bastion chuckled.

Hanzo couldn’t manage to say anything at the moment as he stared at the structure. It appeared in a matter of moments. Something like this on the battlefield would be brilliant for defense.

“Um,” Lena flashed over to it, walking around. “How’s he supposed to climb up it though?”

Hanzo studied the structure with a frown, noticing a number of ways he could reach the top between the coils of vines and a few branches. Then he recalled not everyone was trained to climb things the way he was.

Bastion had the solution though, running their palm over one of the trees. More branches grew out from its trunk, reaching out and growing thick enough to at least support one person.

“Man,” Jesse wandered over to it. “You two could start building some tree houses out here.”

“Hm,” Satya hummed. “Some hidden watch points could be useful.”

“That’s not really what I-”

“But for now, you’ll have to excuse me.” She turned and headed back towards the greenhouse. “I need some time to rest.”

“Oh,” Lena flashed after her. “Satya, wait up.” She spun around and waved. “Good luck guys. If you do manage to fly go by one of the windows.”

“You got it.” Jesse grinned and didn’t hesitate to grab onto the branches, pulling himself up.

“Flying hm? This should be entertaining.” Genji said.

“Brother, do you truly have nothing better to do?” Hanzo sighed.

“Well, Ana did want me to work on channeling my dragon through my system but...”

The archer glared.

“I’d rather do this.”

“Get out.”

“Make me.”

He heavily considered it until he heard Jesse shout. His gaze shot up to the tree, the cowboy now dangling from one of the limbs. His wings had vanished.

“Woops, wrong step there.” He tried to laugh and regain his footing but his legs swung uselessly in the air.

Genji laughed. “Still suck at climbing eh?”
“Shut your mouth. There ain’t many trees out in the desert.” He pressed his feet against the trunk, trying to use the vines to steady himself.

“Slow down, you fool.” Hanzo moved closer to the tree. Bastion let off a few nervous sounds.

“Don’t worry Hanzo I got.” His feet slipped again, the sudden drop forcing him to lose his grip.

Hanzo didn’t think as he dove forward. He tried to catch him but the weight caused him to stumble back and they both hit the ground. The air flew out of him and he found himself looking back to see Genji laughing again.

“Aha, oh goodness, if only you could see your face. Ah, I should take a photo of this and send this to Hana.”

“Don’t you dare,” Hanzo tried to scramble up but Jesse’s weight was too much for that. The cowboy groaned against his shoulder, trying to sit up.

“I must say, brother, it is good to know who is on top.”

“Genji.”

“Hang on, hold that pose.”

Hanzo wasn’t aware of Bastion’s footsteps until the omnic walked past them, headed straight towards Genji. The ninja had his fingers against his visor, clearly trying to take a photo, when suddenly Bastion wrapped an arm around him and tossed him over their shoulder.

“Eh?” He seemed stunned before he tried to struggle. “Bastion? Bastion put me down.”

The omnic just beeped and continued walking toward the greenhouse.

“Come on, I’m only teasing.”

Their conversation continued as they went, slowly growing quieter and quieter as they vanished behind the trees.

Hanzo sighed and finally relaxed. “Remind me to thank them later.”

“Sorry darlin’.” Jesse sat up and pulled Hanzo with him. “I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

“I am fine.” Hanzo moved to stand but Jesse was still sitting on his legs.

“Uh, thanks for the catch there. You didn’t need to do that.” He was rubbing his neck, glancing to the side.

“You are welcome, however I would like to get out of the dirt.”

“Huh? Oh, sorry.” Jesse scrambled to his feet, brushing some of the dirt off before holding out his hand. Hanzo took it, letting himself be pulled up. “Sorry about your crown too.” The cowboy’s hands were gentle as he adjusted the flowers. “Kind of jealous that Bastion always makes these for you.”
“Lúcio told them I liked the first one. They have been doing it ever since.”

Jesse’s laugh was quiet, his fingers trailing over Hanzo’s forehead to move stray strands of hair. “Funny, I was the one who asked them to make it. Thought it’d be fun to see your reaction. Imagine my surprise when you wound up wearing it all day.”

“It would have been rude to toss it out.”

The cowboy grinned this time, hand moving to cup his cheek. “Come on, Hanzo, what was the real reason?”

He snorted. “It is nice to receive gifts from others... from you.”

“That so?” Jesse leaned closer.

“Yes, now stop it. We came here to train.”

“Aw, just one?”

Hanzo studied his eyes for a moment, ignoring the temptation. Instead he pulled back and ran towards the tree. It took little effort for him to scale the trunk, gripping vines and branches to pull himself higher. He leapt onto the platform, checking how sturdy it was before leaning over the edge.

“If you want one,” He shouted down. “I suggest you get up here.”

Jesse’s eyes widened before he scrambled back onto the branches.

Hanzo laughed as he sat down. “Take it slower this time. I will not be there to catch you.”

“I can’t believe you’re making me work for this.”

“It seems to be a decent way to motivate you.”

“You’re a cruel man sometimes, Hanzo.”

He smiled as he laid down, peeking out over the edge to see Jesse wasn’t even halfway there. “Is that you changing your mind?”

“Like hell.”

Hanzo felt his gaze soften as the cowboy–his boyfriend–pulled himself up onto the next branch.

“Good.”


"Aw, you’re heading down there early?" Jesse was practically pouting on the sofa when Hanzo stood up.

He smirked at him. "Ana wants me to set up some simulations for Satya and Fareeha, so yes.” He leaned down to kiss him on the temple. “I shall see you later.”

Jesse caught him before he could pull back and met his lips, making an audible sigh. “Later darlin’.”

The archer admired the goofy smile on his face before tapping his hat down over his eyes and heading out of the room.

Often when he was alone, Hanzo considered this whole situation was moving too fast. Perhaps he’d started it with that first kiss.

But somehow, being around Jesse made him toss logic out of the window.

It didn’t help that his one restraint, keeping it quiet, was also useless. Genji slipped up with Hana, who told Lena, who couldn’t keep a secret to save her life. It was no wonder she was never picked for undercover jobs.

In short, the entire base knew, so he lost his reason for being subtle. So did Jesse, and Hanzo was quickly learning how affectionate the cowboy could be. He refused to leave the room without offering a kiss to the forehead, cheek, or even the hand.

Such a fool.

He still found himself smiling as he headed downstairs. Perhaps he was just as much a fool.

He managed to clear his head as he headed into the training room, thinking of how to set up the simulations. That train of thought soon came to a halt, however, when he noticed he wasn’t alone.

Jack Morrison stood there on a sparring mat, back turned. His visor was nowhere in sight and he kept muttering under his breath. Possibly to his spirit?

Hanzo took a few steps forward before he spoke. “Morrison.”

The soldier turned, eyes moving up. “Shimada.”

“What brings you here?”
He sighed, rubbing a hand over his neck. “Hana and Lena wouldn’t leave me alone. Ana kept insisting, so, here I am.”

Hanzo frowned. “If you do not wish to help you do not need to. Although,” he tilted his head. “I assume Ms. Amari has her reasons for asking.”

“She does,” Jack turned around. “Insists I have a lot to teach everyone. I don’t know about that but,” his eyes flicked up again. “Seems I have a lot to teach you.”

Hanzo’s blood went cold and irritation pricked up the back of his neck. Just what the hell did that mean? He didn’t think he was fond of Jack’s stare, even if it was still fixed above his head.

No, Jack wasn’t trying to look at him. He was looking at the dragons.

“Do you now?” He tried to keep the bitterness out of his voice.

“I admit I don’t know a lot about you, Shimada. But even as blind as I am I can tell you and your dragons don’t get along.”

Sparks ran down his arm and he gripped his sleeve to keep them under control. “And you know this how?”

“Stare at spirits long enough you start picking up on the little things.” Jack glanced to the side before crossing his arms. “Ana wanted me down here to teach everyone how bonds work, but it seems like you need it the most.”

He couldn’t keep the sparks from flashing up his neck and through his hair this time.

“Hm,” Jack’s expression taunted him. “Seems I made the dragon angry.”

“You do not have the right to insult me.”

“I’m only stating facts. If you take offense to it then maybe it’s because I’m right.”

He tightened his jaw, desperately trying to keep his anger under control. “And what reasons do you have to believe this?”

“Not sure I could explain it,” Jack’s posture relaxed. “But you’re completely out of sync. Doesn’t seem like you’re communicating much either.”

“They’ve always been the quiet type.”

“Have they? Or have you just never bothered to learn how to communicate.”

The spark that jumped off his arm snapped in the air. “I am trying to decide if you are intentionally trying to anger me.”

Jack shrugged, obviously not concerned. “Hey, maybe I’m wrong. Maybe I’m seeing things. Care to prove it?”

“Pardon?”
“You and me, hand to hand. If you can manage to land a hit then your bond isn’t as shitty as I thought.”

Another snap. Was this man serious? Hanzo wasn’t about to underestimate him, but he was at a disadvantage. Perhaps the man could see spirits in that state, but what about his opponents?

“Where is your visor?”

“Won’t need it.”

“Are you certain?”

“Yup,” He tapped his foot against the mat before heading to one of the corners. “Good thing I haven’t put this away yet. Ready when you are.”

Hanzo wasn’t fond of this soldier’s smug attitude. It was the first time he’d seen it, actually, so used to seeing him cold and aloof. Perhaps this was the real reason Jesse couldn’t stand him.

Well, advantage or not, he might as well try. At least punching him in the face would feel good.

It took him longer than it should have to tape his hands, far out of practice. He wanted to think it wasn’t necessary but Morrison was a super soldier. It wouldn’t do to be careless.

“So,” Hanzo said as he stepped onto the mat. “Are there any rules I should know about?”

“Nope,” Jack slid into a ready stance. “Come at me with everything you have.”

Foolish.

Hanzo rushed forward, keeping his stride wide to minimize the sound. He aimed to strike the soldier in the chest.

It should have been silent, yet he still found Jack catching his wrist, forcing his arm up before shoving him back.

Hanzo blinked a few times, trying to figure out how that happened.

“At least try and be less obvious,” Jack taunted.

The archer gave no response, silently stepping to the side, or at least he thought. Jack’s eyes seemed to follow him, focused on something else. The soldier couldn’t hear him, could he? Then again perhaps his hearing was just that sharp. It was also possible his dragons were giving away his location and he pondered if there was a way to hide them.

Still, his dragons shouldn’t be revealing where he planned to strike.

Perhaps, as the soldier said, it was simply too obvious.

He dove forward again, a feint this time, the strike aimed at his stomach moved up toward his chin. The soldier twisted his head to the side, avoiding the strike. This time he countered. His palm slammed into Hanzo’s chest but he didn’t flinch. He grabbed Jack’s wrist to keep him from moving,
aiming for the neck.

His attack was blocked, the soldier's arm feeling more like cold stone than muscle. Hanzo let go and jumped back.

“How are you doing this.” He rolled his shoulders to get rid of the pressure on his chest.

“See,” Jack cracked his neck. “If you were communicating with those dragons you’d already know.”

Hanzo gritted his teeth. What did that even mean? What sort of things had this soldier taught himself?

Suddenly he was on the offensive. Hanzo leaned to the side to avoid the punch. Something cold rushed by him and he glanced to see the ice. It was clinging to Jack’s skin, running from his knuckles to his elbow.

Hanzo aimed for his elbow. The soldier pulled back and blocked the hit. The sharp cold burned Hanzo’s fingertips. Snapping his hand back was a foolish mistake. He had no time to block the next punch. The ice on Jack’s knuckles cut into his cheek as he reeled back.

“What in Sam’s hill is going on?”

Hanzo turned to see Jesse standing in the doorway, two mugs in his hand. He looked pissed off, to say the least. With no answer he put both mugs onto the floor before he stomped over, spurs clinking behind him.

The archer opened his mouth to talk but became painfully aware of his injury. Blood slid down his cheek and he lifted a hand to see how bad it was.

Jesse got to him first, glove off, and pressed his hand against the wound. That familiar warmth appeared and Hanzo found himself unable to pull away.

“The hell are you doing, Jack?”

“We were sparring.”

“That’s no damn reason to pull out your ice.”

“Jesse,” Hanzo reached up and grabbed his wrist.

The cowboy’s anger melted into concern as he met his gaze. “You alright?”

“I am fine, it is as he said, we were sparring.”

“That ain't no excuse.”

“I am fine. I will simply have to be more careful.”

Jesse sighed, pulling his hand back to check the injury. Healed or not he moved it back, thumb rubbing under Hanzo’s eye. “You sure?”
“I am sure.”

Jesse still didn’t seem satisfied, fixing his glare back on Jack. “What are you doing here anyway? Thought you were done in here.”

“Spirit training,” Jack regained that sharp edge to his tone. “Like Ana asked.”

“Fail to see what that has to do with punching my boyfriend in the face.”

Hanzo rolled his eyes and almost shoved Jesse out the door. This attitude was completely unnecessary.

“How about you find out?” Jack taunted. “Ready when you are.”
McCree wasn’t sure how to react to the challenge. He’d sparred with Jack plenty of times when he was younger, but it’d be different now. He thought without his visor it’d be easier but based on Hana and now Hanzo that wasn’t the case.

“We are not done.” Hanzo pulled out of McCree’s grip, his wound healed by now.

“We’re not, but I think you should take a break. Get some of that tea.” Jack gestured over to the mugs on the floor. “See how McCree and that phoenix fare.”

So it was a spirit thing. Maybe that’s the trick he was using.


The archer kept glaring at the soldier, the tension obvious. McCree could see the hair on his neck going up.

“Very well,” he turned out of McCree’s grip.

“Ah, hang on.” He tugged off his serape, throwing it over Hanzo’s shoulders before taking off his hat and putting it on his head. “Hold onto those for me.”

The archer shook his head before adjusting the hat.

McCree couldn’t hold back his grin. “Huh, looks good on you.”

Hanzo rolled his eyes before heading over to the mugs.

“Alright,” McCree stepped onto the mat. “Always wanted to test this arm against those genes of yours.”

“You should have offered sooner.” Jack slid into a ready stance. “I’m sure you’ve wanted to punch me in the jaw.”

“You keep adding to the list.” He cracked his knuckles and took a deep breath.

If Jack could see through his attacks then he needed to find out why.

“If he’s using ice I would recommend using fire.” Clementine spoke up. “It can dismantle his defense.”
That much was true. He let the heat rush down the length of his arms, keeping it low enough not to ignite a flame. He didn’t want to give himself away that easily.

McCree started with a simple punch, predictable, getting caught in Jack’s grip. He wanted to test the difference in strength with his prosthetic, pleased to find he could in fact push the soldier’s arm back.

But he didn’t have time to find out how far. Jack caught on and shoved his arm to the side before aiming for his stomach. McCree twisted himself to the side to avoid the hit, tearing his arm free. He kept up his momentum, elbow aimed at Jack’s nose.

The soldier countered it with his own, the ice on his skin hissed at the contact.

“Using the fire’s a bit cheap, don’t you think?” Jack smirked at him. His strength was too much and McCree had to fall back.

“You’re the one blocking with all your ice. Don’t think I don’t notice it collecting on your knuckles.” When he exhaled he noticed the trail of smoke, an idea forming in his head. “I’d call it leveling the playing field.”

“You wish this was an even match.”

“Yeah?” McCree ran at him head on and Jack caught his hands. The impact sent a jolt from his wrist to his shoulders, but he didn’t back down. He had to get as close as possible.

“You’re going to have to be less obvious than that, kid.”

“Told you not to call me that.” He took a deep breath, tasting the ash on the roof of his mouth.

Jack eyes suddenly went wide and he jumped back a moment before McCree could breathe the smoke into his face. The plan had been to fuck up his sense of smell, confuse him for a bit.

How the *hell* did he see that coming?

McCree suddenly picked up on Clementine’s laughter.

_Do you know what’s going on?_

“Ah, my apologies. I just love to watch him work.”

Who? Jack?

“Look behind you, eyes closed.”

McCree did as he was told, trying to keep it quick since he was still in a fight.

However that reminder quickly fled when he realized what he was looking at.

It was *him*.

Well no, not quite. It certainly looked just like him, down to the pose and the facial expression, but the body was completely white. The figure turned its head, yellow eyes meeting his before it grinned,
showing off rows of sharp teeth.

Wait, was that Jack’s wolf?

He grinned even wider before saying, “Watch out behind you.”

McCree opened his eyes as he swiveled his head back around, just in time to avoid the oncoming punch. The fist sailed past his head and he almost missed his chance. He shoved his fear down, snapping his left hand out to grab Jack’s arm. With his strength and the soldier’s momentum he managed to jerk him off balance.

Split second was all it took.

McCree punched Jack in the jaw.

It wasn’t as hard as he would have liked, but he certainly felt it. He considered following it up but decided to let go instead.

“Hah, take that Morrison.” McCree smirked.

He was surprised when Jack did as well, rubbing his jaw as he stood up straight. “Should have figured you’d catch on quick with their history.”

“I still don’t get it though.” McCree crossed his arms. “How come that lets you see everything? Even me trying to blow smoke in your face?”

“I would also like to know.” Hanzo spoke up. The archer was leaning against the wall, mug in his hand, glare fixed on them both. McCree’s serape was pulled tight around his shoulders.

Jack sighed and rubbed his neck before trailing his hand down to his chest. McCree could see the glow this time, watching it trail down the soldier’s arm as he held out his hand.

The wolf appeared in another flurry of light and snow, except he was still shaped like McCree. He grinned, holding up his hand as the hat appeared on his head.

“Howdy,” His deep voice mimicked before laughing.

Hanzo was muttering something in Japanese. McCree decided to keep his focus on the spirit, amazed it could shape-shift that clearly. At this point he assumed no spirit necessarily had a set form, but even when Clementine changed her form it was rarely this detailed.

“I assume then your spirit can show where your opponent is.” Hanzo stepped over to the mat. “But how does it predict their movements?”

When McCree leaned forward this time, wondering if his beard was actually that scruffy, the wolf leaned forward as well. He leaned back, the wolf mirrored it. Every movement McCree made it followed him, at the exact same time. Touching his chin, making a face, jumping to the side, the spirit didn’t miss a beat.

If anything, it was moving a half second before McCree.

“This town ain’t big enough for the two of us,” the wolf struck a pose before laughing again, that
wheezing sound from the back of his throat. Then suddenly its form shifted into a flurry of snow before settling back.

Now he looked like Hanzo.

“After what happened in Switzerland and me losing my eyesight we had to find a way to make up for it during combat.” Jack didn’t seem impressed with his spirit’s antics. “I couldn’t rely on my visor all the time, too easy to break. Instead we came up with this.”

“But how,” Hanzo swatted the wolf from stealing Jesse’s hat. “Your spirit was not built for perception, was it?”

“He was built for survival.” Jack shrugged. “Born from... ah what was it again?”

“The will to survive.” The wolf wandered back over to McCree, still in Hanzo’s form, and leaned up against him. “By a soldier too, would you figure. Why my instincts run so strong in this pup.”

Jack snorted and rolled his eyes. “Point is, he’s always had a knack for sensing if something’s about to go wrong. We simply honed in on that so he could predict an opponent’s moves.”

“It’s like being in your mind,” the spirit waved his fingers near Jesse’s face.

“Please stop doing that while looking like Hanzo, it’s weird.”

He laughed, “distracted by a pretty face, hm? I can’t blame you. I was as well. Where is she?”

“Huh?”

“My shining sun.”

McCree almost jumped from the sudden rush of heat in his chest. It took him a moment to realize it wasn’t even his.

*You want out?*

“I certainly wouldn’t object...”

He sighed and rolled his shoulders, letting the warmth roll down his shoulder as he held up his arm.

Clementine appeared from the coil of flames, taking off in an instant. The wolf beamed, flashing back into his normal form before taking off after her.

“Hey,” Jack shouted. “We didn’t come in here to flirt.”

“Aw, leave ‘em alone.” McCree crossed his arms. “Unless you’re scared to fight me again without your little mirror wolf.”

Jack turned to glare, his gaze just going left of McCree’s.

Whatever argument was about to happen was cut off when the doors opened. Ana stepped inside, Genji and Lúcio close behind her.
“Jack,” She chimed up. “So good of you to join us. I assume you’re already-” The two spirits ran past her. “Well, I hope you were doing some training.”

“Not like I have a choice anymore.”

“Aw, you always have one.”

“Besides, are you telling me you haven’t explained spirit bonds to any of them?”

She shrugged, spotting Jesse’s tea on the floor and wandering over to pick it up. “I knew I wouldn’t need to. You’d do it for me eventually.”

Jack growled and McCree tried not to laugh. He glanced over to see Hanzo was, indeed, still pouting. He stepped closer, going slow to make sure Hanzo was okay with him in his space.

The archer glanced at him, studying his expression before pressing against his side.

“You can get him back later.” McCree took his hat back. “Thanks for holding onto that for me.”

“Do you want your serape?”

“Eh, you have a pretty tight grip there. I’ll leave it for now.”

Hanzo must not have noticed as he glanced down, letting the fabric fall back into place. “My apologies.”

“Aw don’t worry about it, that’s what it’s there for.” McCree kissed him on the head.

“Hey,” Jack interrupted. “Did I not just say we didn’t come here to flirt.”

“Oh can it,” McCree snapped back. “You don’t get to lecture us while green and greener over there are doing that.”

Lúcio and Genji were still just talking to each other, seemingly oblivious of what was going on around them. Their foreheads were pressed together.

“Fair enough, Genji!” The soldier’s voice echoed through the room.

The ninja stood up straight. “Yes?”

“Sparring mat, let’s go.”

“What? Why me? Why not Lúcio?”

“Because I already spar with him when I train with Lena and Hana.” The musician smirked and pushed his boyfriend forward. “Come on, give it a shot.”

Jack whistled, obviously for his spirit. The wolf was currently lying on his back, paws swatting up at where Clementine was hovering in the air. He rolled back over, ears up. Jack signaled him over with a tilt of his head.
“Oh boy, this one should be fun.” He changed shape as he ran, already mirroring the way the ninja ran. His pace didn’t stop as he ran next to Jack. He struck another pose, two fingers in front of his mouth before he simply vanished.

“This is strange.” Genji mumbled.

“Get used to it.” Jack returned to his corner on the mat. “Ready when you are.”
Bonds 10-5

Chapter Notes

Dramaaaaa

There is one more section after this to let u guys know

Hanzo tore himself awake, heart racing, cold sweat on the back of his neck. He scrambled for his communicator. He had to get help. Jesse was hurt. He was hurt. He was...

His fingers closed around the device when he remembered it was a nightmare.

He let it clatter back onto the nightstand as he flopped onto the bed with a sigh. His head was spinning from sitting up too quick, hair catching in his mouth.

Another nightmare, no surprise. The things had been plaguing him even worse since training with the soldier. It hadn’t gone unnoticed. Jesse mentioned the circles under his eyes, asking if that’s what was going on. Hanzo had no issue admitting it, but never took up Jesse’s offer for assistance.

“Just send me a message if they’re keeping you up.”

Hanzo pushed his hair out of the way, looking at the communicator. He knew that he could, that he should, but in the end he wouldn’t. He refused to disturb the cowboy’s own restful sleep over this.

He gave up on getting anymore rest, however. The past few nights, every time he closed his eyes, it was something different. Nightmares always full of electricity that he couldn’t control. At first it was repetitive with what happened to Genji, but lately it was shifting. Lúcio, Hana, Mei and now Jesse.

Hanzo didn’t want to think about if that was what their terrified screaming actually sounded like.

His stomach twisted and for a moment he swore he was going to puke. He forced himself to sit up, trying to rub the tension out of his shoulders and clear his head. He needed to think about something else. Anything else.

Hanzo decided to walk around, the silence of his room becoming overwhelming. Tea seemed like an easy solution but he knew it wasn’t what he wanted. He wanted Jesse’s serape again. He wanted to lean against the cowboy and allow himself to fall asleep.

He wouldn’t wake Jesse up.

He was surprised to find the living room lights on. He peered around the corner to see Hana in the kitchen, with Jack blocking the doorway.

“Is that why you’re always in here? Did Winston assign you to guard the kitchen or something?”
“You shouldn’t be eating this late.”

“What, it’s my food. I’ll eat it when I want.” She ducked under him and ran for it. “Hey Hanzo. Need some snacks?”

“No thank you.” He watched her run past him.

When her footsteps vanished he was left in silence again. He turned his gaze slowly, seeing Jack staring at him.

No, not him.

“Can’t sleep, Shimada?”

“Stop,” Hanzo growled as he headed for the kitchen. “It seems you never can either.”

“Wolf spirit. Learned to sleep whenever I can.” He moved away from the door and let Hanzo through. “Something stirred up the dragons again I see.”

“I ask that you cease commenting on their behavior.” Hanzo tried to ignore him as he filled up the kettle.

“Yeah, fine.” He heard the soldier step away and the creak of the sofa.

Hanzo sighed with relief, refusing to turn around while he waited on the water to heat up. He wanted to keep that soldier and his foolish comments out of his mind as much as possible.

Too late for that.

He still hadn’t figured it out, what that training was meant to prove. Maybe his bond with his spirits wasn’t that spectacular—not that he’d ever admit it—but how would that let him punch Jack in the face? He didn’t understand this at all. Maybe that was the problem.

Jack knew something he didn’t.

The click of the kettle had him pushing away from the counter, stepping back out into the living room. Jack was sitting on the couch, head tilted back towards the ceiling. His gaze didn’t move, not even when Hanzo stood in front of him. The archer took a moment to study the jagged scars on his temples again. They looked nothing like the ones on his face.

“Can I help you, Shimada?” He finally asked.

“Jesse mentioned you were almost always up for sparring.”


“I wish to understand this technique you use to see through your opponents.” Hanzo crossed his arms. “And I wish to better understand what a spirit bond could possibly do to affect it.”

The soldier groaned when he sat back up, running his hands over his face. “You want to do this now?”
“It seems neither of us are sleeping.”

“Yeah, fine, but make some tea first. It’s still three in the fucking morning.”

Hanzo agreed with that as both of them headed back into the kitchen. He let the soldier pick out his own kind, already aware that anything too strong wouldn’t agree with him. They waited for it to steep in a dreadful silence. Hanzo kept watching him, trying to study his expression but there was none. He didn’t even seem to be looking at his dragons anymore either.

He almost looked as confused as Hanzo felt.

“Why are you still here, Morrison?”

The soldier finally looked over. “I thought we were waiting on tea.”

“No, why are you here in this base? I believe you made it very clear many times when you arrived you had no intention of doing so. That you wanted nothing to do with this operation.”

The soldier’s silence only irritated Hanzo more. Avoiding the subject again, no doubt.

“Why does it concern you that much?”

“Perhaps for the same reason you asked that of me. You found it suspicious that someone like me would be fighting for such a cause.”

“Not that suspicious, we took in Jesse after all.”

“As I recall, Blackwatch did. As well as my brother. You yourself were never very fond of criminals.”

Jack seemed to chuckle at that. “Hardly matters now considering I am one.”

“Because you wanted to find answers.”

“Yes.”

“Then why are you still here?”

Hanzo had learned years ago how to handle people changing the subject. Genji used to be notorious for it, trying to get Hanzo to forget he hadn’t been home in three days.

“I’m not going to explain this to you, Shimada. I’m not even sure why it concerns you that much.”

“I do not believe anyone should be here half-heartedly. I do not want my teammates to put faith in someone who does not return it.”

Jack’s smile almost seemed dangerous as he glared. “That’s almost rich coming from someone who doesn’t trust himself.”

The spark that snapped into the air caused the light to flicker.

“Calm down,” Jack reached back and grabbed his mug, pulling out the teabag. “Save it for the
Hanzo chided himself as he took care of his own mug. He needed to keep his emotions under control. How come this soldier had such an easy time riling them up?

He was almost as bad as...

“If we’re being honest partner, I kind of hoped you weren’t gonna come to in the med bay.”

Hanzo frowned, almost not recognizing the Jesse from his own memory. Their relationship had changed so drastically. He hadn’t thought much on it until now.

But now he was as he walked behind the soldier in the hallway. His smug expressions, word choices, always looking nothing but confident when he insulted you.

Jack mumbled something up ahead, rubbing the back of his neck.

Hanzo frowned.

That couldn’t be where Jesse picked up the habit.

No way. He was just imagining things.

Both of them had finished their tea by the time they got downstairs. Hanzo helped set everything up, reminded of how blind Jack actually was when he tripped over it at least three times. Hanzo would have found it amusing if he wasn’t so irritated.

“Try not to hold back this time.” Jack said as he finished taping his hands. “I’m pretty sure I can handle anything you could dish out.”

“Are you certain of that?”

“Well, not entirely, but I do know if anything almost kills me, Angela can certainly fix it.”

Hanzo gritted his teeth hard enough that it made his jaw ache. His nails dug into his palms as he stepped onto the mat, wanting nothing more than punch that condescending smirk off his face. If he accomplished nothing else during this.

He shut his eyes and glanced back, seeing the wolf was already in place. It even mimicked his messy ponytail, grinning when they made eye contact.

“Pretend I’m not here.” He chuckled.

As if.

Jack was using this spirit to predict his opponent’s moves. This meant that as long as Jack had the focus and a visual on the wolf there wasn’t much Hanzo could do.

There was no choice but to corner him.

The match started when they both charged at each other, Hanzo grateful he still had the speed to
dodge the man’s punches. He was not about to explain a broken nose to Angela, and certainly not to Jesse.

His first two jabs were dodged, the third one redirected. With Jack’s hands occupied the archer aimed to knee him in the stomach. He met Jack’s elbow instead. The pain was sharp but he ignored it and spun on his heel. His kick was stopped when Jack caught his ankle, trying to jerk him off his feet. Hanzo caught himself on his hands, pulling free of the soldier’s grip as he flipped back onto his feet.

“Dainty thing, aren’t you?” Jack popped his wrist.

Hanzo tried not to think about the fact Jesse had made the same comment once.

“But you’re still holding back.” Jack rushed forward this time.

Hanzo slide to the side, moving along the soldier’s arm to aim at his stomach.

Jack’s elbow slammed into his ear and he flinched. Foolish. He should have predicted that.

“Come on Shimada. I can handle a bit of a shock. I’ve done it before.”

Hanzo took the chance to try rubbing away the ringing in his skull. “Is that so?”

“Well, you didn’t think all they did in SEP was drugs and injections did you?”

That comment made him pause. He studied the scars on the man’s shoulders. “I do not think I ever inquired much into your past.”

“Yeah, I guess that’s true.”

The fight started back up, and with every passing second Hanzo could feel frustration burning under his skin. Every attack that missed made him grit his teeth. Every one that was blocked made sparks run up and down his nerves. He could feel Tsuki and Umi now, running around on his shoulders.

“Stop holding back.” Jack growled when he caught Hanzo’s wrist.

“I will not. You do not understand. You couldn’t understand what these dragons are capable of.”

“You sure about that? I was there, you know, when Genji was brought in.”

Sparks shot up the length of his arms. Both of the dragons roared as he aimed his next punch.

No.

He froze, the electricity fizzling out into the air. Jack had let go of his hand and he stumbled back, farther back. This was getting dangerous.

This was a foolish idea.

He spun around to run out of the room, but of course it couldn’t be that simple.
“You can’t just lock them up like that, Hanzo.”

He whirled back around, glaring, trying to sound as angry as he could with the fear lodged in his throat. “I do not want any lectures from the likes of you.”

“You think I give a damn?” Jack raised his voice. “What you’re doing is only making them more dangerous.”

“And how would you know? How could you understand any of this? You have not seen what they can do first hand. You have not had your control of your own spirit fall from your grasp.”

“You think so?”

Hanzo froze. Jack did as well, and judging from his wide eyes that comment was never meant to be said.

But there it was, hanging in the air, and Hanzo couldn’t keep track of all the thoughts buzzing around in his head.

“What?” He breathed out. “What did you say?”

Jack rubbed his neck again, cringing, eyebrows pressed together like he was in pain. His hand trailed up his jaw to cover his mouth.

“Switzerland,” He mumbled out, almost too quiet for Hanzo to hear. “Gabe- Reyes and I... It would take too long to explain why he was there. I should have known something was wrong, off about him, but I got caught up in the argument.” He moved his hand down, arms crossed. “Never had great control of my temper, but when the fight got physical it... I don’t remember summoning him, he was just... there.”

Somehow Jack’s eyes were even more distant than before. Hanzo wasn’t sure if he should do anything, say anything, he knew how terrifying it was to get lost in your own memories.

“The only reason it didn’t get out of hand is because Gabriel knew his name. He could call him off but... the damage was already done.” Jack sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “Before I could do anything else the place exploded under us. Never stopped wondering that if I hadn’t hurt him that badly we could have both made it out of there.”

_How bad was it?_ Hanzo wanted to ask but he didn’t. He wasn’t even sure he should be hearing any of this. Jack clearly didn’t want to tell this to anyone.

“Look,” Jack let out a long breath. “I know you don’t want to hear a lecture from me, I get it. You hate my guts. You don’t trust me. I don’t even blame you. But I want to help you with this.”

Hanzo frowned, the unease in his chest fading just a bit as he crossed his arms. “If that is the case then you could... well, as Jesse would put it, ‘be less of a dick.’”

Jack almost looked surprised for a moment before he snorted. What started out as a chuckle grew louder and louder, his hand covering up his mouth again.

“I did not realize it was that funny.”
“Sorry,” Jack couldn’t seem to stop. “You just... nah, nevermind.” He took a deep breath. “You’re right, you’re right. I’ll give it a shot if you’re willing to listen.”

Hanzo let his shoulders drop. “Very well.”

“Look, my wolf and I were on some rough terms after that event. And even before that I’d... never really bothered to find out what he was capable of. Instincts, night vision, ice sculptures, I kept thinking that was enough. Sometimes I’d envy Gabe’s wide range of abilities but I set my own limits by not trying anything new.

“It was terrifying for a while. Losing my eyesight by trying to correct it. Being on my own. Wondering if he’d just snap out and hurt someone else but... He was all I had at the time.”

Jack tapped his foot on the mat before shifting his weight. “I know it’s scary, alright? But these things are a part of you. By holding back, not testing their limits, not communicating, you’re only making the risk worse. We can’t always control our emotions. You need to know what to do if it happens again. You need to trust them enough so they can stop you themselves.”

He stepped closer to Hanzo and the archer went tense for a moment, tenser when the soldier grabbed his arm.

“Your bond with your spirit is how you get stronger. It’s how you maintain balance. And Hanzo... even if it’s the hardest thing you ever do you’ve got to forgive yourself for what happened. You’ve got to forgive them. That much self loathing is just going to affect them too.”

Hanzo sighed, letting his muscles relax. He knew the soldier wasn’t wrong. He’d known his relationship with his dragons had been frayed for years, but somehow he never considered he was the cause of it.

“Have you forgiven yourself?” He asked.

Jack smiled a bit and let go. “Not entirely, it’s a work in progress. Let’s say that Jesse finding out about Reaper was a bit of a step back.”

Hanzo found himself glaring. “As I recall you screamed that information at him in a very rude fashion.”

Jack chuckled again. “Yeah, kind of regret that too.” He stepped around Hanzo and headed over to the empty mugs on the floor.

“Have you told him that?”

“Have you told Genji you’re sorry?”

The archer froze when he opened his mouth to say “of course, obviously” because at that moment he realized he hadn’t. Genji said he forgave him but somehow an actual apology had never left Hanzo’s lips.

“It’s okay,” Jack shrugged. “I’m shitty at apologizing too.” He reached down, feeling around for a bit before picking up the mugs. “It’s late. I’m tired. I’m going to go back to the living room to sleep.”

“Why do you sleep in there? I did not imagine Ms. Amari to be such an disagreeable roommate.”
“She’s not just... quickest way to get to everyone if something goes wrong... just a force of habit. Anyway, if you need anymore help with this feel free to ask me.”

Hanzo studied his expression. No smirk this time. “That would be appreciated, thank you.”

Jack just nodded and waved as he headed out of the room.

Hanzo shut off the lights before heading to his own room. He knew he should try and get some more sleep but he couldn’t bring himself to stop staring at his communicator.

In the end he picked it up, face half buried in his pillow as he typed out a message.

> Genji?

It took a few minutes to get a reply.

> Are you alright Hanzo?

> I am fine. I just wished to apologize.

> There’s no need to do that. I kind of deserved those drawings on my visor after teasing you and Jesse.

Hanzo frowned, hesitating for a moment before he responded.

> Not about that.

The wait for a response was physically painful. He fully buried his face as he tried to ignore the pressure in his chest.

> Where are you right now? Please do not do something foolish.

> I’m not. I’m fine Genji. I’m in my room.

> Is this a conversation you would like to have face to face? Or is this fine?

He wanted to say no. He might not actually have the guts to say any of this to Genji’s face, but that’s what Genji deserved.

> Early tomorrow morning? On the roof.

> Okay. Please try and get some sleep.

Hanzo put the communicator back on the stand, sighing as he let his eyes fall shut. He wasn’t sure how much sleep he could actually get, but if he didn’t try he’d no doubt be exhausted tomorrow.

Strangely, he dreamed of nothing but walking down the side of a river.

Chapter End Notes
Jack and his spirit actually make me so emotional
Hoping part 11 will be at least mostly done by the end of this week I'm gonna try

But here lets end on some softer things...

It had been twenty minutes since Genji left. Almost an hour since Genji had shown up. Hanzo had probably gone up there too early, rehearsing what he wanted to say dozens of times to make sure he didn’t mess it up.

He did anyway.

It was difficult to fully apologize through that many tears.

Genji didn’t say much at first. He just held onto Hanzo, eventually saying that it was okay. That Hanzo didn’t need to say anything else.

Except he did. He needed to say it. It couldn’t just float in the air as if it was understood. It wasn’t fair to do that to Genji.

He deserved to hear it. He deserved that years ago.

It took way too long to get through all of it, even speaking in his mother tongue, but Genji’s patience had certainly grown over the years.

Genji waited for Hanzo calm down to inquire what brought all this about. Hanzo explained, although he wasn’t certain if any of it made sense.

“Hm, yes, Morrison was always like that. I suppose he pushed people to their limits in different ways than Reyes did. This is why Jesse and I made a game out of pranking him.”

“You always had issues with authority.”

“Heh, well, at the time I blamed him for the position I was in. It was the little things.”

He’d asked Hanzo if he wanted him to stay on the roof for a while, but Hanzo considered he wanted some time to himself. Genji insisted they would play some games later before heading back down.

Now it’d been twenty minutes, watching the sky, somehow his mind could do nothing but drift aimlessly. He couldn’t keep track of any of the wisps of thought that entered his brain. For a moment he thought he could simply fall asleep.

But no, he had something else he needed to do.
He took a deep breath as he let his eyes fall shut. Entering his mindscape took only seconds, the sound of the river welcoming him first. The night sky was clear for once, a dark blue littered with stars and galaxies that snaked their way around.

Tsuki and Umi rose out of the river, circling the rock he sat on. Neither of them said a word, clearly waiting for him to speak first.

“I came to apologize.”

“We know,” They spoke in unison.

“I do not wish for this to continue. I...” He sighed. “I am sorry for never trying to understand you better. I hope you can forgive my foolishness.”

Tsuki rose up, hovering next to him. “We could do nothing else, young master.”

Umi twisted himself around her. “We only ever wished for you to let us in.”

“We want you to face this.”

“To better yourself.”

“Do you think you can?”

Could he? Hanzo still had his doubts. There were far too many things he was afraid of, many of them he would barely admit. There was always the risk of him hurting someone again, with his abilities or otherwise. He did not want to drive these people away from him. He’d come to value their presence far too much.

But Genji practically fought a battle to allow him to stay here. His brother had not only forgiven him but refused to leave it at that, wanting to rebuild what they had lost.

Hana had latched onto him from day one, and while it took a while for him to tolerate her nosiness, he appreciated it. Her insistence that he join them for game nights and movies had carefully pulled him out of the isolated space he shouldn’t be in.

Mei slowly came to him more and more for second opinions on her math. Her puns made him laugh more often than he’d admit. Winston possibly trusted him too soon, but Hanzo enjoyed knowing his input into all of this was valued.

And Jesse, the fool. The one who’s challenged him from day one, their petty contests turning into routine, turning into time Hanzo hated to miss. Happening to notice that phoenix lead him to find someone to confide in, even if he wasn’t always brave enough.

But Jesse carried that same fear after all.

Perhaps Hanzo couldn’t do this, not by himself, but he didn’t have to. He was not alone, not anymore. These people cared about him. They loved him.

It was time to stop foolishly believing that no one ever could.

“I am willing to try.” He finally said. “I am willing to do whatever it takes.”
“Then we will be here to aid you.” Both of the dragons flew up in a spiral before turning back and coming back down. Their bodies had shrunk, so much smaller now as they slid over his shoulders and down into his lap.

The surrounding water slowly settled down. The white foam almost vanishing entirely on top of the flat surface. All he could hear now is the river brushing past the rock he sat on, a slow trickle that left a faint ripple that reflected the full moon above.

Hanzo hesitated as he lifted his hand. He gently placed his palm on Umi’s head, the dragon only letting out a soft growl at the contact. The archer slowly ran his hand down the spirit’s back. Sparks moved under his skin as he felt the pattern of the scales.

He’d never touched them before.

“Howdy.”

His mindscape vanished at the sound of Jesse’s voice and he opened his eyes to see the cowboy standing in front of him. The morning sun illuminated his face, making the wood of the guitar slung over his back shine.

“Sorry, not bothering you am I? Genji sent me out here.”

Hanzo frowned and glanced down. “How did you get up here?”

“I’ve been practicing. Gotta know how to climb if I’m going to fly, right?” He crouched down, his hand moving slow before running a thumb under Hanzo’s eye. They were still dry and irritated from earlier. He prayed it wasn’t too obvious. “Don’t suppose I can get a reward this time.”

“Not right now,” Hanzo gently took Jesse’s hand and pulled it away. “I’m sorry.”

“Aw, that’s okay darlin’. ” The cowboy sat down next to him, putting his guitar on his lap. “Music okay?”

“That would be appreciated.”

The cowboy still kept his notes quiet, gentle strums that didn’t seem to follow any specific tune. At least it wasn’t anything Hanzo recognized. Still, it was relaxing to hear as he watched the last bits of morning colors fade out from the sky.

He let out a long breath and let himself lean to the side, pressing against Jesse’s shoulder.

“Want to talk?” Jesse offered.

“About?”

“Eh, whatever you want. But Genji mentioned you were all out of sorts. Wasn’t sure if I could help or not.”

“Your previous commander has a way of stirring things up.”

The next note sounded off. “He ain’t no commander of mine. And did he hurt you again? I swear
next time he wants to fight—"

“No. He did not. I asked him to fight me.”

“When?”

Hanzo sniffed. “... at three in the morning.”

Jesse laughed at that, a loud sound that Hanzo could feel. The warmth from him seemed to move with the noise. “Damn, is this some new fight club I didn’t hear about? The hell are you doing that for Hanzo?”

“I could not sleep. What he said before kept bothering me. You mentioned he was always willing to spar.”

“Yeah he is, crazy bastard. Swear he’s got a bit of a masochistic streak or something. I never saw him on missions but Gabe was always saying he’d go running into fights that were way too much with a damn smile on his face.”

“Hm,” Hanzo tilted his head up to study Jesse’s face. “Sounds like someone else I know.”

“Eh?” His boyfriend blinked a few times, surprised. “Aw hell no, I ain’t nothing like Jack.”

“Are you sure?”

“I was reckless way before him.” He frowned and idly plucked at the same string. “I mean, mostly.”

Hanzo decided not to press the issue.

The cowboy went back to playing, a much more consistent tune this time. He began to hum along and Hanzo almost found himself drifting off to the soft vibrations against his ear.

“Were you and Morrison always on such ill terms?” He mumbled out.

“Eh? Well no, guess not. Great sparring partner. Damn good teacher too for what it was worth. Was always closer to Ana and Gabe though.”

“You have not told me much about about Gabriel.”

“I didn’t?” Jesse tapped his fingers against the guitar. “Well damn, I guess not. Did you want me to?”

“If you are fine with it.”

“Guess if I stick to the earlier parts.” Jesse’s laughter was quiet, empty. “Not sure what you want to hear. Met him when he and his team blew the Deadlock gang out of the water. He should have put a bullet in my head, wound up dragging me into Blackwatch instead.”

“Why?”

“Ain’t that the million dollar question.” He continued the tune from earlier, faster this time.
“Always said it was ’cause of my skills but I don’t know anymore. Point is he brought me in, taught me most everything I know.”

Hanzo brought his hand up, letting his knuckles rest against Jesse’s arm. “You mentioned once he was like a father to you.”

“Yeah, always had my back no matter what. Making sure I was taken care of. Saved my life more times than I care to count. Hell, he put a lot on the line just to keep me above water. Just... wish I could figure out why. I mean, come on. Who looks at a kid from Deadlock like ’yeah, that one, I’m going to take that one home.’”

Hanzo wasn’t sure if he should laugh or not but it came out anyway. Jesse didn’t seem bothered. He flipped his hand over, trailing a finger over the patterns of dark hair. He found a scar about six inches from his wrist.

“I cannot say why he did either.” Hanzo admitted. “But I am glad he did.”

“Eh?”

“If he had not, then I would not have met you.” He dared to look up to see Jesse staring at him, his cheeks turning dark.

“Aw shucks, darlin’.” He gave off that goofy grin again. “You say the sappiest things sometimes, you know that?” He tried to return to playing his guitar, his smile barely fading. “But you’re right. Never would have seen any of this if it hadn’t been for him.”

Hanzo watched his face for a few more moments. “Thank you for being here, Jesse.”

“What, out here? Or in general?”

“Both.”

The cowboy laughed as he strummed his hands over the strings. “Anytime Hanzo. I told you, just ring me up once and I’ll be there. No exceptions.”

“I do not wish to be a burden.”

“Not sure you could be if you tried.”

Hanzo wanted to argue with that, at least considering a few of the sillier answers to that sort of comment, but let it go for now. Jesse was stubborn and loyal, and if Hanzo hadn’t managed to break him of that habit he wasn’t sure anyone could.

Jesse’s cheek pressed against the top of his head, his notes slowing down again as the humming resumed. Hanzo tried to listen, the warmth reminding him of festival music, the nearby torches warming his cheeks when he stood too close.

All too soon he fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes
just as well that we do because the next couple of parts are stressful as shit

what?
Remember how I said I was going to try rly hard to finish this part by the end of this week?

Yeah I wrote over 7k in like two days so YAAAAY Hope I can finish part 12 just as fast, or almost just as fast

Guess I was just rly excited to write this for some reason...

Don't worry too much yet tho, got some set up to do

(Also why do these sections get longer and longer I'm sure u guys aren't complaining but how does this happen jesus h christ)

(Also also I have some people telling me they read this whole fic in like one day which is great I'm glad u love it that much but please remember to drink some water and get a snack or something this is over 100k rn I have concerns)

Edit: A kind reader has informed me that corn on pizza is in fact a thing that people enjoy. A part of me is surprised and the other part isn't, so I edited the dialogue a bit

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You have plenty of ammo, yes?”

“Of course darlin’.”

“Flashbangs? Your arm is in proper condition?”

“Yes.”

“And let me go over it again. You two, Ana and Jack are going to infiltrate these bases while Lena and Hana are on standby.”

“Brother,” Genji adjusted the bag on his shoulder. “Calm down. We have done this before.”

McCree tipped his hat back and smiled. “Aw, he’s just worried about us. Aren’t you?”

Hanzo sighed, a faint blush on his cheeks. “Knowing how things went last time you went to England, I hope you can imagine my concern.”

“We will watch each other’s backs.” Genji said. “And I will not let Jesse run off by himself.”

“That goes for you too.” McCree nudged the cyborg. “I know how much you love getting into fights.”

“Aren’t we assuming these places will be cleared out already?” Hanzo frowned.
“Can’t know for sure until we look. Talon’s always been pretty good about cleaning up their trails, but with this kind of intel we can’t just leave it there.”

“Always be prepared for the worst.” Genji muttered.

“Come on you guys,” Hana peeked her head out of the entrance to the hangar. “Jack won’t stop griping about all the time we’re wasting and I need you to back me up on music choices.”

“Alright, we’re coming.” Jesse said.

“We will contact you when we land.” Genji touched Hanzo’s shoulder. “Try to not give yourself anymore grey hair.” He let go and headed into the hangar, ignoring Hanzo rolling his eyes.

“Promise I’ll be careful darlin’.” McCree stepped closer and pressed a quick kiss to the archer’s lips. “Don’t miss me too much, hm?”

Hanzo just nodded in response so McCree took it as the cue to leave. He only got one foot through the door, however, before a tight grip on his arm jerked him back. There wasn’t much time to ask questions. In one motion Hanzo spun him back around and shoved him against the wall, causing his hat to slide back on his head.

The hand on his cheek was his only warning before Hanzo tugged him into another kiss, a much stronger one. Electricity already danced on the surface of his skin, giving him chills. He let go of his bag in order to pull Hanzo closer, one hand sliding up to tug on the sash keeping his hair up.

“Really?”

Hanzo could only jerk back so far under McCree’s grip. The pair of them turned their heads to see Genji standing there, hand on his hip.

“As much as I would like to take a photo, we need to head out.” Genji moved his head toward McCree every so slightly before laughing. “Nice hair.”

He patted at the staticky mess, heat rushing up to his cheeks as he adjusted his hat to hide most of it. Hanzo picked his bag up off the floor, handing it to him.

“Thanks darlin’. Talk to you soon.”

When Hanzo couldn’t seem to find the words, McCree was just content to blow him one more kiss before following Genji toward the ship. Getting closer he could hear Hana arguing with Jack about the music. The old commander was sitting up front next to Lena who looked eager to get into the air.

“Nice hair,” Ana immediately said when McCree climbed on board.

Before he could try and hide it again Hana took a photo, snickering.

“Both of y’all knock it off.” McCree kept tugging at it, wishing it would just go flat already.

“Aw, don’t be so embarrassed.” Ana put a hand on her cheek. “Reminds me of the times I’d find ice on Gabriel’s eyelashes.”
“Stop,” Jack said without turning his head. “And hurry up and sit down so we can get out of here.”

McCree did as he was told, trying to focus on the hum of the engine instead of the continued bickering between Jack and Hana about what kind of music to play. He was amazed Lena didn’t intervene, but perhaps she was too focused on getting them in the air.

Before he could put his hat over his eyes and try to nap his communicator buzzed. A message from Hanzo.

> I will miss you. Please be safe.

McCree couldn’t keep himself from smiling as he sent what was probably way too many heart emotes. Ana giggled, watching his expression, but he pretended she wasn’t there.

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“Okay guys,” Lena chimed as they climbed out of the ship. “Don’t hesitate to call if you need anything. Hana and I won’t be too far away.”

“Please call, I don’t want to be bored.” Hana huffed as she climbed into the front seat, adamantly putting her choice of music on. After no one could come to an agreement Ana decided to put on some calming classical songs instead.

“You won’t be bored, I’m going to show you all my favorite places.” Lena insisted.

“Don’t play around too much,” Jack muttered.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever dad.”

The soldier flinched and McCree couldn’t keep himself from laughing. He waited until the ship took off and they started walking to mention it.

“Should I start calling you that too?”

“You better fucking not.”

“Alright boys,” Ana smacked them both on the shoulder as she walked on ahead. “We’re playing nice on this trip, got it?”

“Yes ma’am.” McCree said. Initially the plan had just been for McCree and Genji to go, but considering it was Talon they were digging into Ana insisted that she and Jack tag along. He had to admit he felt safer with more people, but he wasn’t sure how long he could stay in the same room as Jack.

“First order of business, we’re finding a motel.”

“What?” Jack picked up his pace to catch up with her. “We can’t dawdle around Ana. We need to plan.”

“We have a plan,” She poked him on the nose. “Unless you were sleeping during the meeting.”
He swatted her hand away.

“And besides, if you really want to go over it again it would be easier in a motel room. Besides, I know I’m hungry. Are you boys hungry?”

“I don’t eat,” Genji shrugged. “But Jesse is always hungry.”

“Not for British food I ain’t.”

“Don’t let Lena hear you say that.”

“Psh, she agrees with me.” He rolled his eyes. “Well, on everything but fish and chips though. Never changed her mind about that.”

“Let’s get fish and chips.” Genji shouted to Ana.

“Oh fuck you, you don’t even eat you don’t get a vote.”

“Knock it off,” Jack sighed. “Fine, we’ll find a place to stay.”

“And drinks,” McCree added.

“No,” Ana spun around. “You’re not doing any of that a night before a mission.”

“Drinks,” Genji repeated.

They got drinks.

Jack heavily limited how much they could get, taking one look at the five bottles McCree was carrying and pointing at the shelves. Only one bottle of hard liquor allowed and one case of something lighter. They all argued about that one. Different kinds of beer and ale. Ana always preferred the darker stuff. Jack was too used to what McCree called “basic American trash”.

Eventually they settled on a pale ale.

Then they started arguing about dinner.

McCree insisted they find some curry, except Jack couldn’t eat curry in any situation. It devolved into insults, with McCree insisting Jack was just using his spirit as an excuse and Jack insisting McCree must have burned out his sense of taste years ago.

Ana eventually forced them all to settle on pizza as they wandered by a local joint. That agreement soon came to an end when they started arguing about toppings.

“Spinach is damn good on pizza.”

“This is coming from a cowboy who probably eats vegetables once every five years.”

“Fuck off farm boy, I eat plenty of veggies. You’re just salty I don’t want corn on there.”

“At least that would be better than damn barbecue sauce.”
“You ain’t lived until you’ve had a barbecue pizza.”

“If you two keep this up,” Ana put her hands on her hips. “I’m getting the Hawaiian style.”

“No!” They both shouted at the same time.

“Do it,” Genji said. “Let them experience the magic.”

In the end they stuck to the basics, half pepperoni, half cheese. Ana and Genji walked on ahead, happily chatting with each other and leaving Jack and McCree to glare at each other in the back.

The motel they got was surprisingly nice, at least compared to what McCree was used to. They brought enough cash afford something better, but they could only get one room. Ana already claimed the bed. Genji didn’t really need one. Which left Jack and McCree to argue over the couch.

“Oh just share the bed, Jack,” Ana covered her head with a pillow. “As if we haven’t before.”

Her comment went ignored.

“You barely sleep anyway,” McCree muttered. “What the hell do you need it for?”

“And you manage to sleep anywhere. Want me to throw some pillows on the floor?”

Genji throwing open the door was the only thing that cut off their argument. He had a whole stack of printer paper in his hands that he gladly set down on the coffee table.

“So,” He said. “The front desk didn’t have any board games, but I got some of this. We can do pictionary.”

Jack, who had long taken his visor off, glared at the cyborg. “Yeah, my blind ass will play pictionary.”

Ana snorted under the pillow.

Genji tilted his head. “Oh? I did not realize your ass was as blind as your face.”

She burst into laughter that time, moving the pillow aside as she sat up.

“No need to worry, I considered that.” He took his own visor off, setting it down before he headed over to grab a beer. “I’ll just draw with my eyes closed.”

“Genji you can’t draw.” McCree couldn’t keep himself from smiling.

“Won’t matter much with my eyes closed. And,” He waved the un-open bottle of whiskey. “If you can’t guess the picture you have to take a shot.”

“You just want us to make fools of ourselves.” Ana got up from the bed. “I’m in if you boys are.”

“Not like there’s much on TV,” McCree shrugged.

After they gathered up some glasses and pulled the rest of the beers over to the table they all sat
down. Jack clearly wasn’t sure about this but Ana insisted it would be fine.

“If I can read your awful handwriting I can do this.”

“You’re the one that’ll have to take shots.”

Genji decided to go first. Practically the second he put pen to paper McCree was trying to hold back his laughter.

“What is that supposed to be? A dick?”

Genji chuckled but kept his eyes closed. “No, damn it. I’ve only drawn two lines.”

“Looks like a dick.”

“It’s not a dick.” His laughter caused the pen to move. “Damn it, now I lost my place.”

“Can’t open your eyes.”

His attempt to fix everything caused him to draw at least an inch to the left. McCree squinted at the pair of circles, and squinted harder at the lines Genji was trying to draw on the inside.

“You damn sure it’s not a dick?”

Ana was laughing now. Jack almost looked disappointed he couldn’t see what was going on.

Genji smiled. “I am sure Jesse, please stop being gay for ten seconds.”

“A dick that looks like that would turn me straight to be honest.”

Ana almost spat out her drink at that comment and even Jack cracked a smile.

McCree leaned closer to the table. “Okay then like, is it some guy trying to hammer some coconuts?”

Genji lost his place again.

“Time’s up,” Ana announced.

“Honestly Jesse,” Genji held up the page as he opened his eyes. “How could you-” He choked on the comment before bursting into laughter. He slammed the page back onto the table, his forehead hitting it soon after. “Oh god, it does look like a dick.”

“I told you.” McCree shouted.

“Hand it over, I’m taking photos of all these.” Ana grinned. “And don’t forget your shot.”

The next round went slightly better, slightly. Jack used to have the habit of sketching when he was younger but was long out of practice. Ana was a much faster guesser than McCree was, but every wrong guess had the entire table chuckling.

“A tribble, or a hairball. The sun? Our solar system.”
McCree had to admit it kind of looked like that, what with all the circles going on there. The tubes had him completely lost though.

When the time ran out Jack sighed, putting his face in his hands. “I don’t want to know how you got solar system out of a lion.”

“At least she didn’t think it was a dick.” Genji complained.

“No, no, I see it now,” Ana tried to talk through her laughter. “So that’s the mane. I thought it was fire, or something.”

The game continued, and so did the shots, Ana getting more than a little tipsy. Genji went to get everyone water to make sure no one wound up with a hangover.

“You know what this reminds me of?” She giggled and pulled a couple of photos out of her pocket. “Remember, Jesse, do you remember that time you drew on their faces.”

Jesse had to squint at the two photos before his sluggish brain could figure out what was on them. The first was the follow up photo to the one in his room, him grinning in front of the camera with Jack and Gabe sleeping on the sofa behind him. The words “super” and “gay” were written on their foreheads in big black letters.

The second, well, Jesse had almost forgotten it existed. When Gabe finally caught up with him, him and Jack got their revenge by doodling a dick on his forehead, forcing him to pose in between them while they pointed at him, crowding over him. As if the words applied to him now instead.

“Hell, you had these the whole time?” Jesse said.

“Course, gotta keep some pictures you know. Jack, you remember this don’t you?”

“Can’t see it,” He leaned against the table, looking dazed at the ceiling.

“I know you remember,” Ana mumbled. “You used to have one like this in your office.”

That startled McCree enough that he almost dropped his whiskey glass. He kept his gaze fixed on Jack whose expression hadn’t changed.

“That photo was from the time he and Lena decided to cover my office in rainbow post it notes.”

“Hah, yeah,” McCree tried to hide his grin, not that it mattered much. “That still wasn’t the best one though. Remember when me and Genji covered the whole mess hall in cups of water?”

Genji chose that time to come back over with full glasses.

Jack actually cracked a smile again. “Yeah, I remember. I had a wall of complaints almost a mile long. I also remember you deciding to do that the day my supervisor was coming in.” He sat up before grabbing his glass. “The recruits were so pissed they had to clean it all up.”

“I would have taken responsibility,” McCree lied. “But it would have taken us far too long.”

“Where did you even get all of those cups?”
“I’ve always had my sources, you know that.”

Jack’s smile grew wider. “The same source that gave you the bath bombs you put in almost all of the toilets?”

Genji and Ana both lost it at that.

“Oh man, that was such a good one.” The ninja covered his mouth. “We couldn’t get glitter out of that one toilet for a week.”

“What did we call it Jack?” Ana nudged him.

The soldier chuckled. “The sparkling shitter.”

The whole table burst into laughter, so much that it brought Ana to tears. McCree almost knocked over his water glass from banging his fist on the table. His attempts to catch it made him realize how hard Jack was actually laughing.

He barely remembered the man smiling ever since he’d shown up, much less laughing.

He had to keep it going.

“Remember when Fareeha and I poured chili powder in your coffee?”

“Oh god,” Jack held his nose. “I try not to.”

“Admit it though, you enjoyed watching us both pass out from the amount of laps Gabe had us run.”

“Yeah, appreciate that he waited until I got out of the med bay for that, you fucker.” The soldier was still chuckling.

“Aw, come on, your job would have been boring as hell without me around.”

Jack shook his head and stood up. “Yeah, yeah, guess that’s true.” He walked around the table, ruffling McCree’s hair before he made his way to the bathroom.

The cowboy sat there, completely frozen for a moment until Genji nudged him. The ninja was holding up the photos, asking if he could send them to Hanzo.

McCree just numbly agreed, trying to blame the alcohol for the sudden lull in his nerves, but he knew that wasn’t true as he tugged at his hair.

Been way too long since someone had done that.

Not that it mattered, of course, he was thirty-seven for crying out loud. He laughed to himself a bit as he took a long sip of water. He didn’t really need people patting him on the head anymore.

“Good work today, Jesse.” Jack ruffled his hair, beaming at him. “Gabe wasn’t kidding about you being a quick learner.”
“Psh, it’s okay Jack, you can say you’re bitter that I totally knocked you on your ass.”

“I’d be more bitter if you still couldn’t land a decent hit. It’d mean I wasn’t teaching you properly. Now,” Jack crossed his arms. “You in the mood for some lunch?”

“We’re stopping by the candy store right?”

“Duh.”

“Heck yes,” McCree threw his fists into the air as he stood up.

Jack laughed and ruffled his hair again.

“Jesse?”

The cowboy jerked out of the memory and turned to look at Genji, who at some point had fit his mask back on.

“Are you alright? You’re spacing out quite a lot.”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“I suppose we all should get some sleep.” He turned his head to Ana, who was lightly snoring against the table. “Follow her lead.”

McCree chuckled and listened to the sound, remembering how much Gabriel used to complain about it. “I’d love to, but we never settled the debate of who’s sleeping on the sofa.”

“Just take it,” Jack had returned, walking around the table to where Ana was. “I’ll use the bed if I manage to get any sleep. Just hope she doesn’t hang onto me.” He knelt down and gently tugged Ana into his arms before picking her up. Somehow it didn’t stir her at all, not even when Jack put her on the bed. In seconds she was clinging to the pillow, her snoring getting louder.

“I’m not sure any of us will be getting much sleep,” Genji muttered.

“Oh come on darlin’.” McCree moved over to the sofa, making himself comfortable. “You slept in my room plenty of times. You must be used to it by now.”

“You do not snore.”

“Eh? Really?”

“Really,” Genji switched off the lights and powered down his own. “But my brother does.”

“No way.”

“Get some sleep, Jesse.”

“I want details.”

“Later.”
“Genji-”

“Both of you be quiet.” Jack growled.

McCree sat up to say something else, but froze when he could see Jack’s eyes, glowing, stare fixed on him. He sunk back onto the sofa, pushing his hat over his eyes.

Later then.

Chapter End Notes

Pffft what you thought I was just going to give you one set of dad feels? Nah, you guys get TWO

Also listen, half my family lives in England, and I can’t speak for every family but literally fish and chips, fish and chips, jesus h christ, there is no one in that family who doesn’t eat it and I, for the life of me, have not figured out why

Also also, Genji was attempting to draw a bicycle, have u guys ever drawn with your eyes closed it’s the best thing ever
Oh boy it’s mission time!

putting a CONTENT WARNING here: There are some bullets flying around and some nasty bullet wounds in this chapter so if that’s something that might affect you please be careful.

“All clear over there?” Genji spoke into the communicator. It had been over twenty minutes since he heard anything from Ana or Jack.

“We’re fine.” She responded. “Not a sign of anyone inside yet. Looks like another ghost town. You boys find anything?”

“Nope,” Jesse, who was standing next to him on the elevator replied. “Dead as a doornail so far, but guess who figured out there was a secret elevator button.”

“Be careful.”

“Yes ma’am.”

They had split up into pairs this time around, since the bases in question were only a few miles apart. The last three they had gone through had been completely empty, quick jobs, but mostly fruitless ones. At least one base had the smarts to damage their computers beyond repair, the others not so much. Winston could only extract so much data from them, but it was better than nothing.

The late evenings were spent holed up in another off road motel, sending updates back to Winston or contacting other people at the base. Genji thought he might gag a couple of times Jesse spoke to his brother, but that was just in his nature.

Besides, he was no better when it came to Lúcio.

Genji spent most of his time trying to get a read on Jack. His presence in the background had ended the moment Hanzo had apologized to him. He didn’t think the soldier was up to anything malicious, but it was hard to tell these days.

Just what motivated him to stay in the base?

Sadly, he was a hard man to read, despite how often Ana saw right through him. His arguments with Jesse weren’t exactly new, but they had never been this common. But Genji knew he had no place to interfere.

All the more reason to split up. He and Jesse worked much smoother without Jack commenting on half their decisions.
The elevator door opened and both of them moved to the door, glancing in opposite directions.

“Clear,” Jesse left his gun in its holster as he moved out into the hall.

Genji followed, eyes fixed on the corner in case someone came around. “We need to locate their database.”

“Want to split up?”

He thought for a moment. “I would rather not. We haven’t confirmed if this place is truly empty.”

“Yeah that’s true. Wish we knew where to start though.”

Genji studied both hallways, no signs or indication of what they held. He crouched down, trailing his fingers over the floor. It was a new technique but maybe…

“What’s up?”

“After my cybernetics I believed a lot of my spirit’s abilities had been cut off. Ana has been teaching me otherwise.”

“Got a fancy new trick?”

“Hanzo’s dragons are aligned with the sky. Mine with the Earth.” Genji shut his eyes, pressing his palm against the metal floor. “Ana believed I could use this to map out areas underground.”

“Can you?”

He smirked, “I have only tested it once.”

“Well give it a shot, I’ve got your back.”

As if Jesse even needed to say that. Genji never had any doubts.

He kept his eyes closed, canceling out sound as he focused on Ryu. The high energy spirit usually worked well with Genji’s style of fighting, but getting him to focus was another matter. It took a few moments of meditation for him to stop running over Genji’s back and travel down into the ground. His roar was loud in Genji’s mind, but would be unheard by anyone else.

Then came the part that gave him a headache.

His vision shot forward so fast it was hard to process it all at once. The hallway in front of him turned down into a dead end. Ryu shot back and he got a view of the elevator shaft before glancing into the other rooms.

“Your hallway.” Genji said. “There’s a large room using a lot of energy.”

“Sounds like a start.”

The pair of them headed in that direction with Genji keeping a close eye behind them. Still nothing suspicious.
Still couldn’t be too careful.

“This the room?”

Genji turned his head to the door in question. It certainly seemed important, a lock next to it that wasn’t present on many of the others. A key card lock, great. He tapped his finger against it, noting the light was red and active.

“Hey Winston, might have something.” Jesse spoke into his comm. “But the door’s locked.”

“You expect it not to be?”

Genji responded to that. “If this place is deserted the systems should be inactive.”

There was a heavy silence for a few moments. Genji kept his hearing up but still heard nothing unusual down the halls.

“Still ain’t seen anyone,” Jesse added. “Do you want us to proceed?”

“We’re almost done here.” Jack cut in. “We can head over there to back you up.”

“Oh, I was asking my actual commander.” The cowboy bared his teeth with that comment.

“Do not start arguing again.” Winston sighed. “I’m going to let you use your judgement on this McCree, but I ask you prioritize your safety over any data.”

“Yes sir,” He lowered his hand and attempted to crack the knuckles on his prosthetic. “Ready Genji?”

“For what?”

His answer was a loud clang that echoed up and down the hall. The sound startled him but his real fear came from glancing around the area in case anyone heard them. Finally he looked back at the door, seeing the massive dent on the left side.

“Jesse,” he hissed. “What are you doing?”

“We gotta open it somehow, right?” He slipped his fingers through the new opening and pulled. The metal groaned, moving slowly before it came to a halt. “Come on, lend me a hand would you.”

Genji sighed, knowing this plan was foolish but also knowing it was too late to go back. He slipped in front of Jesse and used both hands to grip the door. Steam hissed out of his vents as they both jerked the steel far enough for them to both slip inside.

It had to be some kind of main office. The large semi-circle desk in the center of the room was the first indication. A huge server sat in the corner, still humming away with lights glowing.

Certainly active.

“We cannot waste any time.” Genji moved around the desk and brought up the holo screen. It required a password, no surprise, so he simply set to work finding a place to insert the drive Winston had given them. “Is the hall still clear after the amount of noise you made?”
“Relax darlin’ we’re fine.” Jesse stayed stationed at the door, eyes outside. If they got cornered in here there might not be a way out.

Genji finally located the ports underneath the desk. The second the device was in place he let Winston know so he and Athena could get to work. Hopefully they could pry something out of here.

The minutes ticked on, mostly in silence. Genji didn’t want to distract Jesse while he worked, although he knew there wasn’t much that could. Many times in the past he’d tried anything to force him to lose his focus during sparring matches.

The only thing that had was speaking a line of Spanish.

“Are you still clear?” Winston asked.

“Sure are,” Jesse replied.

“We’re almost done extracting so you guys can get out of there. Just a few more-”

A blaring sound cut through the silence, some kind of siren that made the metal walls ring out.

An alarm.

“Shit,” Jesse hissed. “Sorry Winston but we gotta scram.”

Genji didn’t hesitate to rip the drive out as he dashed back over to the door. The halls were still eerily empty as they ran back to the elevator.

Only to find it wouldn’t operate.

“Fuck, damn.” Jesse glanced around.

“They trapped us down here.” He was half tempted to pry open the doors anyway. Surely they could find a way to climb out of here.

“No, couldn’t have. There have to be stairs in case of an emergency. We just gotta find them. Can you do that trick of yours again?”

Genji could hear it now, footsteps. Someone was shouting. “Perhaps, but I’m not sure we have the time.”

“I’ll get you the time.” Jesse growled and snapped out his gun. “Count on it.”

He didn’t hesitate. He dropped to the ground again, eyes closed, forcing himself to focus away from the louder voices. The staircase should be like the elevator shaft.

The sound of gunfire almost broke his concentration, but he didn’t falter. Jesse’s bullets were far quicker. He forced the noise out, only listening to Ryu’s voice. The dragon kept whispering as it flowed back into the ground.

His vision shot around, faster this time. It almost made him remember what nausea felt like. Up, down, left, right, it was moving so quick he couldn’t catch any of it.
There, at the end of the other hall. A small doorway lead into another vertical shaft.

Genji opened his eyes and shot up, blade at the ready. “The other hall has our way out.”

“Figures,” Jesse gunned down the last two agents. “That’s where all our enemies are coming from.”

“We will have to push through.”

“Right behind you darlin’.”

Genji rushed ahead. The opponents were all down, for now, but he was certain more were on the way. He snapped out a set of shurikens as he glanced around the corner. All clear.

“McCree, Genji.” Winston spoke up. “Do you need back up?”

“Wouldn’t turn it down.” Jesse kept up with Genji as they darted to the emergency exit. The door opened easily, but Genji glanced up the staircase before going inside. He could hear footsteps, four men.

“We’re heading your way.” Ana said.

“D.Va and Tracer are as well. ETA twenty minutes.”

Genji leapt up the staircase, grabbing the rails to climb. He heard the footsteps drawing closer, clinging to the bottom of the rails before flipping up onto the stairs.

He caught the men by surprise. He tossed the first one over the rail before nailing the second one in the stomach and throwing him down the steps.

One fired at him but the deflected bullets rang through the air, bouncing back to hit him in the shoulder.

The last one at least made the wise decision to retreat, but it was foolish all the same. A shuriken to the back of the knee made him drop. Genji dashed to catch up, slamming the hilt of his blade into the agent’s neck.

A second after he leaned over the railing, listening for the cowboy’s spurs. “McCree?”

“I’m good. Takes me a while to catch up sometimes darlin’.”

“I will meet you at the door.”

“No, head the the roof if you can.” Jesse seemed to run faster. “Be easier for us to plug ‘em up. Easier for Ana to get a visual too when she gets here. And for Tracer to fly by and grab us. We can’t have these guys pouring onto the streets either.” He came into view now, just one flight below. “Can’t have civilians getting dragged into this.”

“I will go on ahead.”

“Sure thing, just go a little slower this time.” Jesse laughed.
Genji smiled at his good humor, dashing up the stairs. For a few flights he saw no one, heard none of the doors open. Two men tried to burst in and catch him by surprise. Bullets grazed the armor on his shoulder. A shuriken to the throat took one down but the other soldier lunged at him, sending them both to the ground. Genji elbowed them in the side of the head, forcing them back, but there was still a gun pointed at his throat.

However, they were the one who wound up with a bullet in their neck.

“Not like you to get caught off guard.” Jesse reloaded his gun as he finished climbing the stairs.

Genji shoved the soldier off as he got back up, already moving again. “You always have my back if I do.”

“Damn right.”

They only made it one more flight before a door burst open from somewhere above. There were so many footsteps and voices Genji lost track.

“Shit,” Jesse hissed. “Not sure there’s a safe way to get through a wall like that.”

Genji grabbed his arm and pulled them both up to the next doorway, tossing it open. The floor was clear at least as they ran into the hallway. Genji glanced around, passing doors to try and find a more open space. Finally, a room on his left opened up into two long rows of cubicles. They were more than big enough to use as cover.

Perfect.

“I will cut them down if you draw their attention.”

Jesse grinned. “So our usual?”

“We can switch if you like.”

“Nah, you’re the sneaky ninja after all. Let’s get to work.”

The cowboy tossed the ninja one of his flash-bangs and darted back into the hall. Genji found a nearby cubical to hide in. All of them seemed to be devoid of decoration, further proving that all these upper floors were nothing more than a ruse.

It made him wonder what the basement was used for.

It didn’t take too long for the sound of gunshots to ring out, the sound of glass breaking. Jesse was hollering and laughing, returning a few shots before running into the room. He charged down the length of it, holding onto his hat.

The guards flooded in, splitting up to travel in two directions. Genji would let Jesse take care of the ones directly behind him. He would manage.

The ninja ducked, blade out as he waited. The first few people passed by his hiding spot and he ran back, cutting through their legs with two swings. Their alarmed shouts served as a warning, but it wouldn’t be fast enough. Another set of shurikens took out three more. One from behind fired a shot
into Genji’s spine but his armor blocked the damage. He spun around and deflected the second shot. The window next to him shattered. He dove forward and buried his blade into the soldier’s stomach, just below his armor.

The he heard several clicks behind him.

Genji rolled forward before ducking to the side. Bullets ricocheted off the carpeted floor, hitting windows, cubicle walls, and one bouncing into a nearby computer.

He snapped up Jesse’s flash-bang, ripping out the pin before hurling it around the corner. The gunfire stopped a moment before it went off, filling the room with panicked shouts. Jesse hollered out his approval from the other end.

Genji smiled as he dove back out, putting his blade away as he stuck to hand to hand. One soldier on the floor, two out the widows, another slammed into the desk. Their reaction time was too slow.

Within moments all his targets were down.

But it wasn’t over. He glanced back to check on Jesse, his concern unwarranted as the cowboy was already heading in his direction.

“Flawless,” he winked when he smiled.

“Careful, or I’ll tell my brother. He’s the jealous type.”

“Is he really?”

Genji shrugged. “Actually, I do not know. He was never in a relationship long enough for me to find out.”

“Find out later, we still need to get to the roof.”

That was agreed upon, but they couldn’t even take more than two steps before Genji saw another set of soldiers run past the doorway. He readied his weapon as he darted past the cubicles.

His pace froze when he caught something flying in through the doorway.

“Grenade!” He considered darting back but there was nowhere to go. Not in enough time. Nowhere but out the window. He turned to Jesse anyway. Maybe he could shield him. His body was easier to repair after all.

But the cowboy was already charging over, flames erupting from his back and shifting into those wings. He reached out with one hand.

Genji reached back.

Their palms connected a moment before the grenade went off. The wings snapped around him, shielding them from the heat but not the force. Both of them were sent flying out of the window with a rain of glass. He almost screamed, would have if not for Jesse’s secure grip around his shoulders.

Wait, with the direction they were falling-
The sound that rang out when they hit the ground was almost deafening. Stone against metal. Jesse’s wings instantly vanished and Genji immediately climbed off him.

“McCree?” He kept his panic down as he leaned next to his friend, who was very much alive. His eyes were wide before screwing up in pain, his back arching. “What’s wrong?”

“Dent in my armor, fuck,” he hissed and gasped for air. “Shit, fuck, my spine. Get the damn latch.”

Genji snapped the release along the side open, ripping the front half off. Jesse rolled out of the rest, taking in deep breaths.

The ninja wanted to give him a moment to recover, to check for any more injuries, but he could hear shouts from above. The enemies were still there. He saw them peek out of the window, guns at the ready.

Genji deflected one bullet. “McCree, we need cover.”

“What’s going on?” Hana cut in.

He didn’t respond, not yet as he helped Jesse up, staying in front of him to block any more bullets. He was at too much risk without his armor. The pair of them darted to a nearby dumpster. Genji tossed the lid open, using it as a shield.

After a few moments the gunfire stopped.

“We’re grounded.” He said.

“We fell out of the fucking window.” Jesse hissed, stretching his back again.

“Any major injuries? We’re almost there.” Ana said.

“Nah, just hurts like a bitch.” Jesse looked over at Genji. “What now?”

“We need to create some distance.” He peeked out to see their shooters were no longer there. If they were moving position they didn’t have much time. “Are you good to run?”

“I’ll manage darlin’.” The cowboy cringed when he stood. “Just lead the way.”

Genji darted out, keeping his gaze everywhere he could as they moved along the building. If they could slip somewhere completely unnoticed it should leave them in the clear. Talon wouldn’t dig very far in this environment.

He’d been glancing at the building when the two soldiers spun around the corner. The click of a gun and Jesse’s warning shout was what made him look forward.

Too slow.

Suddenly he was shoved to the side, regaining his balance long enough to see the bullet cut across Jesse’s shoulder. The cowboy barely flinched as he snapped his own gun out, firing off two rounds.

“Jesse,” Genji hissed this time as he ran back in front of him, checking the injury. “What was
“You’re welcome.”

“Do not say that. You do not have your armor on. What sense is there in pushing me out of the way? What sense is there in taking the fall for me as well?”

The cowboy didn’t falter, adjusting his hat with a smirk. “Come on now, if I let anything happen to you your brother would have my head.”

“And how do you think he would feel if something happened to you?” The ninja crossed his arms.

“Look, I’m fine.” He waved his arms around before putting his gun away. “Fit as a fiddle. Now what do you say we hurry up and-”

A single gunshot. Blood sprayed out from Jesse’s chest, from his lung. The damned piece of metal clinked against Genji’s armor as his arms turned red. His shock made him go numb, to a point he almost failed to open his arms to catch the cowboy when he collapsed.

“Jesse?” His voice cracked as he studied his face. Eyes barely open and hazy. The air that fell from his lips sounded cluttered, a line of blood trailing down to his chin.

“Jesse?” He spoke louder this time, one hand against the cowboy’s cheek as he tried to will him back to consciousness.

The only thing that snapped him out of his trance was his eyes catching the black clothing of the shooter, standing at the other end of the alley.

Chapter End Notes

Oh huh

that doesn’t look good
Revive 11-3

Chapter Notes

Your agony fuels me

but don't worry guys I'm sure he's fine

CONTENT WARNING sort of for some dragon noms. It's not very detailed but I figured I'd let you know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Genji had to move if he was going to keep Jesse from getting injured any further. He hooked his arms under the cowboy’s shoulders and darted back to the safety of the dumpster. A few bullets hit the ground near his feet before he stumbled behind the metal.

“Jesse?” He shouted again, lifting the serape to see the amount of blood staining his shirt. The color faded into black where the injury was, a frightful exit wound surrounded by torn fabric.

“Jesse please, please.” He pressed his fingers to the cowboy’s neck, cursing his lack of nerves. Why didn’t he get his sensors replaced when Angela brought it up? “You cannot die. I will not let you.” He fell forward and pressed the side of his head against the cowboy’s chest. “I will not-”

Nothing.

He didn’t hear anything.

No, it had to be his ears. His sensors weren’t working properly. Something. He put a hand against the cowboy’s ribs waiting to feel the rise and fall of his chest but it never came.

“Jesse?” Genji felt tears burning at the edge of his eyes. He grabbed his face, tilting it back up. His eyes were still half open, completely empty. “Please Jesse. Wake up.”

The gunfire had stopped. He was faintly aware of the approaching footsteps but he couldn’t move. Not until Jesse woke up. Not until the cowboy snapped into his usual grin, laughing his head off at his joke.

“Aw man, so you do care.”

“That was not funny, McCree.”

“Sorry darlin’, just wanted to see what you’d do.”

“This is not funny,” he whispered, tears clogging up his visor. “Please.”

Jesse still didn’t stir, didn’t smile, and slowly Genji came to realize he wasn’t holding onto his friend anymore. Not really.
The footsteps got closer.

Genji gritted his teeth, feeling heat rush through his system. His hand snapped up to his sword, his grip on the hilt far too tight.

They would pay.

They would pay for this.

Anger roared in his chest and Ryu mimicked it as the ninja darted out from his hiding place. He stared at the barrel of the gun.

Genji drew his sword, spinning around as he shouted. “Ryūjin no ken wo kurae!”

His sword glowed. His dragon emerged, the roaring growing even louder as he let go of the blade. It shot forward, toward his opponent, the dragon following along.

The soldier’s scream was cut short when the blade went through their collar.

Genji didn’t look away as Ryu pinned them to the ground, into the ground. He didn’t flinch at the sound of teeth against bones, at the blood that sprayed into the air.

But he finally did glance down at the dots of red that covered his armor. Tears burned at his eyes again before he mumbled, “ryū ga waga teki wo kurau.”

Ryu shrank down as he glided back over, snaking his way over Genji’s shoulders as some form of comfort. As if it would make any difference now.

Jesse was dead. He was dead, because Genji decided to have a stupid argument like that out in the open. It distracted both of them.

It was a mistake he could not correct.

“Genji? McCree? Are you two still okay?” Lena called in. “We ain’t heard a word.”

“Ana do you have a visual yet?” Jack said.

“I’m working on it.”

Genji couldn’t feel his arm as he lifted it to tap against his communicator.

“McCree is down.” He tried to keep his voice as level as possible, but it wouldn’t matter. He had no choice but to report it. He wasn’t sure if he could handle their responses right now.

“How bad?” Winston already sounded panicked. “Are you two at least under cover?”

“He is down.” Genji repeated. “He is down and he will not be getting back up.”

The silence almost had him dropping to his knees. Almost, but he forced himself to turn back. They couldn’t just leave Jesse here.

He heard the static in his ear and reached up to shut the system off. He couldn’t deal with it right
now. He couldn’t.

“Don’t touch him.” Jack’s voice came up, stern and urgent.

Confusion recharged his nerves as he responded. “What?”

“Do not touch him!” The soldier shouted this time. “Do you hear me Genji? Do not touch him.”

What did that mean? He was about to ask for an answer when something bright tore into his vision. He glanced down to see a spark and a flame emerge from the injury on Jesse’s chest.

Suddenly the flame roared to life, covering his chest and rising into the air.

Genji stumbled back. “H-he is on fire.”

“What?” Lena shouted.

“Jesse is on fire.”

“Do not touch him.” Jack continued to shout.

Genji questioned why, wondering if he should put a stop to this. But just putting his hand closer had his sensors flaring to life, telling him how hot the flame actually was.

Footsteps put him on alert and he snapped out a set of shurikens until he realized it was just Jack, sprinting down the alley. As soon as the soldier got close he dropped his rifle on the ground and tore off his visor. His eyes were wild with fear.

“I’ve got visual on you.” Ana said. “My boy better be okay.”

Genji wished he could answer that question but he didn’t have one. The flames flickered and finally died down, swirling around the injury before vanishing.

Jack knelt down on the ground next to Jesse the same moment the cowboy’s eyes suddenly flew open, gasping for air.

He was alive.

“Jesse?” Genji dove forward but Jack’s hand pressed against him and shoved him back. His anger started to burn again but he bit it back this time. The soldier had to have a reason.

At least Jesse was breathing.

Sort of.

It didn’t sound right at all, short gasps for air, as if he couldn’t possibly get enough oxygen into his system. A few times it cut off into a coughing fit, more blood spraying out of his mouth.

“Come on kid,” Jack gently pushed down on his shoulder. “Relax. Breathe.”

His words didn’t help. Jesse continued to struggle for air. One of his hands tried to go for his injury until Jack forced it back.
The cowboy’s eyes were wild with fear, moving around as his breaths got quicker and quicker. He was panicking.

“Damn it,” Jack hissed before shouting toward the roof. “Ana!”

Genji felt something rush past his side. Glancing down he saw the sleep dart lodged in Jesse’s neck. The erratic breathing came to a stop as the cowboy slipped into unconsciousness once more.

“What are you doing?” Genji hissed. “How is that supposed to help?”

“Quiet.” Jack didn’t even look in his direction as he dropped the biotic field on the ground. He snapped Jesse’s serape off, carefully lifting him up to wrap it around his chest instead. He muttered out a few apologies before lowering him back down. He tugged one of his gloves off, pressing one set of fingers to Jesse’s throat while the other reached for his comm.

“Tracer, tell me you’re close.”

“Almost there.”

“We need you to land nearby. We have to get Jesse out of here.”

“Is he okay?” Winston said.

“He’s alive, but barely.”

“What is going on?” Genji leaned closer. “He was dead. I checked.”

“He’s got that phoenix, or did you forget.” Jack shot him a glare.

“He’s got that pheromone, or did you forget.” Jack shot him a glare.

“Then can she not heal this?”

“It’s not that simple.” He didn’t explain further as the sound of their ship rang out from above. “Genji, stay here with Ana and clear out the last two bases.”

“You cannot be serious.” The ninja tried not to shout.

“Does it look like I’m kidding?”

“You cannot ask me to leave him. I will not leave him.” Genji stepped closer, although he knew looking intimidating was useless. “You are not my commander anymore.”

Jack sighed, long and tired. “Winston?”

The silence was only filled with the sound of the ship coming in for a landing and Hana’s mech already on the ground.

“I will not force you to stay Genji.” Winston said. “But we need to make sure those other bases are inactive, if nothing else.”

Damn it. Genji didn’t want to stay. He wanted to go. He wanted to make sure Jesse was okay, to be there when he woke up and apologize for even letting this happen.
Coming back from the dead, Genji was certain he knew what that felt like.

Just adding to the list of things they had in common.

“Genji,” Ana spoke up. “Believe me, I understand your frustrations, but he will be safe. We’ll see him when we return.”

“I’m staying too.” Hana announced as her mech rounded the corner. “No way are you two staying here alone.”

“Can you grab my rifle and my visor?” Jack moved slowly as he tugged Jesse into his arms, supporting his back as he lifted him up.

Genji wanted to argue but there was no point to it anymore. Jesse needed to get to Angela as soon as possible. He couldn’t focus on his own feelings right now. He could do that when his friend was safe.

He picked up the equipment, almost struggling with the pulse rifle. It was much heavier than he expected as he tossed it over his shoulder. He quickly moved to catch up to Jack, meeting Hana’s worried stare.

When Genji drew close enough he swore he could pick up Jack’s muttering. Then again, he had to be hearing things.

“It’s alright,” “it’s okay,” and “I’ve got you,” weren’t the sort of things he said anymore after all.

Chapter End Notes

totally fine.....

(also me realizing from your comments how misleading that last line was on the previous chapter, all talon agents wear black, why did I not think about this (I swear Reaper and Widowmaker will show up (later)))
I see y'all being relieved but, as they say, dying is easy, living is hard.

Pain.

Pain.

Pain.

McCree couldn’t seem to remember at all what came before it. He couldn’t see anything. He could just feel the agonizing pressure in his chest. Every breath he tried to take failed. Cold air seemed to pass directly through his lungs. Any movement almost left him screaming, something sharp pressing underneath his skin.

His whole body felt like lead. Moving was barely an option. Underneath all the pain there was nothing but heat, burning under his skin, making it itch. His mouth felt dry, tasted like ash.

Where was he?

Another jolt finally had him opening his eyes, the haze fading out into the ceiling of their ship. He tried to sit up but the second he did the pain became overwhelming. Bile caught in his throat and he fell back coughing, somehow tasting the copper through the smoke.

“Stop moving.”

Something cold pressed against his forehead and his gaze shot over to see Jack leaning over him. He tried to speak, but all that came out was a desperate croak.

“Breathe slow.” The soldier ran his thumb over McCree’s eyebrow. “And don’t panic, or I’ll have to put you out again. Can’t go making this hole in your lung worse.”

Why was it always his damn lungs? He felt himself smile, almost laughed if the crushing pain didn’t suddenly shift to his spine. He cringed and tried to keep quiet but a whimper still slipped past his gritted teeth.

“Don’t worry love.” Lena said. “Just another thirty minutes.”

Till what? They were heading towards the base? Where was Genji?

Genji...

Now he remembered. The gunshot to his shoulder. The ninja scolding him in the middle of the alley. Then the blinding pain that hit his back. Red covering the ninja’s sleek armor.
And then...

“Did...” He swallowed, desperate to get his words out. “Did I die?”

“Try not to talk.” Jack pushed his bangs back. The cool sensation brought minor relief to the waves of heat. “But yes, you did.”

“How-”

“Did you already forget what your spirit is capable of?”

Right, right, phoenix spirit.

Clem? He thought, suddenly very aware of her silence. Her snark was practically never ending earlier.

“I am fine.” She answered. “But I must concentrate.”

Hell, what was happening to him right now?

“Lena? Jack?” Angela’s voice came up through the radio. “How much can you tell me about his condition?”

McCree tried to lean up enough to answer her himself but Jack shoved his head back down.

“Bullet went through his chest.” Jack said. “Punctured lung. Two shattered ribs. His spirit is keeping him here but he’s lost a lot of blood.”

“Is he conscious?”

“Sure am doc.” He managed to lift a hand in the air.

“I said don’t talk.” Jack hissed.

“Really fucking hurts doc,” He kept going anyway. “Feels like skin is burning off. Mouth tastes like ash. And my back-”

Suddenly there was a sickening crack and he felt something shift in his chest. He grit his teeth to bite back his scream but the sudden intake of air sent him into another coughing fit, making the pain even worse.

“Sorry,” Clementine said.

What was that?

“I am trying to fix your ribs.”

Cool, great, wasn’t there a way to make this less painful?

“No.”
“I’ll be ready when you arrive.” Angela said. “Please hurry.”

Jack’s other hand suddenly pressed against Jesse’s shoulder. “Stop moving around, damn it.”

“Like to see you deal with a bullet to the chest.”

“Jesse.”

“I’m trying okay? I’m-” His air sputtered in his throat making him cough again. He could feel the blood slip past his lips this time. He tried to glance down at the injury, seeing his serape wrapped around his chest. It almost blended in with the dark red that covered his tan button up shirt.

Hell.

“Quit arguing and sit still.” Despite how much that sounded like an order, Jack’s voice was unusually gentle. His thumb ran over the cowboy’s forehead again. “Try and rest.”

McCree wanted to argue with that. There was no way he was going to be able to do that with the amount of pain gripping his chest. But still, he kept his mouth shut, trying to focus on the cold sensation on his skin. He thought about snow. He thought about the time they got stuck on location due to a huge snow storm, leaving them with copious amounts of free time. He thought about Gabriel dragging him into it, laughing, because “you haven’t seen anything like this before.” He thought about his commander tossing him into a five foot bank of the stuff, laughing as McCree sunk a foot down into it, leaving a vaguely human shaped cut in the white powder.

He thought about when he managed to climb out, grabbing a fistful of the stuff to throw in his direction. He thought about how a simple snowball fight turned into an all out brawl, the other members coming out to join as they built forts and stocked up on ammo. He thought about the satisfaction of nailing Gabriel right in the mouth.

He clung to the sound of Gabriel’s laughter as everything else faded out.

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Burning, something was burning. He could smell it, taste it in his mouth. His skin itched with the sensation and when he scratched he could feel it peeling off in dry flakes. He glanced down, seeing how grey and cracked it all was. He scratched harder, trying to find the skin underneath but it was red and torn.

The burning got worse.

“Jesse?”

He spun around at the voice, seeing Hanzo standing there in the dark.

The cowboy ran over to him, ignoring the stiffness in his legs. He reached out, desperate to grab him, hold onto him, but his hand passed right through him.

Hanzo wasn’t even looking directly at him.

“Hanzo? Darlin’? Hey I’m right here.” McCree waved his hands around. “I’m right here I swear I-”
“Jesse?”

A new voice. He turned to see Fareeha this time, looking just as lost as Hanzo did. McCree knew it would have the same result, trying to grab her shoulder, but he did it anyway.

“Manita? I’m here. I’m right here.”

“Eastwood?”

“Jesse?”


All of them calling out his name. Unable to hear him, see him. He desperately cried back.

“I’m right here. Guys? Someone? Clem?”

This was a nightmare right? Could she not pull him out of here? It was so dark. He felt like he was suffocating. The itching on his skin got worse and worse and when he moved to scratch it he saw how dry it was now. What was once flakes of skin completely turned to stone and dust, revealing bones and nerves.

McCree screamed and stumbled back until he hit something.

“Going somewhere, cowboy?”

Everything went cold as he turned, slowly, not wanting to see where that voice came from. Reaper seemed to tower over him, that bone mask practically glowing against the empty black space.

“Gabe?” McCree whimpered.

“What do you look so frightened for?” The mercenary's body was slowly melting into ash as well, swirling up into the air like smoke. “Didn’t you say you’d follow me anywhere?”

Claws brushed against his cheek, so cold that it burned.

“What was that phrase again?”

“The man in black fled across the desert,

and the gunslinger followed.”

McCree tore himself out of his dream and almost out of the bed he was now lying on. All the pain in his chest returned full force, making everything seize up as he gasped for air.

“Jesse,” Angela was there in a second, pushing him back onto the bed. Where was he? “Jesse, shh, it’s okay. You’re safe.”

Was he? Was he really? What the hell was happening to him?
“I’m sorry,” she kept soothing him. “Just hold on a little longer okay?”

He wanted to ask her what that meant but everything was going hazy again. No, no, he didn’t want to go back there. He needed something to hang onto.

*Clem?* McCree called out again, tried to reach for her but it was as if she wasn’t there. Where did she go?

Why was he suddenly so alone?

Chapter End Notes

He’s fine.... totally fine.............

*lies down*
McCree tried to bite through the end of his second cigar, wishing he could taste it, but it was almost the same flavor of the ash in his mouth. He exhaled the smoke before putting it out on the floor of the deck. His eyes were up, fixed on the stars for a while before he had to look away from the emptiness.

Reminded him too much of that owl.

That fucker, showing up in some of his nightmares that he couldn’t tear awake from over the past week due to the amount of times Angela kept him under. She was far too concerned with him opening his wounds again.

Not that he blamed her. It seemed a hole straight through his lungs was too much for Clementine even. He still hadn’t heard much from her. Sometimes he could get her to confirm that she was there but that was all she would say.

He should still technically be in the medical bay.

But fuck that.

It probably wasn’t a wise idea to sneak all the way out here. His pain had gotten worse from all the walking, aching in his ribs that snaked its way down his back. He shifted in his seat but the wall could only be so comfortable. A breeze made him shiver and he clutched his arms.

He missed his serape.

It wasn’t gone, at least, Mei mentioned during one of her visits that she was going to get it looking good as new.

Everyone had come to see him at least once, if not more often. Genji burst in the moment he got back from his mission, rushing out so many apologies McCree couldn’t keep up. The cowboy had laughed it all off at the time. He was alive, he was fine, phoenixes worked miracles after all.

Genji didn’t seem convinced, but he didn’t argue either.

He saw Hanzo, of course, but the archer never spoke a word. McCree couldn’t get a read on what he was thinking. The few moments he caught him was always when he was drifting awake. Any
conversation was met with simple nods.

He didn’t want to assume anything about what was going on in Hanzo’s mind, but it was frustrating.

So what if he wound up being dragged into the base still bleeding? People did that all the time around here. It wasn’t anything new, and he’d come out of it just fine. Still recovering but fine. He wasn’t dead.

At least, not anymore.

His hand shook as he fumbled for another cigar. He couldn’t get his nerves to calm down.

In fact they were so on edge he almost screamed when the door opened. His jump made the pain in his spine worse and he cringed and groaned as he looked over at who it was.

Hanzo stood there, surprised for a brief moment before his eyes narrowed into a glare.

“Howdy,” McCree mumbled as he put the cigar in his mouth.

“Why are you out here?” The archer was already crouching in front of him. “Did Angela give you permission?”

McCree didn’t answer that question. He knew it was obvious.

“You should not be out here, Jesse.” Hanzo snatched the cigar from between his teeth. “And you certainly should not be smoking while your lungs-” His eyes darted down to the two used ones still sitting on the floor.

Fuck.

Hanzo suddenly grabbed a fistful of his collar and pulled him forward. McCree gasped at the pain in his chest, trying to tug back, but the archer held firm.

“You fool. What do you think you’re doing?”

“Relax Hanzo–ow–just trying to blow some steam.”

“Blowing steam, blowing smoke,” he tossed the cigar over the railing. “Doing such foolish things will do nothing more than impede your recovery.”

“I’m not staying locked up in that room.” Jesse gripped Hanzo’s wrist with his prosthetic. “Specially if you’re not going to talk to me.”

Hanzo flinched before he glared. “What?”

“Don’t play dumb Hanzo,” he forced the archer to let go. “Not a word, not a damn word since I got back. You keep visiting so I gotta assume you care but I can’t deal with all this silence. If I did something to piss you off just say so.”

Confusion swept over Hanzo’s features before both of his hands grabbed McCree’s shirt this time. “You think my silence is a sign of anger?”
“The hell else is it supposed to mean?”

“We all have our ways of hiding our fear, Jesse McCree. You disguise yours with laughter, do you not?”

McCree’s stomach twisted.

Hanzo loosened his grip. “I could not speak because I was afraid. I did not want to add to your stress while you were trying to recover.”

“Afraid of what, darlin’? Look at me, I’m fine. I’m going to be-”

The archer pushed him back against the wall. “You died.”

That word, the one he’d been trying to avoid thinking about for the past week. He could taste it in his mouth, more bitter than all the smoke and ash that still cluttered at the back of his throat.

“You think I did not hear it? You think I did not hear my brother report what happened to you? That he had lost you?” Hanzo was still glaring but his hands were beginning to shake. “As soon as I found you, I lost you. Did you not consider how terrifying that was?”

The archer’s grip went slack as he suddenly fell forward, burying his face in McCree’s shoulder. “You were dead,” his voice cracked. “I thought I lost you.”

McCree forced the numbness in his limbs away as he lifted his arms, squeezing Hanzo as tight as he could without making his ribs hurt.

“I’m sorry, Hanzo.” He wanted to summon a soothing flame, but lately he was lucky if he could summon enough fire to light his cigar. “I’m sorry, darlin’. Mi luz. Lo siento.”

After a few moments Hanzo pulled back, rubbing his eyes. “You promised to be careful.”

“Yeah, I know,” McCree gave him a small smile. “That sort of thinking always goes out the window when it comes to keeping others safe, you know?”

“Genji told me,” Hanzo was still glaring but by now it looked more like a pout. “I agree that it was foolish.”

“You want me to let him get shot next time?”

“He had his armor on. You did not.”

“Yeah, okay, fine.” McCree sighed. “It was stupid. But I’m fine now.”

“Are you?”

He was about to laugh that question off with another joke, but his voice caught in his throat under Hanzo’s stare. It was fixed, focused, but not harsh.

“I mean, I’m going to be, right? Between Angela and my spirit I should be good to go in no time. I made it out here, didn’t I?”
The archer held the same expression.

“And come on, not like I haven’t been through rough shit before. I mean, I even had my lung punctured before. Gabe doing fire CPR on me to keep me afloat while we waited for help. And of course there was the time I lost my arm you know.” McCree found himself laughing as he pointed at the prosthetic. “I’d say I’m pretty used to this by now, so it’s not... it’s not...”

He didn’t realize he was crying until Hanzo ran a thumb over his cheeks.

The fear from earlier suddenly rushed back into his system. He grabbed Hanzo, pulling him closer, so damn glad he could even feel him in the first place.

“Oh god,” he mumbled, trying his damnedest to keep his breathing level. “I died. I actually fucking died, Hanzo.”

“I know.”

“No, you don’t get it.” McCree pulled back in order to look at him. “I died. Not almost died. I died. I thought I had experienced that before, but this was so much worse. I...”

Words failed him. He couldn’t even begin to describe it, the pain, the weight, the absolute chill that tried to burn through his bones. He couldn’t hope to explain any of it.

But the worst part, the absolute worst part, was the nothingness that welcomed him every time he went out. Empty black space full of people who couldn’t see him. Is that was the afterlife was? Nothing but a disconnect from everything you loved?

He clung even tighter to Hanzo, burying his face in his neck. All he could do to anchor himself now was focus on the sensation of cool skin against his forehead. He took a deep breath, noting the smell of fresh soil and lavender. Hanzo must have spent some time in the greenhouse today.

“Was scared,” McCree muttered between tears. “Was so damn dark. Couldn’t reach anyone else.”

“I am right here.”

“Thought I’d never talk to any of you again.”

“You are talking to me now.”

“You guys are my whole world.” He let out a sob which brought back the pain in his ribs. “ Barely had a home before Overwatch. If I couldn’t reach you-”

“You can.” Hanzo gently took McCree’s right hand and pulled it up to his face, kissing his palm. “We are right here. I am right here.”

McCree clung to him again, to hell with the pain in his chest. Hanzo kept whispering to him, pressing his cheek against the side of his head as a hand wandered through his hair.

“Never want to go through that again,” he muttered. “Never want to put you through that again.”

“That is a difficult promise to make in our line of work, Jesse.”
Yeah, wasn’t that the damn truth. He didn’t want to think about it, but wasn’t that the truth. He already had to deal with almost losing Angela, Fareeha, Lúcio, just who was going to put their lives on the line next time?

“However,” Hanzo continued. “That sentiment is shared.”

McCree chuckled and bit his lip to hold back another sob. Suddenly he felt so tired again.

“You are aware I am going to insist you return to your room.” His boyfriend said.

He huffed and nuzzled himself closer to Hanzo’s throat. “Few more minutes.”

“Very well then, a few more.”

McCree wasn’t unaware of the sensation of Hanzo’s dragons sliding over his shoulders, looping around his neck. One of them nuzzled his cheek before slipping under his chin.

Somehow or another, the static made him drowsy.

It felt safe.

Chapter End Notes

Workin on part 12, hoping I can belt it out quick

it's... only slightly better than this one lol oops

funfact, re-read the first section to see a bunch of hints I dropped (half of which were unintentional MY BAD)
“Ever wonder what that feels like?”

The water shoved him back down again as he scrambled for the surface. His back slammed into the rocks below, knocking the air out of him. He kept struggling against the current, reaching for the light filtering in from above, but it seemed to get farther and farther away.

“What was it like?” His friend continued to taunt him.

“Did it feel like you were dying?”

McCree couldn’t breath but he couldn’t seem to just pass out either. It was so much nicer when he did, drift into black and wake up in his room. Instead the pressure on his chest got worse and worse, as if the water was getting heavier. Something sharp dug into his shoulders, dragging him down even farther.

Then a pair of bright white eyes loomed over him.

“Vaquero.”

No. Not again. He didn’t want to see this damn bird again. Why did it keep showing up? It’s like it had somehow leech its way into his mind. He was lucky if he managed to wake up by this point.

Sometimes he wasn’t. Then he got to enjoy the sensation of it tearing through his skin.

Wake up. He screamed to himself as he stared at those rows of teeth. The pounding of his heart was so loud. Wake up. Wake up. Wake up.

“No escaparas de mi, vaquero.” The owl’s grip tightened.

Wake up. He did his best to ignore it all. The sensation of his ribs cracking, talons digging through his shoulders, the light from above finally fading away. It’s not real. Not real. Wake up.

“Ever wonder what that feels like?” The voice returned as the owl drew closer. “Wonder if that’s how Gabriel felt?

“When he died all alone?”
McCree shot out of the bed when he finally snapped out of the dream. The sudden motion stirred up his still healing injury, sharp pain that snaked its way through his ribs. Sweat lined his forehead, his neck, his chest. His body had completely overheated again. He tried to wipe it away, flicking the damp strands of hair out of his face.

Damn it. Why was this still happening?

It had been well over a week since the incident during his mission. Recovery had been much rougher than he thought it would, rougher than he was used to. Typically Clementine would patch up any injuries he had fast enough to get him out in a few days.

Over a week later and Angela refused to take out his stitches.

He had to assume it was because he hadn’t gotten an injury this severe in years. The closest thing had been his arm but that-

“Don’t worry kid, I’ll keep you safe.”

His mind seemed to snap awake a second time and he threw the covers off the bed.

The nightmares had to be the worst part of it all. He had at least convinced Angela to allow him to rest in his own room now, but there wasn’t a lot of that getting done. It didn’t matter what he tried, every time he closed his eyes his brain was coming up with something new to torment him with. All of it combined just dug up old fears he thought he’d conquered, things he never wanted to think about again.

He used to try begging Winston to install a pool somewhere on base. Now he was glad the scientist never agreed to it. The thought of looking down into a body of water alone made him want to puke. His hydrophobia had been a series of ups and downs ever since his friend accidentally pushed him in the river. They had just been playing around. Who was to know the current was much harsher than it looked.

The river had been merciful at least, spitting him out onto a rock after tossing him around for about twenty feet.

He didn’t go near it again.

In fact, it took a lot of coaxing from his mom to even take a bath, and even then he refused to put his head underwater. Her gentle words made him feel safer at least.

At least, until Deadlock.

All it took was one incident for them to figure out what he was afraid of. He supposed the bright side was his punishment was always consistent.

He tried to keep it a secret when he got to Blackwatch. He tried so damn hard. But one day during down time, a few of the recruits thought it would be funny to toss him into the pool that he refused to jump in.

One panic attack and one terrifyingly angry Gabriel later, that charade came to an end. His commander insisted on swimming lessons, painfully slow swimming lessons. It took at least two
weeks to get McCree to put his head underwater. It took him a month to do that while swimming.

Still wasn’t fond of water. Preferred to avoid it. But at least now he knew what to do if he wound up in it. He could handle it.

Maybe.

McCree’s fingers dug into his arm where skin met metal. He could still feel some of the fresh scratches he put there from another nightmare. He didn’t know if Angela caught onto his sudden unrolled sleeves but she hadn’t commented yet.

Not that she was the only one fretting over him. McCree could barely walk around the base without someone asking how he was doing. He appreciated it, but sometimes he worried that if they kept prying it would break open a door he wanted to keep locked.

The company was still a welcome distraction. Hana would bring in games and most times Lúcio would join her. Winston brought him two batches of peanut butter cookies only for Reinhardt to follow up with a blueberry pie. Torbjörn and Brigitte insisted they were working on a surprise. Mei would give him status updates on his serape.

“Sorry it’s taking so long.” She said. “I got a bit carried away with sewing. I mean, you had a lot more holes in it than just that one.”

Ana came by at least twice a day, shaking his medicine bottle, sometimes tugging his shirt up without permission to make sure nothing was bleeding. She was almost as bad as Angela was, but when everything was shown to be in order she’d smile and kiss his forehead.

Bastion came by to drop off flowers. Lena came by to chat, usually doing most of the talking, not that she minded. Fareeha brought a new stock of Debbie cakes, although she proceeded to sit down and start eating them herself.

“Been working on my future vision,” she said between a mouthful of brownie. “When you feel better you’ve got to practice with me, okay?”

Hanzo was almost always there. If not in McCree’s room he’d find him out in the hallways. Sometimes they held hands, sometimes they didn’t. They didn’t always talk much either. McCree was learning to appreciate the silent moments.

Lately Hanzo had been showing up with a few books.

“What are those?” McCree spoke into his pillow, in too much pain to move around.

Hanzo smirked as he sat down on the bed. “Poetry.”

McCree didn’t understand enough Japanese to know what any of them were about, but damn if it didn’t sound lovely to hear it. Often times it put him to sleep.

Only for Hanzo to wake him back up, gently holding his face, concern all over his features.

The archer wasn’t the only one aware of his nightmares. If the others didn’t comment on the dark circles under his eyes, they at least stared at them for a moment. McCree just passed it off as part of the whole recovery business. Nothing weird was going on.
They probably didn’t buy it. These people knew him too well by now.

Genji especially, although strangely enough he hadn’t seen much of the ninja since he got back. A few short check-ins and that was all. McCree had asked Zenyatta what was going on. It was rarely like him to be so evasive.

“He still carries a lot of guilt towards what happened to you. He is working through it. I hope you can be patient with him.”

It frustrated McCree, but he could be patient. He knew trying to confront the ninja about it would just start a useless argument. If meditating was how he dealt with it all these days then McCree would leave him to it.

McCree glanced back at his pillow, at his bed, noting the few blood stains but choosing to ignore it. He knew he should get more rest, that he needed it, but hell if he was going through that again right now.

“Clem?” He mumbled as he wiped away more sweat. “You there?”

Silence was often what greeted him these days. It worried him to no end. It wasn’t like her, but he couldn’t seem to reach the mindscape to speak with her. He had so many damn questions, but she never seemed to have time to answer them.

In the end he got up, tossing on a t-shirt before leaving his room. The whole space felt overheated by now and he needed some air. Some tea, maybe. It did nothing to keep away the nightmares, but at least it made his waking hours more calm.

The walk was slow, filled with him clutching at his side in a feeble attempt to ease up the agony he was creating. Pressing too hard only made it worse. He prayed no one caught him out here, despite how many of them tended to stay up late. No doubt he’d be sent back to his room.

When he reached the living room he followed the light of the kitchen, only now noticing how foggy his vision was. He wiped at his eyes to clear them out. The last thing he needed was to walk into a wall and give himself a bruise.

“Jesse?”

McCree shouted and almost tripped over the arm chair. He spun around to see a familiar pair of glowing eyes, narrowed in his direction.

“What the fuck, Jack.” McCree hissed and ran a hand through his hair. “Do you just live in this damn room now?”

The soldier shrugged.

“You barely even sleep in here. Don’t you get bored? At least bring a book or something-” He stopped himself as he looked back at Jack’s eyes again. “Sorry.”

He just laughed. “It’s fine. But sometimes I do watch documentaries.”

“Oh yeah?” McCree continued toward the kitchen. “What about?”
“Whatever’s on,” Jack followed behind him. “Did you know songbirds can eat up to three hundred insects a day?”

“You remember that?” McCree opened up the cupboard where they kept all the tea, frowning when he noticed Hanzo’s was missing. Maybe it ran out.

“Well I figured I wouldn’t bore you with details about Geoffrey Chaucer.”

“I know it’s hard to believe, but I do read.” McCree studied the labels on the other boxes.

“Yeah, I know.” Jack’s voice seemed to go quiet. “We could never get you to shut up about The Three Musketeers.”

McCree glanced back at him, watching him lean against the doorway. His eyes were fixed on the corner.

Then suddenly he let out a sharp breath as he straightened up. “Nightmares still this bad huh?”

McCree dropped the box in his hands, the sweat on the back of his neck quickly returning.

He’d barely seen Jack since the incident, talked to him even less. The bastard couldn’t even see. How the hell did he-

“Come on Jesse, you really think Gabe didn’t take a few lethal wounds during the omnic crisis?”

He swallowed at that as he picked the tea up off the floor and put it back in the cupboard.

“I’ve seen all this shit before. And by the way, I know you normally don’t sweat that much. So either something is wrong or you like to keep the heat up in your room to ridiculous levels.”

“Well maybe I do.”

“Nice try.” Jack stepped closer, waving a hand in front of his own face. “I can still see through all your bullshit, kid.”

“Stop calling me kid.” McCree tried to step past him, get out of there. It was clear Jack was trying to corner him.

That thought was confirmed when the soldier grabbed him and pulled him back. “Jesse-”

“Get out of my way.”

“I need you to talk to me.”

“Why should I? What the hell, suddenly I remind you of Gabe and you decide you give a shit?”

Jack’s breath caught and he let go, moving away from the door. “That’s not what’s going on.”

“Fine, whatever.” McCree pushed his still damp hair away from his face. “But I’m not talking about my damn nightmares.”
“Then don’t. Just…” The soldier’s eyes scanned the air as his jaw moved to the side. “Look, I can’t see your phoenix, so I’m going to take a guess that’s she’s being really quiet right now, and hasn’t explained any of this.”

McCree suddenly felt cold. He ran a hand over his arm and then his neck, trying to pick out the phoenix’s presence. “You can’t see her?”

“No.”

“Is she okay?”

“It means she’s preoccupied, very preoccupied. I’m sure you’ve at least guessed that fixing a lethal injury isn’t exactly easy work.”

The constant ache in his chest was a reminder of that.

“Look, spirits aren’t an unlimited resource. They can expend energy just like us. You want to take a guess at how much energy it takes to reverse death?”

McCree didn’t have an answer to that, although he had a decent guess. This at least explained her silence, and why his wounds hadn’t already healed.

“Right now she’s doing everything she can to keep your heart from stopping.” Jack went over to the cupboard himself and started pulling down boxes, opening them to sniff at the contents. “Healing your wound comes second, since we have the supplies on hand to do that normally, as slow as it may be.”

“Hang on,” McCree held a hand over his chest. “Are you telling me that I’m a walking dead man right now?”

“Right now? Not so much. A few days ago? Maybe.”

“What the fuck.” He clutched his shirt, recalling the flavor of ash that had only recently left his mouth.

“Kind of why Angela was so adamant about you staying in the med bay. Just in case you dropped.” Jack finally pulled out a tea bag and went searching for the mugs.

“You’re fucking with me.”

“I’m not.” Jack turned on the kettle and turned around. “Just because your spirit can bring you back doesn’t mean it’s pleasant or easy. This isn’t the sort of thing normal people do.”

“Is that where the nightmares are coming from?”

Jack shrugged, “Best me and Gabe could figure is your brain treats it like another traumatic event. Except, you don’t really remember when you die, so it starts digging up everything else.”

“Cool,” McCree leaned against the doorframe, rubbing his face. “Great. Fantastic.”

“Sorry, but dying still has a few consequences.”
“Was it this bad for Gabe?”

Jack’s expression seemed to go blank and the room went silent apart from the kettle getting noisier in the corner. It wasn’t until it clicked off that Jack even moved.

“The first time it happened he’d been shot in the head.”

“What?”

“Out cold for two weeks. The only reason no one called it is because they couldn’t explain why his heart was still going fine despite the damage to his skull. Kept insisting it was a super soldier miracle.” Jack snorted as he poured the hot water in the mug. “They had to dig the bullet out, patched him up the best they could. Phoenix did the rest.” Jack blew at the steam before he walked over and handed McCree the mug.

“Even when he woke up it took her another week to fix his motor skills. His memory was patchy for ages. Constant headaches. Nightmares. Mixing things up. Damn lucky that bird has that much juice in her.”

McCree stared at his reflection in the still darkening water.

“Jesse, are you sleeping with anyone?”

He almost dropped the mug, giving Jack the most offended look he could manage while he tried to deal with his shock. “Fail to see why that’s any of your business.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “I mean, are you sharing a room with anyone?”

His nerves settled down for a moment as he focused on the warmth in his hands. “Nah, got my own room and all.”

“Bad idea,” Jack headed back into the living room. “Until all this blows over I suggest you find a roommate.”

“You can’t be serious,” McCree followed. “As if I want to keep waking someone up every twenty minutes from a nightmare.”

“I think we’d prefer that to you making your injuries worse.”

“As if that’s even happened.”

“No?” Jack looked at him while he hovered in front of the armchair. “Then how come I smell blood?”

McCree flinched again, some tea spilling over the lip of the mug. “Had a bloody nose earlier.”

“Liar.”

“Fuck you and your super senses, Jack Morrison.”

The soldier laughed before he sat down on the chair. “I can’t tell you what to do Jesse, I’m just trying to give you a warning. This isn’t something to fuck around with.”
“Yeah, fine.”

“Now drink your damn tea and go to bed.”

McCree glared, about to retort until he saw the smirk on Jack’s face. He took a sip, not sure if the water had cooled down that fast or his body temperature was just that high. “Didn’t you just say I shouldn’t sleep alone?”

“Yeah, but I’m sure Hanzo will open his door if you knock.”

McCree snorted, moving over to the couch to sit down. “I’m not waking him up.”

“You can sleep outside with the bastion unit for all I care. Just find somebody.”

McCree took another sip, now trying to figure out what flavor this even was. It certainly wasn’t black tea, or any of the kinds Hanzo used. Suddenly, now that he was no longer on his feet, his exhaustion hit him like a bull. The thought of laying down and passing out sounded so damn good right now.

Too bad it wouldn’t last long.

Still, he glanced down at the couch between sips.

“Mind if I sleep in here?”

“Go for it.”

“Not stealing your couch, am I?”

“Go to sleep kid.”

He didn’t, not right away. He finished his tea first, setting down the mug before trying in vain to find a comfortable position on the sofa. It seemed like no matter which direction he was laying it made his ribs scream. At least on his back it was tolerable.

McCree tilted his head up to see if Jack was staring at him, but the man was still looking up at the ceiling.

“How did that happen anyway?” McCree tugged the blanket off the back off the sofa and wrapped it around his shoulders.

Jack let out a long sigh. “How did what happen?”

“Your eyes. Was that from the explosion?”

The soldier hesitated. “Go to sleep, Jesse.”

“I’ll go to sleep when you tell me a story.”

“Hmm, the owls fly forth from the treetops. Through the air they soar and they sweep. The hot, crimson rage fills my heart. For real: shut the fuck up and sleep.”
“You’re such an asshole. How do you even have that damn book memorized?”

“Used to use it to make Ana laugh when Fareeha was a toddler.”

“Just won’t tell me, huh?”

“I’ll tell you what happened to my eyes if you tell me what happened to your arm.”

McCree went silent at that, his left arm suddenly feeling much heavier. He expected Jack to make a smart ass remark, but there was none.

Just silence.

McCree couldn’t place when he drifted off and fell asleep, but it was clear he was dreaming the second the landscape appeared. Buildings, nothing but skyscrapers that towered above him seeming to bend inward. The sky was nothing more than a reflection of them. Shades of black with a few windows glowing like stars.

“I’m scared.”

His gaze shot down to the kid–Oscar–clinging to his left arm, eyes wide.

“It’s alright,” McCree said, even though he knew how this all turned out. “We’ll get out of here. Didn’t we agree I was the most badass cowboy around?”

Oscar laughed, snorting and covering his mouth. “You’re the only cowboy around.”

Their smiles were cut short at the sound of voices. McCree had no hope of understanding what they were whispering but the footsteps got louder and louder. The windows seemed to vibrate with the sound.

McCree grabbed Oscar’s arm before they both ran down the street. He knew it didn’t matter. He knew it would end the same way. All the buildings looked the same as they dashed past them. The same turns. Same signs.

The footsteps got closer.

“¿Por que sigues corriendo?” The owl’s voice seemed to crawl up from the ground and along the walls. “No escaparas.”

Didn’t matter. He’d keep running. He’d keep running until his lungs gave out. Even if it was nothing but a dream–nightmare–he’d keep fighting this damn thing.

McCree saw someone up ahead. He skidded to a stop, trying to turn around but there were people behind him as well. No choice but to duck into the side road, one he knew lead to a dead end.

“Now what?” Oscar hissed.

McCree didn’t have much time to answer. Their enemies were already rushing into the alley. Far more than three of them this time. Even if he tried to get off dead eye it wouldn’t do much.
He still shoved Oscar back. “Just stay behind me, kid.”

“¿Pero quien va a ayudarte?” The owl’s head slowly slid into view, its eyes lighting up the entire alley, black walls turning grey. Its talons clicked against the street, the tips of its wings rising up like horns.

McCree took a deep breath, finger against the trigger. No one would, not in here. It didn’t matter anyway. If he could just protect this kid once. Once...

Then what?

He’d wake up and his arm would still be gone.

His enemies all raised their weapons, guns clicking. The owl stepped over them, through them, until it stood behind the one in front. Its neck stretched out as it lowered, hovering over their shoulder. The eyes made it hard to aim at the target, but at least there was only one now.

At least-

The gunshot made him flinch. He expected pain in his arm but there was none. Slowly he opened his eyes, glancing down at it, seeing it still keeping Oscar back who was staring ahead with wide eyes.

McCree followed his gaze, only now noticing the person in front of him.

“Gabe?”

His father figure stood directly in front of him, an actual smile on his face, as if there wasn’t still a threat behind them.

“You okay kid?”

“Gabe.”

“You both had me worried there for a minute.”

A hand brushed across his cheek, wiping away the already forming tears. The touch made him go rigid from the familiarity of it all. His hand snapped up to grab Gabriel’s wrist.

“Papá.”

Gabriel’s smile turned softer.

Then suddenly the entire alley turned black. Those glowing eyes reappeared in the distance, followed by the owl’s open mouth.

Something jerked Gabriel back, off his feet, his stomach hitting the invisible floor below. McCree didn’t hesitate to reach down, but the same force pulled Gabriel away. His commander struggled with whatever was wrapped around his leg, gripping at the ground to stop himself.

McCree ran. He ran as fast as he could. Like hell it was dragging him away that easily.
He dove forward, arms out, managing to catch Gabriel’s hand before he went any farther. That didn’t deter the creature. It pulled even harder, forcing McCree to latch on with both hands. He wasn’t going to let go. Not even when the owl tried to pull both of them up. He dug his heels into the ground.

He met Gabriel’s gaze, finding more determination than fear. Typical.

“Don’t you dare let go.” McCree hissed. “I’ve got too many things to say to you.”

“Oh yeah?” Gabriel smirked, gripping his hand tighter. “Like what?”

“Like I’m sorry.”

He shook his head. “You’ve got nothing to apologize for, mijo.”

The owl jerked on both of them again. McCree felt his boots skid across the ground, almost being thrown into whatever space they were being dragged into.

Only now did the fear appear in Gabriel’s eyes. His gaze was fixed on McCree’s boots before glancing back up.

McCree’s heart stopped. “Don’t you let go. Not to save my sorry ass.”

That sad smile returned.

“Gabe don’t. Listen to me damn it. Don’t you dare-”

Gabriel shoved him back.

He screamed as he snapped out his other hand, trying to latch on, only to miss by an inch. Gabriel vanished in a second, along with everything else.

He didn’t stop screaming, shouting his name, wishing he could see something. All that was left now was the sudden pain in his chest.

Something cold pressed against his forehead.

McCree’s eyes flew open, unable to sit up as he tried to figure out the unfamiliar weight on his head. He reached up to feel the cold towel, running his fingers over the fibers.

“Your body temperature got way too high.”

He jerked his head to the side to notice Jack was sitting on the floor, leaning against the armrest of the sofa.

“Shit, Jack,” He adjusted the towel back into place. “For someone who seems so concerned about my health you like giving me heart attacks.”

“Get some more sleep.”

“What, so I can wake up in ten more minutes?”
“You slept for an hour at least.”

Did he? It certainly didn’t feel that way. He kept the back of his hand pressed against the cold towel, already feeling it warming up.

“I didn’t wake you up, did I?”

“Wasn’t asleep, and don’t worry about it.”

He tried not to. He tried to focus on the towel and not the pain in his side. Did he open his injury again? He didn’t feel like checking. Jack would have said something if he noticed.

Still, he couldn’t seem to make his eyes shut. Every time he did his nightmare kept flooding back, his prosthetic gripping at thin air like he still had a chance to hang on. He stared at the metal for a while, eyes trailing down to the scars above his elbow.

“Wasn’t enough cover.” He muttered.

Jack turned his head. “What?”

“Was trying to protect a kid. Bad guys shot him clear through my arm.”

The soldier’s eyes seemed to study the empty space in front of him before he look forward again.

“My visor. Vision was only damaged from the explosion. Stole the visor to correct it, but it was only a prototype. When it tried to connect to my head it fried my optic nerves.”

“Sounds painful.”

“So does losing your arm.”

The room fell quiet for a few moments. McCree actually managed to shut his eyes this time, studying the dark like it held some kind of answer.

“You miss it?” He mumbled.

“Sometimes. You?”

“Sometimes.” He sighed, exhaustion slowly pulling him back under. The cold sensation settled back over his head, soothing compared to the itching heat that he’d almost become used to over the past week. Bit by bit he let it lull him back to sleep.

“God damn it Jackie, how much ice cream did you get him?”

“Looks like we’re busted kid. Take the goods and run.”

“Both of you get back here!”
When McCree woke up in the living room—for the third time—he suddenly noticed the smell. Cinnamon flooded his senses and he slowly pushed himself up, trying to pinpoint the source. It was still dark in the living room, no one else there, but he heard the clank of a pan in the kitchen.

His whole back felt stiff when he stood up and he cracked his neck. No wonder Jack was always complaining and stretching. That couch was terrible.

He snatched up the blanket, wrapping it around his shoulders before making his way to the kitchen. He squinted in the light, but his vision quickly came back into focus. There was Jack, putting another set of cinnamon rolls onto a pan before sliding it into the oven.

McCree only watched them for a moment before glancing back at the soldier’s face. “Still wear those silly bandanas huh?”

Jack seemed surprised by his presence, spinning around with his eyes wide. The bandana in question was wrapped over his nose and mouth, a startling purple color.

“Hey, Jesse, ever tried the cinnamon challenge?”

“Hell no, I ain’t that stupid.”

“Try it sometime, maybe then you’ll figure out how it feels for me to get this stuff up my nose.”

McCree made his way over to the bar and sat down. “If that’s the case why the hell do you keep making those?”

“Because,” Jack made his way over to the coffee pot, filling up a mug and bringing it over. “You like them.”

McCree took the cup, eyeing Jack suspiciously. The soldier didn’t notice, returning to his baking.

Jack had never been much of a cook but even McCree had to admit he was damn good at baking.

“Who are you and what did you do with Jack Morrison?” He mumbled before taking a sip, surprised at how dark it was.

The soldier just laughed. “Old habits die hard. You only get one cup of that by the way. Angela would destroy me if she found out I gave you any more.”

It was silent for a while. Jack started putting the finished rolls onto a tray while McCree sipped at his coffee. He glanced up to check the time, six-thirty. No doubt people would be waking up soon.
“Feel any better?” Jack said.

“That couch sucks.”

He laughed. “Yeah, sure does.”

“Why do you keep sleeping on it?”

“I don’t, always. Sometimes I use the chair. Or just lounge on the floor.”

“Sounds worse.”

“Says the kid who managed to sleep wedged between two sets of crates when he decided to stow away on our airplane.”

“Never did figure out how you found me.”

Jack pointed to his nose.

“Oh come on. I decked myself out in different cologne.”

“Didn’t get your hat though, did you?”

Damn, he didn’t even consider that. Maybe he should give it a careful wash.

“Jack,” Ana’s voice hummed from outside before she wandered in. Even with her hair up it was in a mess. She was still in her nightgown and a robe that was far too big to be hers. “I can smell that.”

“Glad your nose still works.”

She gave him a short laugh as she stepped over to him, giving him a quick kiss on the cheek before snatching a roll. She didn’t wait to eat it as she headed to the coffee pot.

“It’s hot,” she complained.

“I just pulled them out.”

She grumbled in response, sipping at the coffee. “Get out some plates would you?”

“You’re the one with a working eye.”

Another grumble. She put down her mug and began to dig out some dishes to use. “Jesse dear, did you want one?”

“It’d be appreciated ma’am.”

Jack shoved the tray across the counter. “Just give him three.”

Ana smiled as she put them all on a plate. She stepped around the bar to set them in front of McCree, kissing his temple. “Morning dear, did you sleep okay?”
He shrugged a bit, picking one up. “I suppose a little better.”

“Little steps,” she said. “Oh, I better get another cup for Reinhardt. He’ll probably be up soon.”

She wasn’t wrong. The smell must have been seeping through the walls with the amount of people that rushed in. Zarya was first, excited, making a comment about how this might actually get Mei up at a decent hour. Then Reinhardt, who made a show of lifting Jack off the floor in a massive hug. The soldier grumbled about it but McCree swore he heard his voice crack.

He finished off his coffee.

Lena came in, dragging a very tired Hana and Lúcio. She pointed at the rolls.

“See? Told you dad made breakfast.”

“Lena will you-”

“Thanks dad,” Lúcio smiled as he rubbed at his eyes.

“Ugh.”

More and more people crowded into the kitchen, to the point McCree almost got shoved off his chair. As soon as he got into a more comfortable position though, Angela was on his other side, asking after him.

“I’m fine, doc.”

“That’s what you always say, forgive me for not believing you.”

He yelped when she tugged his shirt up, checking his back.

“Is that blood?”

He sighed.

“My office after breakfast.”

“Yes ma’am.”

He passed into a daze after that, hearing the chatter but not getting a word of it. He frowned at his empty coffee cup, wishing he could have more. Something similar.

No good, he was still tired.

“Jesse?”

He turned to see Hanzo sitting next to him. When the hell had he gotten here?

“Mornin’ darlin’.” He mumbled out.

Hanzo’s fingers slid over his cheek, pushing the hair away from his face. “How are you feeling?”
“Good as I can be right now, I suppose.”

His boyfriend gave him a light nod, fingers still moving over his skin. It was a gentle sensation, lightly tugging at his hair. As tired as he was, he swore he’d fall asleep right there.

He almost did, Hanzo catching him before he collapsed onto the counter.

“You should get some more rest.”

“Would, but Angie wants to see me in her office ASAP.”

“Later then, you should not push yourself.”

“You know, if people keep saying that I’m going to start charging them dimes.”

“Then do not give us reasons to remind you.”

McCree rolled his eyes. “Name one.”

Hanzo narrowed his eyes. “I caught you trying to smoke a third cigar when you had not been cleared from the medical bay.”

“Okay but that was-”

“Two days after that Ana found you trying to sneak into the firing range.”

“I was just trying to-”

“And Hana did inform me about catching you in the liquor cabinet at two in the morning.”

“Little rat.” McCree mumbled into his palm.

“She was concerned. We all are.”

“I know, I know,” he sighed. “I’m sorry Hanzo I just... yeah, fine. I’ll get some more rest. I’ll go see Angie, go for a walk, and then lie in bed and stare at the wall for five hours.”

The archer frowned. “I did not say you had to do that.”

“Well I’m not sleeping,” McCree waved a hand in front of his face. “Not... dealing with that again so soon.”

“Would you like a distraction?”

He tried not to laugh at that, knowing any dirty implications were likely not what the archer had in mind. “Yeah, sure, might help, if you have nothing better to do.”

Hanzo pressed his lips together. “I do have some training with Morrison and Ms. Vaswani scheduled, but I will come by when that’s finished.”

“Almost wish I could watch,” McCree lifted his right hand and slid their fingers together. “Wanna see all the new stuff you’ve figured out.”
“I will show you when you recover.” Hanzo pulled his hand closer, gently kissing the knuckles on his fingers.

McCree felt the tension rush out of his system. Yet again he swore he’d fall asleep, almost slumping over onto the counter. By now he’d completely forgotten there was even anyone else in the room.

Until he heard the familiar click of a phone camera.

Both men glanced to the side to see Hana standing there, phone out with a grin on her face.

“How?” Hanzo frowned at her.

“Don’t try and lecture me. I know you’re gonna want this as your new background.” She already seemed to be in the process of sending it to him. “It’s adorable.”

“I doubt that,” McCree glanced at his messy hair and the blanket still on his shoulders. He didn’t even want to know what his face looked like right now. Then his gaze shot over to Hanzo. “Wait, what’s your current background?”

His boyfriend’s cheeks went red as Hana responded. “Oh, Ana took a photo of you kissing his head while he was wearing your serape.”

McCree couldn’t keep himself from laughing, a blend of amusement and affection. Hanzo’s face turned even darker as he pulled his hand away, crossing his arms.

“Aw, don’t be embarrassed darlin’. I think it’s sweet.” McCree got out of his chair, leaning over to kiss his cheek. “But I’ve gotta run. I’ll see you later, yeah?”

“I am... tired, but I am fine. I apologize for my absence.”

“Properly connecting enough takes energy.” She paused.

“I am afraid I cannot speak for long.”
“Few more minutes?”

“Hm, with Madam Ziegler on her way I suppose that is fine.”

McCree smiled, ignoring the lump in his throat. Who would have thought just hearing her voice would affect him this much. “Madam? Come on, Clem, she’s a doctor.”

She laughed before using a mocking tone. “For god’s sake Clementine, I’m a doctor not a lady.”

“Huh?”

“Oh goodness, you never saw that. Mistress Reyes loved that show.”

“You like TV?”

“As much as any spirit could I suppose. My opinions are rather bias.”

He considered how old she was. “Did it blow your mind when you first saw a TV?”

“A little, but I was more surprised by guns.” Another pause. “And frightened.”

McCree felt her anxiety rush over his shoulders, but he didn’t ask. A subject for a later time.

He heard her sigh. “I used to love the stars.”

He blinked. “What?”

“The stars. There were so many. Back then we had no idea what they were. Mysterious and wonderful things.” Her voice seemed to grow quieter. “To think the sun was one all along.”

Fear was creeping up his spine and he couldn’t place if it was his or hers. “Clem?”

“Why did he have to be made of stars too?”

He opened his mouth to ask, but the sudden heat made all his muscles go rigid. It burned. It itched. Like his skin was trying to peel itself away. He used the wall to keep himself from falling but his legs still gave out. His breathing was short, quick, making his ribs ache all over again.

What the hell was happening?

Clem? He screamed in his head, hoping she could hear him. Clementine?

As quickly it began, it vanished. It rushed out of his system, his nerves going numb for a moment as he forced his breathing to slow down.

Clem? He kept calling out. Hoping for an explanation, something.

No response.

What the hell was going on? Was she even okay? McCree cursed his inability to find out. There had to be a way he could find out.
“Clem?” He mumbled one more time as his vision started to fade out.

“Jesse?”

Something clattered on the floor before Angela cut into his vision. Her eyes were wide as her hand pressed against his forehead, forcing it back up.

“Mein gott, you’re burning up.” Her other hand touched his cheek. “Jesse? Can you hear me?”

“Yeah,” he mumbled out. “Sorry she just... Angie can you see her?”

Angela seemed confused for a moment before she shut her eyes. When they flew open she looked terrified.

She cursed a few times as she grabbed his arm and helped him up.

“How are you feeling?” She seemed to stare through him. “And don’t lie to me this time.”

“Tired,” he muttered before rolling his shoulder. At least the pain in his chest was gone. “A little better otherwise.”

“Young spirit seems to have calmed down.” She took a deep breath. “Are you sure you wouldn’t mind spending a few more days in here?”

“I can’t stay locked up in here Angie.”

She rolled her eyes, urging him over to the bed now. “Trust me I know. I’ve never met anyone who refused to sit still as much as you.” She waited for him to sit down before continuing, gesturing at his shirt. “I still remember the time you got injured on that mission and kept trying to sneak out to train with Genji. Gabriel had to lock you in your room.”
He chuckled as he took off his shirt, only now realizing he’d never put a proper pair of pants on. “Yeah, I got out anyway.”

She hummed, taking off his old bandages. “The tech department was very pissed about having to replace that entire console. I still wish I knew how you did it.”

“How? You wanna learn how to break electrical door locks?”

“I wouldn’t object.”

He laughed again, flinching when her fingers brushed over his stitches. “Damn Angie, you’re turning into a full on criminal now.”

“I did that the moment I agreed to come back.”

He let her glance over the injury, heard her tsk when she checked his back. Her palm was over the injury, the same sharp sensation returning.

“How the hell is that thing still not closed up.”

“Well,” She frowned at him. “Considering the number of times you’ve torn your stitches it’s not that surprising.”

“That ain’t my fault.”

“I know it’s not, I’m just asking you to be patient. I’m certain that until recently your body wasn’t even able to heal anything on it’s own. This is going to take time.”

The temptation to flop onto the bed and scream was overwhelming. He was so damn tired and felt restless at the same time. He wished he could just go outside and run five miles before passing out on the grass. It’d be so much easier than this.

She redressed the wound in silence for a while, handing his shirt back when she was done.

“We still haven’t gotten much healing training done have we?” Angela seemed to ponder for a moment. “Do you think doing that could keep you from doing anything else foolish?”

“Might,” He yawned, rubbing at his eyes.

“You need some more sleep, Jesse.”

“Yes doc,” he moved to get up only to have her push him back onto the bed.

“No, rest in here. I’ll keep an eye on you.”

He thought about protesting, considered it, but not having to walk all the way back to his room sounded nice right about now. He settled down on the bed, clinging to the sheets and ignoring her soft laughter.

McCree didn’t really sleep as much as he dozed in and out. Perhaps it was better that way, less nightmares. He listened to Angela move around, fiddle with screens and occasionally hum. The soft taps of her fingers on her communicator were often followed by laughter.
That sound always had him drifting off again.

He didn’t completely wake up until he heard something clatter onto the floor. He shot up, probably too fast, looking for the source.

Angela stood there, hands on her hips as she glared at a broom that was now lying on the floor.

She caught his gaze, her expression softening. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“It’s fine,” he rubbed his face. “Don’t wanna sleep too long.”

“This broom refuses to stand up.” She picked it up and shoved it against the wall.

“Wait, are you actually cleaning?” McCree smirked as he climbed off the bed.

“...I got bored.” She admitted.

“No need to worry doc, I’ll get out of your hair now.”

She frowned. “Are you sure? You can rest more if you need it.”

“I already feel better,” he stretched. “And I wanted to go for a walk.”

“It better be a short one.”

“Yes ma’am.”

“And stay close to the base.”

“Fine.”

“And remember to take your-”

“Angie,” he sighed. “I’ll be fine.”

Her frown deepened and she put her hands on her hips before she stepped closer, pulling him into a hug.

“You make it too easy to worry about you.”

“Sorry,” he returned the hug. “I’ll swing by this evening if it helps.”

“Please do,” she pulled back. “And Jesse?”

“Yeah?”

“Please tell me next time you damage your arm.” She tapped the joint of his prosthetic.

Damn.

“Sorry,” he rubbed his neck, not missing the anger in her eyes.
She just hummed at him and nudged him toward the door.

McCree didn’t say anything else. Not like he had an excuse. She’d asked him once before to tell her if it was a problem. He imagined the only reason he hadn’t gotten a lecture this time is because Angela already knew how tired he was.

He’d get one later.

McCree almost made it to his room to change clothes before he was interrupted. Brigitte called out his name and he turned to see her and Mei running down the hall. Torbjörn was following after, with Winston taking his time.

“What’s up?” McCree asked as the two ladies skidded to a stop. Both of them had their hands behind their backs.

“We’ve got some surprises for you.” Mei’s eyes glittered when she smiled.

“Huh?” He glanced at the others for confirmation. Torbjörn gave a firm nod. Winston gave a smaller one.

“First,” Mei seemed to hop in place, “since it took me so long.”

Her hands snapped out, red cloth trailing after.

It took McCree a few moments to even recognize his serape. The red and gold were unbelievably bright. The only proof that it wasn’t brand new were the stitches, which were much more than stitches now. Any repairs had been turned into patterns of gold, often taking the shape of feathers or flames.

He couldn’t manage to say anything as he reached out and ran his fingers over the fabric.

“How?” He stuttered.

Mei smiled, “Winston found a way to revitalize the pigments, I suppose you could say.” She glanced back at the scientist.

“Ah, it was no big deal.” He adjusted his glasses. “Mei did most of the handiwork.”

“Sorry if I got carried away. I didn’t want it to just look patchy so I tried some patterns.”

“No it looks good it...” McCree lifted the garment up, studying it closer. “Darlin’ you didn’t need to do all this.”

“It’s fine,” she smiled. “I wanted to cheer you up, and it was good practice. It’s been awhile since I’ve done it.”

McCree thought about asking, but when her gaze dropped he held back. Instead he tossed the serape over his shoulders before wrapping it around his neck. The warmth was familiar, although the smell wasn’t. Some kind of chemical, a bit acidic. It was sharp but minor. It’d probably fade soon enough.
He smiled as he turned around. “How’s it look?”

“Fantastic,” Mei grinned.

“Blinding,” Torbjörn pretended to cringe.

“Matches your boxers,” Brigitte winked at him.

He rolled his eyes at that before tugging Mei into a hug. “Thank you darlin’, means a lot.”

“Anytime,” she chimed as she hugged back, tightly. Too tight.

McCree gasped at the pain in his ribs.

“Oh! Sorry.” She let go. “I seem to be picking up Zarya’s habits.”

He laughed it off, constantly amazed at how strong this girl actually was.

“So,” Brigitte cut in. “Remember how you had to ditch your armor last time?”

The memory of the metal digging into his spine flashed through his mind. “Yeah, but I have spares.”

Torbjörn rolled his eyes. “Spare? Pah, why not get something better?”

Brigitte revealed what she was hiding, almost shoving it in McCree’s face. “Tada!”

It was armor all right, more of a copper color this time around.

“New and improved. Kind of a test actually.”

McCree frowned. “Huh?”

“She’s been working with the Vishkar girl.” Torbjörn said. “Blending her threads into metal to make it stronger.”

“It seems to work fairly well,” Winston said. “But we haven’t done any field tests.”

“Using me as a guinea pig.” McCree put a hand on his chest. “I’m mighty offended.”

Brigitte shook her head. “It’s still made to fit, lighter than before, likely more durable. When you feel better you can test it. Oh!” She smiled and turned it around. “Check out the back.”

The back panels were engraved, detailed lines that created a pair of wings. The feathers were colored, a gradient of red fading into yellow.

McCree’s mouth fell open. “What? What in the– Did y’all really go and do that for me?”

“You’re welcome.” Torbjörn smirked.

“The hell?” McCree took the armor to study it closer. “Did you draw this on there?”
“Course, what do you take me for?”

“Not an artist.”

Mei and Brigitte were both giggling.

“Mind the tongue boy, or I might just take it back.”

“Well I’ve never seen you draw anything.” McCree frowned before looking at Brigitte. “Does he?”

“He does draw all of his designs.” She shrugged. “And decorations and such.”

McCree supposed that was true, only now realizing he’d never thought about it. “Well then, my apologies.”

“Hm, I’ll forgive you this time.” Torbjörn hid his smile well under his mustache.

McCree ran his fingers over the etchings, feeling the shapes and noting the tiny details on the feathers. He wasn’t sure he wanted to know how much work this took. It already felt like he owed a debt he couldn’t pay back.

“You guys really didn’t have to-”

“Oh hush,” Brigitte threw and arm over his shoulder. “It’s all worth it. We’re just glad you’re still here.”

McCree tried to ignore the oncoming tears but had no choice but to wipe his eyes.

Torbjörn laughed. “Aw look, the crybaby’s back.”

“Don’t be mean,” Mei lightly shoved him.

“Nah he’s right,” McCree smiled and stepped forward. “I’m just a big crybaby. Wanna give me a hug to make me feel better?”

“Don’t even think it, boy.” The shorter man was already backing up.

“Aw, but Reinhardt used to tell me you were such a cuddler.”

“Well he lied.”

“Come on Torb,” Brigitte said. “Give him a big hug.”

“If he touches me I’ll knock his teeth out.”

“No you wouldn’t,” McCree smirked. “Or Angie would put you in a hole.”

“I’ll take my chances.”

He couldn’t help but laugh as his steps turned into a full on run as he chased the man down the hall, Brigitte close behind him.
The familiar weight of his serape flying behind him made him feel like he could fly.
McCree kept telling himself he wasn’t lying. He was walking after all, near the base, in the woods behind Bastion’s lodge.

However, he supposed he didn’t mention the climbing.

Coming out here didn’t seem to be enough to clear his head. Bastion greeted him, offered him flowers, but it did little to quell his restlessness.

He wanted to run.

He wanted to, so badly. Escape into the night so that no one had to see him like this anymore. The only reason he didn’t is because he made that mistake once.

Never again.

Still, it didn’t mean he couldn’t hide for a little while. What better place to do that than up on the platform? Roof was too risky and Hanzo liked it up there.

At least due to practice, scaling the tree was easier now, following a familiar pattern of branches. He went slow, making sure his newly repaired serape didn’t snag on anything.

He felt relief when he gripped the platform, tugging himself up. That sensation changed to shock when he realized he wasn’t alone.

Genji sat there, back to him, meditating. For a moment McCree cursed himself for interrupting, then considered just climbing back down.

“Hello Jesse.” The ninja spoke.

“Darn, what gave it away?” He tried to joke as he climbed the rest of the way up. He turned around, back to the ninja when he sat down.

“Your spurs, the usual.” Genji at least sounded like he was in a pleasant mood. “Although, I tried to deny it. You should not be up here in your condition.”

“How do you know I’m not the picture of health?”

“Angela keeps me informed.”

Yeah, that would figure.
“What are you doing up here, Jesse?” Genji almost sounded annoyed that he had to repeat the question.

“Well, what are you doing up here?” McCree fired back.

“I asked you first.”

“Well I ain’t telling if you don’t.”

Genji let out a long sigh. “What does it look like I’m doing?”

“Meditating, but I sure hope it ain’t over the same bullshit Zenyatta was mentioning four days ago.”

The platform shook. McCree turned to see Genji’s palm pressed against it before he stood. “It is not ‘bullshit.’”

“You sure about that? ‘Cause I sure as hell think so.”

“Because you are looking from the wrong angle.” The ninja spun around, fast, dangerous. “We both know that if I had not started that argument out in the open, that would not have happened.”

“And that’s something to kick your ass over? You fucked up, so what?”

“You died!”

“So what? I’m still here, ain’t I?”

“And what if you did not have that spirit?” Genji clenched his fists. “What if it had not been you? What if it had been Lúcio, or Hana, or even Hanzo?”

That thought made McCree flinch.

“I cannot allow such a foolish error to risk the lives of those I care about.”

McCree gritted his teeth. “So you have to meditate for over two weeks? Bullshit.”

“Jesse.”

He stood up, towering over Genji. “I get it. You fucked up. You feel like shit. You can’t stop thinking about all the little things you could have done different.” McCree jabbed the ninja’s chest with his prosthetic. “Newsflash, you ain’t the only one. I’ve had almost everyone on that mission apologizing to me, acting like it’s their fault somehow. Ana for suggesting the split up, Lena for not flying faster, Hana for distracting herself when they should have been ready. Hell, Winston’s done it five damn times for not getting backup sooner. As if it would have made a difference.”

Genji stood on his toes. “Maybe it would have.”

“Or maybe not. Maybe it would have just drawn out more Talon agents. Maybe one of them would have been caught in the crossfire. It doesn’t matter, Genji, it’s done. And I know you. I know how dedicated you are to bettering yourself. Ain’t a doubt in my mind you wouldn’t make the same
mistake.”

Genji exhaled, relaxing his stance as he stared at the platform. At least he seemed to be considering McCree’s words.

“And look,” McCree rubbed his neck. “I ain’t guiltless either. I was messing around when I should have been practicing flying. If I could have done that we wouldn’t have hit the ground so hard.”

“I am not that easy to carry.” Genji objected.

“So? Even then you still had armor. Me trying to be noble was stupid too. You had every right to be pissed.”

“That is not an excuse for my actions.”

“Maybe not but,” McCree sighed and ran his hands down his face. “Darlin’ what I’m trying to say is it’s not all your fault. I get that you’re working off your guilt, but you don’t gotta carry all of it. I don’t... I miss seeing you. I hate you isolating yourself like this. I mean, forgive me for worrying, but when you did this back in Blackwatch you got... bad.”

“Ah,” Genji crossed his arms. “I understand your concerns now.”

“Sorry,” McCree laughed. “I guess that was a wordy way to say I’m worried about you.”

“It is fine,” Genji’s voice softened. “You were always like this. Something you picked up from Commander Reyes I imagine.”

McCree laughed, remembering the sometimes hour long lectures they got for reckless decisions. So much energy and anger only for it to boil down to, “Don’t do that again. You scared the shit out of me.”

“Sorry for uh,” McCree waved his hand up and down. “Totally ruining your zen.”

“No, I needed to hear that. In truth my meditation was going in circles. I should have spoken with you from the start, but I was afraid, in my anger, I would lash out.”

“Genji, darlin’, I’ve already seen you at your worst.”

“Perhaps, but not when you were dying.”

“Point.”

The pair of them stared at each other before they burst into laughter. McCree didn’t hesitate to jerk him into a hug, lifting him up in the air.

“I still love the dickens out of you, you know that?”

“Hm, be careful.” Genji swiped his hat and put it on his own head. “My brother is the jealous type.”

“You know what I mean,” McCree set him down. “And last time you said that you told me you
didn’t actually know.”

The ninja shrugged. “He’s full of self loathing and insecurity, of course he is.”

“Damn,” McCree put a hand on his heart. “That’s just brutal.”

“It is the truth.”

“Maybe, but you could use some more tact.”

“Perhaps if I say it to his face.” Genji tugged at McCree’s serape, studying the new stitching. “But he is getting better. I doubt I need to tell you this, Jesse, but please take care of him.”

“I’ll do my damned best.”

“I know you will, if you treat him anything like how you treated me.”

McCree smiled, stealing his hat back. “You know, sometimes wondered when that call went out if you’d want to start something again.”

“If I’m honest, I had considered it. However...”

“Then you met Lúcio?” He smirked as he leaned close.

Genji’s vents hissed as he turned his head away. “To say he was charming would be an understatement.”

“Just can’t win against fame, I suppose.”

“Don’t be jealous, you have your charms.”

“Hey, I concede defeat.” McCree held up his hands. “Things worked out this way, I think.”

Genji just hummed in agreement, studying the stitching again. McCree took the silence to glance at the sky, studying the few clouds. The breeze felt nice, rustling the branches below them.

“Mei did a good job.” The ninja said.

“Didn’t she? The lot of them made me tear up.”

“As if it takes much to do that.”

“Watch it, you little shit.”

Genji laughed, shaking his head before he stepped past McCree. “I should head back. And you? You never told me what you were doing out here.”

“Wanted to clear my head, be alone for a bit.”

“Then I shall give you your space.” The ninja practically jumped off the ledge and McCree could hear the branches below shake. All too soon he poked his head back up. “Please do not do anything reckless.”
“I won’t.”

“Hm, that’s what you always say.” Genji watched him for a few more moments before he finally began to climb down.

McCree sighed, deflating as he sat back down on the platform. He was at least glad he’d sorted that mess out. One less thing to worry about he supposed.

His thoughts drifted as he watched the other trees move, listening out for birds. He watched a pair of them flutter from branch to branch, either talking or arguing with each other.

If only he’d been able to fly...

McCree glanced back at his shoulders and then towards the edge of the platform.

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Hanzo sighed, irritated, waiting outside Jesse’s room which was most certainly empty. He’d even asked Athena for his location but she didn’t seem to know where he was. For the time being Hanzo waited, glancing at the group chat on the communicator for entertainment.

Lúcio: I still can’t believe he was just asleep.

D.Va: His fault. We put him on the roof.

Lúcio: OMG you did what??

D.Va: I had Zarya help.

The pair of them were talking about Morrison. With how attentive the soldier was, it was odd to find him passed out in the training room. Him and Satya had debated on waking him up, but decided against it. He knew how little sleep he actually got.

Sadly, he never should have told Hana.

Tracer: He’s going to be so upset when he wakes up ommmf. Oh no I hope he has sunscreen. I know he burns easily.

Torbjörn: He could use the tan.

Hanzo sighed and shook his head, glancing at the door again. He knew he was early, and McCree mentioned he was going for a walk. There was no reason to worry so much.

Still...

Hanzo: Has anyone see McCree?

D.Va: Stop calling him McCree in the group Hanzo. We all know he’s your stud muffin. But no I haven’t seen him.

Mei: He said he was going for a walk?
Mercy: That better be all he is doing.

Genji: He is out in the woods.

Hanzo frowned, trying to type up a reply, but he wasn’t quick enough.

Mercy: What? Genji please tell me he is just smelling flowers.

Genji: He wanted to be alone. He climbed up onto the platform.

Mercy: Mmmmm that boy

Genji: He is fine doctor, or he was when I last saw him. I told Bastion to check in on him.

Mei: Someone ask Bastion.

Lúcio: Wait, Winston, did u ever add Bastion to this group?

There was a long pause for a reply to that.

Winston: Sorry, no, they’re so new to the system. Hang on.

It was nice, actually. Over the past week Lúcio managed to develop a device to allow Bastion to access their comm systems. Since then the omnic had taught itself to type in human speech, although sometimes there were a few translation errors.

It was interesting to see what they had to say.

Lúcio: Bastion? U there?

Bastion: Hello Everyone! I did not even realize we had such a communication platform.

Hanzo smiled to himself.

Hanzo: Bastion, do you have eyes on McCree?

Bastion: Eyes? no eyes... ! I see what you mean. Yes I do.

Mercy: Is he up on the platform.

Bastion: Yes Yes he is. He is practicing flying.

Hanzo could almost feel the silence that fell over the entire base. The pause on the system only proved it. His nausea didn’t even have time to settle, however, before his notifications exploded.

Mercy: WHAT!??

Mei: JESSE NO

Genji: I literally just told him I told him not to I told him
Winston: I can’t be surprised.

Lúcio: Oh man Eastwood’s in trouble.

D.Va: What do you think Lu. Will he pass out from the fall or from mama angela decking him in the face?

Torbjörn: I’m bettin on angie.

Ana: What is going on in here?

Mercy: I AM GOING TO GET HIM RIGHT NOW I WILL TIE HIM TO THE BED I SWEAR

Pharah: Why doesn’t he ask me for flying lessons : c

D.Va: Omgggg

Hanzo sighed.

Hanzo: No need doctor, I will go and get him.

Mercy: Do not make excuses for him Hanzo. I want him in my office ten minutes ago.

Ana: Good lord Angela. You sound like Jack.

Mercy: HE COULD SERIOUSLY INJURE HIMSELF.

Hanzo: I am aware. Bastion? Can you try and prevent McCree from climbing up the tree again if he tries.

Bastion: Okay okay!!!

Hanzo put the communicator away as he ran for the quickest way outside. For him, that was heading towards the deck and climbing down the wall.

Not the safest route, but the fastest.

When his feet touched ground he didn’t slow down. He even tried to run faster, desperately ignoring his communicator. He weaved through the trees, past the garden and the greenhouse. Still no sign of him yet.

He heard Bastion’s frantic beeps when he came to the clearing. The omnic was staring up at the platform before turning their gaze to Hanzo. They shrugged, their eye flashing a few times before Hanzo’s communicator buzzed.

> He fast

The archer sighed and shook his head. He stepped up to the base of the tree. He considered climbing, but if Jesse was being as avoidant as it sounded there was no doubt that would only encourage him to jump.

“Jesse?” Hanzo shouted.
To his relief the cowboy appeared, head poking out from the side of the platform, those wings glowing behind him. Except, he noted, the color was much darker than usual.

“Hey Hanzo, what brings you out here?”

“I was looking for you.”

“Didn’t you have training?”

He rolled his eyes. “Morrison was out cold in the training room, sleeping.”

Jesse laughed, his hat almost falling off his head. “Probably my fault, I was sleeping in the living room. Kept him up even more than usual.”

Hanzo frowned at that. It had to be nightmares, he assumed, but why didn’t Jesse come to him about those?

A topic for later.

“Angela knows what you’re doing Jesse. Bastion told the entire base.”

“I’m fine Hanzo.”

“Perhaps, but I am asking you to come down all the same. She wants to see you.”

“So she can lecture me again? No thanks.” McCree pulled back out of view. “All I fucking hear from anyone lately, including you. I know I took a bullet through the chest but fuck, I wandered around a city once with a dead arm. You guys act like me doing any kind of physical activity is going to kill me.”

Hanzo let out a long sigh, trying to keep his anger under control. “It will not, however it will slow down your recovery. If you wish for this to be over faster you need to rest.”

McCree’s hand appeared from the platform, flipping him off.

Anger burned through Hanzo’s nerves and he almost leapt onto the tree to start climbing it. He took a few deep breaths, rubbing his temples. Calm down. Jesse had to be acting this way for a reason.

“Jesse, please, I just wish to understand why you insist on doing this right now.”

“Should have known how to fly.” Jesse stood up. “Should have, didn’t. Could have prevented a lot of shit.”

Panic flooded out his irritation in half a second. “Jesse, please get down from there.”

“Fine, I will.” The footsteps weren’t the least bit encouraging as they moved to the edge of the platform.

“That is not what I meant and you know it.”
“You asked me to get down.”

“Jesse,” Hanzo moved around the trees. If he had to catch this damned cowboy then so be it.

He saw the man stop at the edge, wings out. His breath caught when he pulled back.

“Jesse!”

His boyfriend jumped.

He jumped, but he didn’t fall. His wings opened up, catching him before carrying him forward. The cowboy was laughing as he glided, weaving around the trees. Sometimes his wings would pass over branches and leaves, only to shift around them.

“See Hanzo?” Jesse twirled around once. “Nothing to worry about.”

That did nothing to quell Hanzo’s anxiety as he ran after the cowboy. It couldn’t possibly be safe to fly with his wings in that condition. His abilities still weren’t strong enough. It was a miracle he formed them in the first place.

A miracle or a disaster waiting to happen.

“Can only glide so far.” Jesse grabbed a branch to make a sharp turn. “Haven’t managed to give myself any lift. But at least this way I can stay in the air.”

Bastion’s beeps made them sound impressed, but the last thing Jesse needed right now was encouragement.

“Please just get down.” Hanzo kept chasing him.

“That’s what I’m doing.” Jesse twisted around to glare at him. “If you’d just be patient—”

“Jesse!”

The warning came a second too late. The cowboy glanced ahead only for his back to slam into the branch anyway. His wings sparked and sputtered out before he fell forward.

Hanzo caught him before he hit the ground, managing to stand under the sudden weight. Bastion’s beeps were alarmed as they drew closer.

“I’m fine,” Jesse shot back up, although his expression said otherwise. “Don’t tell Angie.”

Hanzo frowned as he set Jesse down, making certain he could stand on his own two feet. “I cannot promise that. It is her job to look after you.”

“Yeah but she’ll throttle me if she finds out.”

Hanzo couldn’t keep himself from stomping forward. “Then why did you do it?”

He didn’t mean to shout as loudly as he did. The volume of his voice made Bastion straighten up and McCree flinch, taking a step back.
He lowered his voice as he continued. “You know very well how reckless and dangerous this was. You could have injured yourself further. Using your abilities only limits your healing. Why do you keep doing this?”

The cowboy’s back hit the tree behind him, leaving him with nowhere else to go. He sighed and glanced at the ground. “I don’t know.”

“Do not lie to me.”

“I don’t know, okay?” He snapped his head back up. “I don’t know. I just... I can’t stand just being locked up in a room, unable to sleep or stuck in my own damn thoughts. Then I get out here and me and Genji have that talk and I just... I wanted to see if I could do it.”

Hanzo was beginning to understand, but his irritation only got worse. “You cannot keep doing this."

Jesse frowned when he glared, straightening up to make himself taller. “What are you now Hanzo, my Ma? I’m fine for fucks sake.”

“You are not fine.” Hanzo leaned up on his toes, making sure to look Jesse dead in the eye. “If you were as ‘fine’ as you claim you would not keep doing such reckless things. You would not keep trying to smoke, or drink, or throw yourself off of high places on the slim chance your wings will catch you. I know very well you are frustrated, Jesse, but that is not an excuse.”

Jesse sharp exhale was followed by a trail of smoke slipping past his lips.

Hanzo did not back down. “You are not telling me everything. There is something else bothering you. If you would like to keep it to yourself so be it, but I am begging you to stop this foolish behavior. I cannot...” His breath shook for a moment. “I cannot stand to see you hurting yourself like this.”

Confusion flashed across the cowboy’s features before it shifted into realization. His eyes darted around before settling on the ground, gaze distant.

Hanzo only moved closer, reaching out to take his boyfriend’s right hand. “We bother you because we are concerned. Many of us saw you when you were brought in. We do not wish to see it again.”

“Hell darlin’,” Jesse was shaking. “You never told me you saw that mess.”

“Of course I did.” He almost laughed about it now. “Winston had to hold me back as I attempted to chase Angela to her emergency room.”

Jesse pressed his forehead against his. For a moment he said nothing. Hanzo only watched his eyes and listened to his unsteady breaths, their fingers loosely tangled together.

“Sorry I... You’re right. I know I shouldn’t be doing this I just... I feel like it’s the only thing I can do.”

“Jesse,” Hanzo moved closer so their noses brushed together. “You do not need to do this by yourself. If you would like to try, I would be willing to help you find a solution.”
Jesse met his gaze, his eyes looking bright for the first time in almost a week. Hanzo had rarely marveled at the color brown, but now he found himself studying the lighter shades that surrounded his pupils.

Then Jesse let out a chuckle, “What did I ever do to deserve you?”

Hanzo smirked, “Funny, I often ask myself the same question.”

“Come on darlin’, I ain’t that great.”

“Do not say such foolish things.”

“It’s not-”

“You,” Hanzo took his other hand. “Are the kind of man who will selflessly protect his friends, despite the fact they are better armed. A foolish decision, but one that shows what sort of person you are. Your kindness is far more than I deserve.”

“Don’t say things like that.” Jesse’s lips brushed against his but he bit them back.

“It is the truth,” Hanzo kissed him. “And I do my best to remember not to take it for granted.”

“Hard to believe you were yelling at me just a second ago.”

“Out of concern.”

“Yeah fine, but still, your cool down time is quick.”

There was a beep of agreement to his left. Hanzo almost screamed as he jumped back and turned. He had completely forgotten Bastion was there. The omnic just tilted their head.

“Right, come on,” Hanzo tugged on Jesse’s arm. “You need to return to the base.”

“Don’t take me to Angie.”

“If you do not come willingly she will come find you herself.”

The sudden weight pulling down on his arm made him stumble. He glanced back to see Jesse lying face down on the ground, groaning.

“Jesse?”

“I don’t wanna.” He whined. “Don’t take me up there.”

He snorted and pulled, only dragging the cowboy so far. “You are being childish. Get up.”

“No,” he kept whining.

“Jesse.”

Another high pitched noise.
“You are getting your freshly repaired serape absolutely filthy.”

That got him up, eyes wide as he brushed all the dirt off the cloth.

Hanzo was distracted by his communicator, a private message from someone. He assumed it would be Angela asking for an update, but instead it was Hana.

> That’s p gay Hanzo

He frowned, confused, at least until he opened up the group only to see Bastion had posted a photo.

_D.Va:_ gay

_Mei:_ Awwww

_Mercy:_ He is supposed to be bringing him up here.

Hanzo shot his gaze back over to the omnic. “Bastion!”

They beeped, another head tilt.

“You cannot just take photos of people and publicly post them.”

The omnic made a sad noise but shrugged, gesturing to the device.

_Bastion:_ Lúcio told me to.

_Lúcio:_ Bastion no.

Hanzo glared.

_Hanzo:_ I shall keep this in mind next time I find you and my brother using the supply closet for its unintended purpose.

_Genji:_ HANZO

_D.Va:_ ooooooooh my god

_Lúcio:_ U SAID U WOULDN’ T TELL ANYONE betrayed by two people it’s like a public execution

_Bastion:_ You did not tell me that photography people was improper behavior : (

_D.Va:_ yeah lu, you USED THEM
   And it’s “photographing” Bastion!

_Bastion:_ Thank you!!

Hanzo just shook his head, putting the device away. Jesse was staring at him, confused, but at least he hadn’t run off. The archer didn’t say much else as he held out his hand.
His boyfriend sighed but took it, letting himself be led back to the base.
And now for something... completely different

*flying circus theme plays*

Well, just a different perspective really

“Gabe?” Jack stumbled on the uneven ground, unable to get a visual of the debris between the brightness of the flames and his hazy vision. “Gabe?”

What had just happened?

With all the noise around him he tried to piece it all together. Gabriel storming into his office, his anger dark and unusual. What started as an argument about a bounty melted into much more. For a moment Jack didn’t even recognize him, as if someone else was speaking. But those insults, those were personal, and then-

“Jack?”

He turned his head toward the sound, able to make out the dark colors of Gabriel’s clothes leaning against a still-intact wall. Jack didn’t hesitate to run over, tripping more than once which caused him to stumble right into the other man’s arm.

“Careful,” Gabriel’s hand was gentle as he kept him steady. “You alright?”

“Am I alright?” Jack gripped the grey hoodie which was now covered in scorch marks. Even then the dark colors did little to hide the scratches and tears, the blood still coming out of a bite wound on his shoulder. He glanced down to see violent slash marks on Gabriel’s right leg. If it wasn’t for the wall he probably wouldn’t be upright. “Jesus Gabe, Jesus I’m so-”

Gabriel tightened his grip. “Worry about it later. We need to get out of here.”

Right. They could talk about apologies and solutions to this mess later. They needed to focus on escaping this death trap. It was a miracle the blast hadn’t killed them, but the state of the building likely wouldn’t hold up for long.

Jack quickly pulled Gabriel over, wrapping the man’s right arm over his shoulders. He only waited a second to see if Gabriel needed to shift his position before both of them started moving.

“I’m afraid you’ll have to be my eyes.” Jack tried to smile. “Can’t see anything but colors and vague shapes right now.”

“Doesn’t surprise me, one of your eyes is almost completely red, dude. Kind of gross.”

“If only I could return the compliment.” He tried to laugh, following Gabriel’s signal to step to the
“Your nose okay?”

“What?”

“All this smoke and shit is gonna fuck up your senses isn’t it?”

“I’ll worry about it when we get out of here.” He tugged Gabriel over a pile of rubble. “Tell me you see a way out.”

“Well it looks like we dropped two goddamn floors. We’re gonna have to climb.”

Jack chuckled and kept moving. “Think my statue made it?”

“Oh my god, Jack.”

“If not maybe I’ll just go ahead and finish the job before we get the hell out of here.”

“Yeah I’d like to see you—” His words were interrupted by a sharp breath. Jack felt the sudden weight on his shoulders and struggled to keep them both upright.

“Gabe?”

“Fuck, I’m fine. Keep going.”

Jack risked glancing down at the injury again, trying not to think about how deep it was, how much blood there was.

_This is your fault._ His own voice kept churning in his head, louder and louder. The only sound that could match it was the ringing in his ears, the groaning of metal around them. His already hazy vision seemed to fade out even more, not even focused on the vague shapes anymore.

Only the loud screech of metal from above snapped him out of it. His gaze shot up, unable to see anything but grey.

He felt Gabriel suddenly wrench free, gripping the back of his jacket and tossing him to the side. Jack hit the ground, rolling away as pieces of metal and glass cut into his cheeks.

The sound of the ceiling collapsing was overwhelming.

Cold suddenly rushed through his system when Jack snapped awake, sitting up on the sofa. The empty black space he was so used to now welcomed him as he felt at the cushions, getting a feel for where he was.

The living room, of course. Where else would he be at this hour? At least he wasn’t on the roof anymore. Almost six hours spent up there due to some prank Hana decided to pull. It wouldn’t have been as bad if she’d left him his communicator.

With no way to contact anyone or safely climb back down all he could do was sit there.

He had, for one moment, considered trying to climb down anyway. Let fate decide if he made it or
fell to a tragic death. Whitefang greatly disapproved.

It took six hours before Ana and Reinhardt came up to get him. Jack spent the rest of the day hiding in his room, at least until everyone fell asleep.

Back out here again.

Why the hell did he let himself fall asleep?

“Sorry,” Whitefang said as he came into view. “I could not manage to find you quick enough to pull you out.”

Didn’t matter much now, did it. Even with the nightmare gone the memory was as clear as ever. His mind could fill in the blanks. Him snapping out of his dazed state only to find Gabriel half buried under scorching metal. Jack tried to get him out, trying to use his ice to keep his hands from burning as he tried to shove it all away. In the end he got burned anyway, and Gabriel finally got enough strength to scream at him.

“Get out of here you idiot.”

“Not without you. This is all my fault Gabe I can’t.”

“I’m already done for. Just go.”

“No,” He tried to sound angry but collapsed to his knees, gripping Gabriel’s hoodie in spite of the stinging on his fingers. “Till death do us part, remember?”

Gabriel tried to smile, at least he thinks so, he still couldn’t see. “We never even got married.”

It was meant to be a joke but the realization hit Jack harder than anything else surrounding him. The tears made his eyes absolutely burn but he couldn’t make them stop.

Why had he been so goddamn stupid?

“Jack,” Gabriel took his hand. “Mi luna, please go. Stay alive. I need you to do that for me and... find Jesse for me would you?”

“Huh?”

“Find Jesse. I still don’t know where he went. No idea if he’s even alive and... looks like I won’t be able to apologize to him now.”

“Gabe...”

“Promise me, Jack, promise me you’ll find him, look out for him.”

“I promise.”

“Good.” Gabriel’s grip tightened before he suddenly pulled his hand away. “Now go.”

Another rush of cold hit his shoulders. He blinked to see Whitefang hovering in front of him, yellow eyes focused.
“Jack,” his voice was calm. “You are not there anymore.”

He knew that, of course he knew that. He pressed his palms against his eyes to try and push his emotions back down, the memories as well, but they all seemed to fight back. He couldn’t just ignore it anymore with everything that was going on.

It was probably far too late to start living up to that promise now. It was something he should have tried to do from day one. But hearing Jesse had gone down, knowing what was about to happen to him, guilt and concern slammed into him full force.

And he was right. He didn’t need to see to know Jesse wasn’t handling it well. The nightmares, his body trying to correct itself, the sudden disconnect with his spirit. He’d seen the same thing with Gabriel.

It was strange, that headshot had probably been the worst for Gabriel to recover from, but the second time he went down was the one Jack never liked to talk about.

Why the hell did Gabriel always insist on saving his life?

“You know why.” He felt Whitefang practically summon himself, skittering around the room as he took shape. The wolf sat next to the sofa, pressing his head against Jack’s.

“Don’t need the sympathy,” is what Jack said, but he ran his hands over the wolf’s cheeks anyway. He buried his face in his fur, wishing it could somehow block out everything else.

But he couldn’t keep ignoring all of this guilt.

It was about time he kept his promise.

Suddenly Whitefang jerked out of his grip, looking to the side with his ears straight up. Jack could feel it now, the unease in his stomach, the fear rushing up his spine. Suddenly his instincts were firing on all cylinders. Something was wrong.

“Jesse,” Whitefang breathed out. “Something’s wrong with Jesse.”

Jack focused too hard on the what. The pain was unbearable for a moment, clawing it’s way through his skin and into his ribs before he stood up, gasping for air.

God damn, when did the connection get that fucking strong?

No, no time to think about it. He had to move.

Whitefang was already on it, his physical form vanishing as he burst into a run toward the rooms. Jack followed after, shutting down his panic so that he could focus on what he needed to do.

“Athena,” he called out to the AI.

“Yes Commander?”

He hated that she still called him that, but his attempts to correct her never worked. “Where’s McCree?”
“Agent McCree is in his room,” her voice went in and out as he kept running. “I’m detecting an elevated heart rate.”

“Get his door open, and wake up Angela. Tell her to meet me in the medbay.”

“Understood.”

Damn, damn, he really needed his visor for this. Being able to assess the damage without it would be nothing short of difficult, even with Whitefang’s help.

Before he even reached the door he could hear Jesse gasping for air. The scent of blood wasn’t a surprise, but why was it so strong? He could feel the temperature increase as he darted inside, desperately looking around for the phoenix for any indication of his condition, but he couldn’t see anything.

Damn.

He rushed over to the bed, hand already on Jesse’s forehead to keep him from moving around too much. The kid’s body temperature was way too high. His other hand found the injury, almost reeling back at the amount of blood he felt under his palm.

“Holy hell kid, what did you do?”

He didn’t have time to think about it. He tore the sheets off McCree’s bed. He shoved one end of it against the injury, ignoring Jesse’s shout as he ripped into the other end of it. When he had a sizable piece he forced the kid to arch his back so he could tie it in place. It didn’t need to be perfect, just enough so that he didn’t bleed out on the way to Angela.

“Whitefang, talk to me.” Jack growled as he pulled Jesse into his arms. The kid was shaking, muttering under his breath in a mixture of English and Spanish. The word ‘no’ sounded the same either way.

“I can’t see her.” Whitefang had vanished from Jack’s field of vision. “Jack I can’t see her. I can’t feel her. What if she-”

“Focus.” Jack took a deep breath to keep both of them from panicking.

“You’re right.” The wolf reappeared in a flurry of ice, moving out the door.

Jack didn’t want to run, concerned about making Jesse’s injury worse, but taking his time wasn’t an option either.

However he only got a few steps out when he heard the door across the hall open.

He identified Hana by her voice when she gasped. “Jesse?”

Jack didn’t stop moving, he couldn’t afford to, and predictably Hana followed after him.

“Jack? Jack wait. What’s going on?”

“I don’t have time to explain.” He picked up his pace. “And if I’m honest I’m not entirely sure
“What can I do?” She sounded determined, despite the shake in her voice.

Jack wasn’t sure she could do anything. As far as he knew, at least, she didn’t have a ton of medical experience.

“Go get Ana,” he said. “Angela might need some help.”

“I’ll get Lúcio too.” She ran on ahead.

Jack returned his attention to Jesse, tightening his grip, hating that he had to carry him like this a second time.

“It’s okay,” he found himself whispering again. “I’ve got you. You’re not going anywhere, alright?”

The kid wouldn’t stop shaking, another gasp for air left him coughing. Jack just pulled him closer and ran faster.

“I’ve got you. Just stay with me. Don’t... don’t you dare go anywhere Jesse McCree.”

Angela was waiting for him in the medbay, on high alert like always. Her unicorn rushed over before she did, its eyes studying the pair of them. Angela lead him into the nearest room, almost forgetting to actually show him where the bed was.

“What happened?” She asked.

“I don’t know, I just found him in that state.” Jack rubbed at the blood on his hands, feeling it dry against his skin. “My guess is a nightmare got out of hand.”

“There’s blood on his prosthetic fingers.” Angela mentioned before cursing in German.

Jack was going to ask what that meant, but didn’t get much of a chance. Ana and Lúcio both rushed into to the room, already asking what they could do. Angela barked out orders before urging Jack to leave and to wash his hands as well.

He almost didn’t, not until Ana insisted. Pester them about Jesse’s condition now wouldn’t do any good. They needed to concentrate.

He heard the door shut and glanced at Whitefang who sat next to him now. The wolf’s ears were down, gaze still fixed on the room. Jack tried to not let it worry him, his spirit had always been the type to fret. Even the smallest things could make him think of the worst outcomes. Still, the anxiety was mixing with Jack’s, making a cocktail that made him want to puke.

“He okay?”

Hana’s voice made him jump, and he couldn’t quite place where she was standing. “I don’t know. Don’t think so. All I can do is let them work.”

“You’re allowed to worry you know.”
“Worrying never helped anyone.” He began to walk in the general direction of his room but he could hear Hana walk past him, blocking his path.

“Maybe not, but nothing else you can do right now, right? Would it be so wrong to admit you care about him?”

Jack frowned and crossed his arms. “What are you talking about?”

“Come on, dad,” he heard the pop of chewing gum. “I train with you almost every day now. I’ve seen what you’re like sometimes. Not weird to think you were like that with him too once. Reinhardt even told me you were close.”

“We weren’t that close.”

“He told me you used to buy him all kinds of sweets that Gabriel tried to ban because it’d make him too hyper.”

“So?”

“He told me sometimes when Gabriel was gone on long missions in your earlier days you’d be left in charge of him. Heard you’d always cover for him when he’d pull his pranks. Heard you were the one who got him that gun.”

Jack gritted his teeth, trying to keep the image of Jesse’s expression when he opened that box from burning into his mind. “It was Gabriel’s suggestion.”

“But you got it for him.”

“What’s your damn point?” Jack growled. “Everyone on this base cares about him.”

“You keep acting like you don’t.” She cracked her gum again. “Just like everything else you keep shoving it under a lid. That’s what I hate about most of you older soldiers. You act like expressing yourselves just makes you weaker. You keep acting like I’m stupid for doing it.”

“I don’t think you’re stupid, Hana.” Jack almost ran a hand down his face until he smelled the blood. “And I’m too damn tired to have this argument right now.”

He expected her to argue back but instead she moved aside, no doubt glaring at him as he moved past. Whitefang wasn’t in front of him, causing Jack to miss the turn and bump into the wall instead. Only then did his wolf reappear, his mood clear by the drop of his head.

“She’s going to be fine.”

“You do not know that.” Whitefang glanced back at him. “I told you before what could happen. You cannot see her either.”

“I haven’t been able to see her this whole time. Her being quiet is nothing new.”

“Not like this,” Whitefang stopped and sat down.

“Can we talk about this when we get to my room? Please?”
The wolf continued on its way, not speaking another word. As soon as Jack opened the door to his room his spirit vanished from sight. He tried not to think much on it as he headed for the bathroom, turning on the hot water in the sink. He scrubbed at his hands, not even sure if he was getting all of the blood off.

“Don’t shut me out.” Jack said, already feeling the oncoming wall.

“What? Like you?” Whitefang’s face appeared on a sheet of ice. “Ms. Song was not wrong you know. How much longer are you going to keep yourself locked in here?”

“You know it’s not that simple.”

“Would you be okay if he died believing you still hated him?”

Jack’s grip on the sink slipped. The scent of blood was suddenly overwhelming and he shut the tap off.

“Jack?”

He hadn’t even heard Ana walk in. He turned to look at her, wondering what kind of expression she had on her face.

“Is he alright?” He tried to step closer to her but she pushed him back, placing him next to the sink.

“He’s alive. Angela spent a lot of energy making sure the injury stays shut this time.” She turned the sink back on, pulling Jack’s left hand under the water before scrubbing at his palm. “Lúcio’s keeping an eye on him for now.”

“Did he open it himself?”

“It seems that way, judging by the injury.” Ana sighed, rubbing up his arm with a towel. “That prosthetic has quite a lot of strength to it. I can’t say what he was dreaming about but it’s no surprise.”

She paused for a while as she switched arms. For a moment she didn’t even clean, her fingers tracing out the burn scars on his palms.

“He was trying to fly today.”

Jack swallowed. “What?”

“He was outside, trying to fly. Forming those wings takes quite a lot.”

“Fuck,” Jack ran his free hand over his face. “God damn it, fuck. Why the hell was he doing that?”

“I don’t know.” She scrubbed out some of the blood under his nails. “But I don’t think you’re the person who can judge him for reckless behavior.”

“Like hell I can’t Ana. I told him not to be sleeping by himself during all of this. I told him that a spirit’s energy isn’t limitless. Why does he feel the goddamn need to do all this stupid crap? Why
does he feel like he has to do all of this by himself?"

Ana squeezed his fingers as she ran the towel up his arm. “Why do you?”

Jack’s breath caught. Why? Because back then he didn’t have anyone else, really. There was barely anyone he could trust. He barely trusted himself.

“Damn it,” he cursed his own voice for shaking. “This is all my fault.”

“No it’s not.” Ana let go of his arm.

“Yes it is. Damn it. He keeps doing all this by himself because that’s what he had to do for five damn years. Five damn years I could have been looking for him so he didn’t have to.”

“Jack,” Ana gripped his arms. “You are not the only one who made that mistake, believe me. That’s why I wanted you to stay, so we could both work on correcting it.”

“Won’t get the chance if he doesn’t wake up.”

“He’s fine,” her touch on his face was gentle. “He’ll be okay. And when he wakes up we can both give him a thirty minute lecture and send him to his room.”

Jack laughed at that for a moment, but it did nothing to hold back his tears. Ana brushed them away before pulling him into a hug, her arms tight against his neck.

“Why did I let all of this happen?” He buried his face in her shoulder.

“Only you can answer that question I’m afraid.”

They stayed silent for a moment while Jack waited for his tears to come to a stop. The only sound was the still running sink. He risked pulling Ana closer, hoping she wouldn’t comment on it. He didn’t hug her often enough these days.

“You know,” she said. “I’m pretty sure he gets it from you.”

“Sorry but I’m pretty sure being a stubborn asshole is Gabe’s thing.”

“ Nope,” she pulled back and put a finger to his lips. “Both of you are stubborn, but as I recall you’re the one who kept running straight into trouble for some silly reason or another.”

“That’s not true.”

“No?” He could almost feel her smirking. “What about the time you snuck away from the medical team to go help Gabriel, only to pass out after the fight from blood loss.”

“He needed help.”

“Or the times you charged out as a distraction without anyone’s approval. Or the time you literally asked Reinhardt to chuck you into a group of omnics. Need I go on.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “Fine, but I mostly broke that habit when I was strike commander, which was before we even found Jesse.”
“Maybe, but I know for a fact he still looked up to you. I caught him reading battle logs before.”

Jack sputtered for a second, remembering when Jesse asked for them once when he was stuck in the HQ. He figured the kid was just doing some general research.

Ana ran her thumb underneath one of his eyes. “You need to get some more sleep.”

“I slept enough today.”

“Obviously not, go get some rest. I’ll even tell Reinhardt to meet you in the living room.”

“Ha, ha,” Jack moved her hand away.

“I’m serious. I know you’ll sleep in there anyway, especially with Jesse in this condition.”

Jack sighed, knowing she was right. It’s not like anyone would let him sleep outside the medbay.

“Fine, but only if he’s light sleeping. I don’t want to drag him out of a good rest.”

“Could just share his bed.”

“Oh my god, Ana.” He nudged her back, trying to leave the bathroom only to run into the corner of the door frame. She laughed, adjusting him to face the right direction. Only then did Whitefang appear, still stressed and annoyed, but a little calmer than before.

Jack only settled on the living room sofa for a few minutes before he heard Reinhardt’s footsteps. The man ruffled his hair, asking if he’d like to watch anything in particular. Jack was glad he didn’t sound too tired, then again the man would without a doubt put up a front to keep him from worrying.

Jack just let him pick the movie again, curling up in the blanket. The moment Reinhardt sat down Jack was leaning against him, exhaustion sweeping over him.

The dialogue of the movie faded out to the voices in his head.

“What? Is this mine? Is it really?”

“Sure is. Gabriel said you should have one of your own.”

“Yeah but this is... I’ve never seen a gun like this. This has to be custom made.”

“It is. I figured you could use something to match your... style.”

“Yeah, yeah, I see the spur, you’re not subtle.”

“Whatever kid, want to go test it out?”

“Hell yes. You’re on pops.”

“What did you just call me?”

“Loser has to buy ice cream.”
“Jesse, you don’t have any money.”

“That’s okay, ‘cause I’m not gonna lose.”
Something was... off.

McCree couldn’t place what it was. He couldn’t place where he was. It looked familiar, like the entrance to an office building.

“Bomb.” A young voice echoed in his ear. Suddenly he was running, kicking in the doors, barely in control of himself. There was someone in here he had to save. But who?

He ran through the first floor. To the staircase. He threw open the door only to see himself standing there.

What?

Suddenly the floor went out from underneath him.

He panicked for a moment, until the familiar warmth of sand wrapped around his limbs. He scrambled back up, gasping for air when he surfaced. He clawed at the ground to pull himself out. The sand felt rougher, somehow.

He finally opened his eyes and looked around. The desert seemed even drier than before. The usual rolling hills of sand were nothing but flat, cracked earth. The sun was low on the horizon, a strange sunset to say the least. It was more akin to a large fire in the distance under the night sky.

Still, this had to be his mindscape.

“Oh,” McCree dusted himself off as he stood, searching for the phoenix. She had to be here right? Didn’t she pull him out of... whatever that was?

He ran over to her tree, fingers trailing along the wood. He picked at the black flakes of bark, watching them fall to the ground before he saw her flame. It was small again, curling around the trunk of the tree.

“Oh,” McCree crouched down, reaching out but not touching her. “You okay?”

There was silence for a few moments. The flame flickered and darkened before it suddenly glowed a violent yellow.

“Jesse McCree Amari Reyes.”
His entire body froze at the voice that made the ground quake underneath him. The use of his full name had him standing up and taking a step back.

But the flame followed, licking its way up the tree and consuming it. The entire thing glowed as the fire snaked into the sky, spreading out its wings.

“C-Clem?”

“You absolute fool. What in heaven’s name are you thinking?” Her voice was still loud, vibrating his ribs.

“What do you mean?”

“What do I mean? What do I mean?” He flames shot forward until she was face to face with him. “In order to recover from my panic and keep it from harming you I take a moments rest only for you to use up my power and run into a tree.”

McCree flinched. That hadn’t been that big of a deal had it? He’d felt fine when he’d gone to his room that night. And then... then...

Suddenly he remembered. The nightmare. Jack had been there, why the hell had Jack been there? He was even younger than Jesse ever remembered seeing him, but he was there. They were fighting against omnis. Jack was charging in without thinking. And before he knew it Jesse ran to cover him.

Cover him from the spray of bullets headed in their direction.

The pain against his back had been imaginary, but the one he felt in his chest when he woke up was very real.

It was all hazy after that, but someone had been there. Someone had carried him out before it all went blank.

“Foolish child,” Clementine spat. “Stretching my power thin. Getting yourself another injury for me to deal with. Tearing it open in your sleep. I know for a fact Jack told you not to sleep alone.”

“Well he could have fucking explained why.” McCree snapped back. “You could have too. You could have at any time and instead I get nothing but deadass silence from you.”

“I’m trying to keep you alive.”

“Then what are you doing now?”

Clementine huffed, her fire retreating back to the tree. “You are in the medical ward. Since the others are keeping you in good condition I do not need to focus on it. Now I can use my powers to give you the lecture you so clearly need.”

“Hell no, I’ve had it with those.”

“If you listened the first time it would not be necessary.”

McCree spun around on his heel, trying to ignore her. Instead the whole space shifted and he
found the tree in front of him again.

“You will not be waking up Jesse, so I suggest you listen.”

Hell, where was the quicksand. He was starting to think he’d prefer another nightmare to dealing with this.

“Master McCree,” Clementine’s voice softened as the flames on the tree shrunk away and twisted through the air. They landed in front of him, shifting into her human shape as she pressed a hand on his cheek. “Please, listen.”

McCree swallowed but he didn’t move.

“I see your thoughts. I know your frustrations. But I cannot heal you faster if you continue to do this to yourself.”

“I know that,” he glanced to the side.

She gripped his chin and forced him to look back at her. “Then why do you not listen? Jack’s warnings may have been unclear, but he still gave them to you. There is nothing I can do to prevent these nightmares. Having someone nearby to make sure you don’t hurt yourself is important.” She released her grip. “A spirit’s energy is finite. In fact... it is possible for a spirit to use all of it up, in which case we would vanish completely.”

McCree sputtered and stepped back. “What? You... you telling me if this went sideways enough I’d never see you again?”

“It is unlikely, I know how to manage my power, but it is possible.”

His skin felt cold and he crossed his arms. He really wasn’t as immortal as he first thought.

“Please listen to Jack. I know he is... Jack, but he knows what he is talking about. He’s dealt with it before. Gabriel explained all of the details to him.”

McCree let out a defeated sigh. He knew she was right, he knew. He just wished he could get over whatever obstacle was sitting in his brain and do something about it.

“I’m sorry,” he eventually said, as if it would fix any of this. “Thanks for uh, working so hard to save my ass.”

Clementine chuckled, her hand returning to his cheek. “You do not need to thank me for that Master McCree. You should know, that if it did come down to it, I would gladly burn myself out to keep you alive.”

His hand snapped up to grab her wrist. “You don’t mean that.”

“I do.”

“Don’t do that,” he felt himself shaking, even more so when she touched his other cheek. “Not for my sorry ass.”

“I would have done it for any of my masters since my purpose has changed.” She floated upwards
and kissed his forehead. “And no matter how “sorry” your ass may be, I still love you. I would absolutely do anything in my power to protect you. Never doubt that.”

McCree already had tears blurring his vision. He tried to hold them back but one still managed to escape. Clementine gently brushed it away.

“I’ve seen your nightmares. I know what you dream about. Sometimes these situations get... tricky. Memories bleed together. I’m afraid the images of my brother haunt you more now because of my own memory of him.”

McCree blinked, desperate to clear his vision. “Wait, those are from you?”

“Somewhat, you carry your own fear of him as well. Those emotions combined with my exhaustion is... what caused my panic earlier. I am sorry for that.”

“Nah, nah darlin’. You told me it was risky to talk like that. But I was being selfish I...” McCree suddenly jerked her into a hug, certain the bird wouldn’t approve, but he didn’t care. “God, I missed you so much Clem. I can’t stand just sitting in my own thoughts by myself anymore. I hated the damn silence. If you burned yourself out I... Gods I don’t know what I’d do.”

“I am not going anywhere.” Clementine removed his hat to gently fix his hair. “Surely you know I am better than that.”

He laughed, putting her back down as he desperately got rid of any remaining tears. “Yeah, suppose that is true.”

She studied him for a few moments, losing her form as her flames moved over his shoulders.

“I know you wonder, why Master Reyes has appeared in some of your dreams.”

“Eh?”

“I find it strange that you do. That you wonder why he acts the way he does.”

“He doesn’t... show up in my dreams much.” Jesse mumbled.

She changed back into her original form, head already brushing against his cheek. “It seems I need to tell you this. Master Reyes loved you, much in the way I do, if not more so. The image you have of him is not just from your memories but mine as well. He never would have hesitated to throw himself into danger to keep you out of it.”

“But why?” McCree turned to look at her. “If you knew his mind so well then why? Why the hell would he waste his time with a kid out of Deadlock? Why would he give so much of a damn about someone like me?”

“There is no answer that would satisfy you.” She shook her head. “No words to make it clear to you. I suppose, at first, you were just a kid who he wanted to offer a second chance. That all changed the moment he saved you on that mission, listening to you cry because you believed everyone would just leave you for dead. Master Reyes... felt stuck for a while. The position he had taken was not easy. It often made him feel that his efforts as strike commander meant nothing. A struggle to save the world only to see how messy it still was. You end a war but what scars are left behind by it?”
She stepped around his shoulders, switching sides. “His desire to make a difference had not changed, but in his position that was limited. Many of his jobs were dirty, tasks that were meant to be used for the ‘greater good’ but never caused any visible changes. Ah, but you, you changed everything. He’d never felt anything like it, seeing your face light up under praise.”

McCree nudged her face away, ignoring the blush that was likely crawling up his cheeks. “So I was a pet project?”

“No,” her tone was harsh. “He cared too much for you. I could not explain why. There are no words as to the ‘why’. But it did not take long for him to become terrified at the thought of losing you. He would have done anything to keep you alive.”

McCree stared at her for a while, studying the colors on her feathers. “That’s why he gave me you.”

“Indeed.”

He didn’t know what to say to that. A part of him always knew that, but the other part kept on denying that anyone could care about him that much. That anyone would give up that much for his sake.

“He wanted you to live. In fact he often wished for you to find something better. Escape from Blackwatch, make a different living. He often joked about the image of you inheriting Jack’s farm.”

“What?” McCree sat down on the ground. “What the hell did Jack say?”

“He didn’t seem too opposed to it, but he didn’t actually own the land at the time.”

McCree hummed and tried to picture himself there. Strange, as much as he daydreamed about it when he was little he couldn’t seem to do it anymore. It didn’t help that the whole thing seemed so empty, with him being the only one there.

Just wouldn’t be right without everyone else around.

McCree fell back to lie on the ground. Clementine hopped onto his chest as he grabbed his hat and put it over his face.

“Tell me some more secrets.”

“Hm?”

“About Gabe, I know you know them all. We still got time to kill right?”

“That is true I suppose. Very well, did you ever hear about the time he had to keep a drunk Jack from trying to car jump an entire bus?”

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When McCree finally woke up everything was hazy for a while. He was numbly aware of the IV in his arm, the pain in his side, and the wrappings that were so tight around his chest he could barely move.
When he finally opened his eyes, he glanced around. The lights were off, no telling what time it was, but there was still enough to see the person leaning against the wall.

Jack Morrison stood there, eyes distant as they watched the floor. His arms were crossed, brow creasing every now and then. No telling what he was thinking about.

When McCree stirred, Jack’s gaze flicked over to him. He stood up straight, but didn’t move any closer to the bed.

“You finally return.” There was hardly any amusement in his voice.

“I think,” He groaned as he fell back against the bed. “Damn, did I really fuck it up that bad?”

“I’d tell you but I couldn’t see the damn thing. You’d have to ask Angela.”

It took a few moments for McCree to realize what that meant.

“You found me.”

Jack just nodded.

McCree turned his head away. “Thanks.”

“Don’t thank me yet,” Jack stepped over to the bed. “I thought I told you not to sleep by yourself.”

“As if you explained any of it.” McCree snapped his head back around. “Maybe instead of being so fucking cryptic about everything you could just explain it in the first place.”

“Fine,” Jack’s expression didn’t change. “But that doesn’t give you much excuse for ignoring me.”

McCree growled and pushed his head against the pillow. “For fucks sake, stop talking to me like I’m stupid.”

“I don’t think you’re stupid,” the soldier raised his voice. “I just know you’re the kind of person who’s going to keep trying to do everything by himself over and over again because you feel like you have to.”

“And what makes you so sure of that?”

“Cause I do the same fucking shit.” Jack sneered as he leaned closer. “And I don’t think I need to tell you how much of a terrible role model I am.”

McCree would have taken the chance to crack a joke if the comment didn’t take him so off guard.

“So,” Jack straightened up. “Here’s the deal. When Angela actually lets you out again you can either find someone to bunk with, or, if you try and go to sleep without someone, I’m sending Reinhardt into your room.”

McCree inhaled too fast, coughing on his own spit for a few moments. “What? You’re joshin’ me.”
“Nope. He already agreed to it. And it wouldn’t matter anyway, you’re missing bedsheets as of now.”

He groaned and let his head fall back again. The burning in his throat only added to the list of unpleasant sensations running through his system.

“Those are your options,” a cold hand ran over his forehead and ruffled his hair. “Your decision.”

“You’re such a jackass.”

“Trust me, I’ve heard.”

McCree pouted but couldn’t find anymore energy to argue, especially when gentle fingers were pushing his bangs out of his face.

“Get some more sleep kid. I’ve got an eye on you.”

“No you don’t, you’re fucking blind.”

He wondered if that was going too far but Jack burst out laughing, nudging McCree’s head to the side as he pulled his hand back.

“Get some sleep.”

McCree blew hair away from his face as he smiled and shut his eyes.

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It took a whole day to convince Angela to let him go. Thanks to the constant systems at work and McCree actually sitting long enough to let them work he at least didn’t need stitches on his injury anymore. He got the chance to study it when she replaced his bandages with something lighter. He found himself cringing at the bruises surrounding it, the lines of fingers unmistakable.

Maybe he should take his prosthetic off when he slept for a while.

“You’re not leaving this base without supervision.” She said. “If you think I won’t have Torb build a drone to follow you around all day you’re sorely mistaken.”

McCree finally surrendered with a “yes ma’am,” knowing she was serious, not blaming her for the attitude. Not only had he seriously fucked up, but she’d barely gotten any rest trying to get him to this point.

He made a mental note to get her some flowers, and maybe a bottle of something.

Plenty of people had swung by his room during the afternoon, mostly checking in. Ana’s annoyance didn’t last long, at least, unlike Hanzo. His boyfriend had spent most of his visit glaring, arms crossed, although he ended it with a kiss to his temple and a whisper.

“Come find me when you get out.”

McCree almost hadn’t. Out of habit he’d headed to his own room only to stop himself,
remembering his deal with Jack. He couldn’t keep risking this. Even if Hanzo wasn’t up for the idea, well, there were a number of people who would probably be fine with it.

He hesitated before knocking, hoping the archer might be somewhere else so they didn’t even need to have this conversation. There was no real explanation for his nerves, but the only other person he’d ever shared a bed with had been Genji.

Hanzo did open the door, already in his robe with his hair down. McCree couldn’t keep himself from glancing at it, noting how smooth it was.

“I almost did not expect her to let you out of there until tomorrow.” Hanzo crossed his arms.

McCree laughed and rubbed his neck. “Well, it took another two lectures to allow it. And I made a deal to uh... um.”

“Share a room? Jack already told me.”

His mouth hung open as he searched for the words. “Did he? Ah, well I guess that’s what you wanted to see me for.” He laughed again. “But you know, you don’t have to do anything like that if it makes you uncomfortable.”

“It does not,” Hanzo frowned. “We have done it once before when you helped me sleep.”

Right, of course. It wouldn’t be that weird, right? And they were dating after all.

McCree couldn’t seem to get his legs to move.

Hanzo glanced over him before holding out a hand. McCree took it, forcing his stiff muscles to move as his boyfriend pulled him into the room. It was so much cleaner than his was, although he wondered if part of that was the sparse amount of decorations. His dresser was at least lined with flower crowns, although most of them had dried out by now.

“You may take the bed.” Hanzo let go.

“Huh? What? Where the hell are you sleeping then?”

“I can easily make a set up on the floor.” The archer picked up one of the pillows.

“Oh hell no. I ain’t stealing your bed darlin’. I can sleep on the floor just fine.”

“You are recovering. You are not sleeping on the floor.”

“I’ve slept on worse.”

“You are taking the bed, McCree.”

“Don’t use that tone with me.” He wandered over and snatched the other pillow off the bed. “I’ll sleep wherever I damn well please.”

“Get on the bed.”

In another situation McCree might have liked to hear those words, but not now. He began to walk
away, clutching the pillow to his chest.

Suddenly something soft hit him in the head. He heard the pillow slump onto the floor before he glanced down at it. Then he looked back up at Hanzo whose hair had gone messy again, his cheeks turning red.

McCree grinned, clicking his teeth as he fluffed the pillow. “Is that a challenge, darlin’?”

“Do not be so immatu-”

He hurled his pillow across the room, nailing Hanzo on the face.

The archer looked mortified for a moment before his glare returned, sharp as ever.

“Loser takes the bed.” McCree smiled, picking up the other pillow.

“You do not need to be straining yourself right now.”

“As if it’s going to take effort to beat you in a pillow fight.”

Hanzo’s frown was the only warning he had. The archer snatched up the pillow and leapt onto the bed before jumping into the air. McCree screamed, only able to put up a shield as Hanzo’s weight shoved him onto the floor. He gasped when his back hit the ground, his ribs protesting under the pressure.

“God damn darlin’, you want me to take it easy and then you try to crush me.”

“You lose,” Hanzo smiled as he shoved his pillow against McCree’s face. “Now take the bed.”

McCree knew he could counter attack before Hanzo got away, but taking a deep breath made him pause. It smelled like Hanzo, like his hair and whatever herbal shampoo he liked using. His last shreds of self control were what kept him from clutching it to his face as he sat up.

Yeah, he guessed he could take the bed.

“You could uh, take it too, if you want.” He said as he sat up, letting the pillows fall onto his lap.

Hanzo didn’t seem to disagree, a light tilt of his head. “Would you be comfortable with that?”

He honestly didn’t know. Situations like these always seemed to put McCree’s nerves into overdrive. The only reason Genji got away with it is because they spent far too many evenings hiding in each others rooms only to pass out on the bed. Eventually he got used to it. Now his mind kept going over a list of all the things that could go wrong. The number one was these nightmares. If they were bad enough that he tried to tear his own chest open, well, he didn’t want to think about what might happen.

“Willing to give it a shot.” He pulled the pillows up with him, tossing them back onto the bed. “Heard you snore though.”

Hanzo rolled his eyes. “Only when I sleep deeply, which has not occurred in a while.”

Well if that wasn’t depressing to hear, but McCree refrained from commenting on it. He knew
Hanzo had his reasons for being such a light sleeper. It was much the same for him when he was out and traveling.

McCree took off his serape, glad he was smart enough to leave his hat in his room, but not entirely sure where to put it. Hanzo offered a hand, carefully folding the material and putting it on the dresser next to all the flowers.

McCree sat down on the bed, his hand resting against his prosthetic. He knew he should take it off while he slept, avoid the risk of causing any damage, but as his fingers hovered next to the latch he froze.

It shouldn’t make a difference, he told himself, it’s not like you can feel it anyway. What is it going to matter if it’s attached or not?

“Jesse?”

If Hanzo’s voice didn’t break him out of his trance his touch certainly did. He felt the archer’s hands on his shoulders, moving down to his upper arms as he leaned against his back. McCree noted he had taken his robe off, and was in fact not wearing a shirt. It was a nice distraction, but not one he wanted to focus on.

“What’s wrong?”

McCree was so tempted to laugh it off, ignore it, try to sleep anyway.

“You do not need to do this by yourself.”

“I uh, figured I should take this off, since it’s a little risky and all with these nightmares. Just...”

He didn’t really know what to say.

Hanzo’s hand slid down further, resting in the palm of his prosthetic. McCree watched, able to imagine what it felt like while not actually feeling anything.

“It’s dumb,” He mumbled. “Hate the damn thing, can’t feel it, but I can barely bring myself to get rid of it. Rather see this hunk of metal than nothing at all.”

“It is still a part of you.”

“Yeah, I suppose.”

“You may leave it on if you prefer.”

“Dunno if it’s worth the risk.”

Hanzo kissed him on the shoulder before pulling away. “It is your decision.”

It didn’t do much to help him decide, but feeling Hanzo lie down on the bed somehow had the tension leaving his shoulders. He took a deep breath, pulling the latch and cringing as his nerves disconnected. He never liked holding his arm when it wasn’t connected to his body, but glancing around he wasn’t sure where to put it.
“Uh, darlin’?” He glanced back at Hanzo who had his back to him.

“How?”

He opened his mouth to ask, it was a simple enough question, then he just broke into a grin as he held the arm next to Hanzo’s face.

“Need a hand?”

His boyfriend turned his head, staring at the arm before glancing over at McCree. Then he snorted before bursting into laughter. He sat back up, taking the prosthetic in his grip and studying it.

“How often have you used that awful joke?”

“Not enough to be honest.”

Hanzo’s laughter quieted down as he put the prosthetic on top of McCree’s serape. The cowboy flopped back onto the bed, leaving the covers off as he stared at the ceiling. Hanzo moved closer to him, hand on his chest as he rested his head on his shoulder.

He must have felt McCree tense up. “Is this okay?”

“Yeah, ‘s fine. Just wish I could touch your hair.” He frowned down at his left arm.

Hanzo reached over him, tugging on his right arm and convincing him to roll over. Cool hands slid past his sides, resting on his back. McCree’s chin rested against Hanzo’s forehead, the scent of shampoo even stronger. He resisted the urge to inhale too deeply, reaching up to slide his fingers through Hanzo’s hair.

There wasn’t much reason to be whispering but he did it anyway. “I ever tell you how lovely your hair is darlin’?”

His boyfriend hummed. “Get some rest, Jesse. We will watch over you.”

“We?”

He saw the tattoos glow as the dragons emerged, sliding up his arm and resting on McCree’s shoulder.

Of course, why didn’t he guess that.

He tried not to laugh when one of them nibbled at his beard and nuzzled their head under his hair. Cool scales and soft static made his nerves dance before they all settled down.

He swore he could hear Hanzo humming his name as he drifted to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

SO I have some kind of bad news, little bit of good news.
Bad news is this fic is going to be on a sort-of hiatus. May is gonna be hectic considering I need to do some writing for my writing group's literary journal, and I also decided to join a zine so that'll be fun. There's also some outlines I need to finish and some smaller projects I want to get out of the way.

The good news is, with this part done we're more than halfway through. Part 13 is sort of a fluffy segue type bit, with a little build up, before we get into the INTENSE STUFF

Because of the nature of it I might just update part 13 as sections get finished, but don't expect them too frequently as I work on other things.

SORRY, thanks for your patience as always. I never rly planned on this fic being so long but I started it and I want to finish it.

As always you're welcome to hit me up on tumblr anytime, I love hearing from you guys (and check there anyway I might upload some drabbles from this AU based on some reader requests)
Training 13-1

Chapter Notes

AHAAA I LIVE AHAHAHA

Christ guys I am so sorry. Life has refused to stop kicking me in the shin, and on top of that I just? Struggled so hard with this part for some reason

BUT IT'S DONE NOW IT'S DONE

I pray the rest won't take nearly this long. Thanks for your patience guys. I mentioned before but this part is pretty lightweight, some soft stuff before we start heading on the final stretch.

Also check below for some additional updates.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Got you again ‘manita.” McCree grinned as he reloaded the gun with the rubber bullets. Fareeha stood at the end of the training room, only covered in light training armor. By now she had a number of bruises on her arms and shoulders. One was on her forehead.

“Sure we shouldn’t break?” He asked. “Angela is going to kill me for all the bruises.”

Fareeha just smirked and steeled herself. “She’s given me worse.”

McCree burst out laughing. “Dang, gentle doc is frisky behind closed doors, huh?”

“I’m not telling you that. Now let’s go again.”

The pair of them were working to sharpen Fareeha’s future vision. She wanted to be able to predict one attack after another. So far she was good enough to dodge two bullets, but always got caught by the third.

“One more,” McCree said. “Then a break. We can try again tomorrow.”

“Fine.”

McCree was lucky he even got clearance to do this. It took a week of him forcing himself to take it easy. Hanzo practically followed him like a shadow, especially if he went outside. McCree occasionally complained about it, but the evenings were a blessing.

Hanzo had an easy time snapping him out of nightmares with a bit of static. McCree never talked about them. Hanzo never asked.

All the downtime finally allowed Clementine to focus on his injury. Angela took the stitches out a
few days ago, but begged him to keep resting.

McCree assumed he was only allowed to do this because Fareeha did some sweet talking.

“Come on,” Fareeha said. “One more time.”

McCree smiled and aimed the training pistol.

Bang! Fareeha weaved left.

Bang! She jumped to the right.

Bang! The rubber bullet nailed her in the leg.

“Damn it,” she hissed. “I saw it, but I couldn’t move.”

“Might need to work it up to seeing five steps ahead in order to dodge bullets.”

“Yeah,” she sighed and took off her padding. “But I can’t see farther if I don’t practice.”

“Still got headaches?”

“Mostly from this bird yapping in my ear.”

McCree laughed. Normally he’d relate if he hadn’t missed Clementine’s voice for so long. He unloaded the pistol. “Take a break. Might see if we can set up simulations for you to oversee.”

“Meaning?”

“You give out orders. If you were able to predict trouble for everyone else it’d be pretty handy.”

“Mom said it was tricky.” Fareeha rolled her lip between her teeth. “There were a lot of times she never saw even the most drastic events coming. Sometimes you get visions. Sometimes you don’t.”

McCree considered that but shrugged. “That was your mom, not you. I bet you could figure it out. And, hell, can’t believe I’m saying this, but Jack might be able to help.”

“Oh boy, I look forward to that conversation.” Fareeha cringed. “We barely got along when I was younger.”

“You just hated that he wouldn’t let you run around on your own.”

Fareeha snorted and carried her stuff toward the door. “I’ll think about it.”

McCree left it at that as he put the gun back in the weapon vault. Fareeha had only just gotten on regular speaking terms with her mother. Jack was going to take some time, especially with his attitude.

McCree paused as he picked Peacekeeper up. Jack had been acting weird since the whole revival business. Like he suddenly wanted to fix everything.

He knew McCree wouldn’t die. Why did he suddenly care so much?
“I’ve never seen a gun like this. This has to be custom made.”

McCree shook his head and put his gun away before leaving.

He didn’t quite make it out of the training room. Lúcio was on the other side of the door, perking up when they made eye contact.

“Hey Eastwood, just who I was looking for.”

“Well, they do say I’m a wanted man.”

The musician laughed.

“What’s going on?”

“I’m just here to meet Morrison for training. But, I was told you were the guy to ask about setting up a simulation match.”

“Pardon?”

“Me and Genji verses Vaswani and Hanzo.”

“You’re really doing that, huh? But why not ask Ana?”

“Oh, I did. She told me to ask you.”

McCree frowned. That was a bit odd. Sure he’d set up a bunch back in his later years in Blackwatch, but he was hardly qualified.

“Fine, I’ll give it a shot. When do you need it by?”

“Tomorrow? We’ve got that Vishkar mission in a few days.”

Right, McCree almost forgot.

“I’m on it then. See you around, Lú. And good luck with Jack.”

“Hah, I’ll be fine. One of us will get him eventually.”

McCree hoped he was around to see that.

He check the time as he headed upstairs. His training with Angela wasn’t for a few more hours. He had time to figure out a simulation. Before that, however, he needed to get familiar with the program again.

McCree tapped on Winston’s open door, not seeing the scientist in his lab. A few moments later he swung down, peanut butter in hand.

“Jesse,” Winston spoke through the cap in his mouth before spitting it out. “What’s up?”

“Sorry, didn’t mean to interrupt your lunch.”
Winston snorted. “It’s not one, according to Athena.”

“Nonsense, PB and bananas is always a good meal.”

Athena chimed in. “I know both of you are aware that you are wrong.”

The pair of them chuckled.

“Got any you’re willing to share?”

“I always keep plenty.” Winston headed back up.

McCree sat and waited in front of the console. A map of the Vishkar office they planned to hit was displayed on the center screen. He glanced to the right, over the list of files he and Genji managed to extract. Most of them were past mission reports, a few on weapon inventory. It at least gave them an idea of what Talon had been doing in England.

He ignored the urge to dig through them.

“Here,” Winston landed next to him. He held out a pair of bananas and a jar of peanut butter.

“Aw, my own jar? Ain’t I special.”

“Well, I didn’t think you’d want to share with me.”

“Had to cook food in a rusted pan before. I’d live.” Jesse popped the lid off the jar.

“So, what did you need?”

“The new simulation program. Lú wants me to set one up, but I haven’t work with this one before.”

“You’ve made training simulations?” Winston asked through a mouthful of banana.

“Sure, Gabe used to let me mess around at first. We had one with little people that you could run through and see how many men and what weapons would be best suited for each situation.” McCree laughed. With a lack of spoon he took off his glove and dug into the peanut butter with his finger. “Had a lot of fun setting up one team with impossible odds. Sometimes they did pretty well. Eventually I built some of my own for our team to use. I think a couple even got sent over to HQ. Least that’s what Gabe told me.”

The scientist was quiet for a moment, watching the ceiling.

“I can show you how it works in here.” Winston finished off the banana. “But it’s better to plan in the control center, next to the training room. That way you can see how it affects it directly.”

“Fair enough.”

Winston tapped at the keyboard to bring the program up. It showed the training room, gridded out. A lot of the floor could rise up into platforms or obstacles. Other platforms could come out of the walls, as well as a number of weapons to fire rubber bullets. There were a number of pre-loaded
“maps” that also brought up holograms to make it all feel more real.

“Manipulating the room is fairly simple.” Winston put his fingers on a pair of blocks to raise them up. “The buttons on the side here allow you to activate weapons and training bots, as well as their timing and levels. More detailed settings are up here, such as number of agents, time limit, if you want to use a point system, that sort of thing.”

“Seems easy enough to navigate.” McCree pulled the screen over and fiddled with a couple of platforms. He hid his smile behind the banana in his hand as he kept pulling more and more up.

“Jesse.” Winston huffed.

“What?”

“Stop using my program to draw penises.”

The cowboy kept snickering but put everything back into place. “Sorry boss.”

“I still don’t like that one.”

McCree hummed as he looked at the list of training modes. “Chief?”

The scientist actually paused. “Maybe.”

“Hah, finally found something.”

“I said maybe. Don’t start spreading that around.”

McCree dropped the screen as he got out his communicator and pretended to type. “Hey everyone, Winston said it was okay to-” the sentence cut off when his hat was shoved over his face.

“Knock it off.”

He just laughed, putting it back into place as he put his communicator away. He went back to the program, continuing to browse the list. He needed something to work with a two versus two. Extra weapons probably wouldn’t be needed, but considering their different fighting strategies making an even playing field would be tricky.

“So, what is this for, exactly?” Winston was hovering next to his shoulder.

“Seems like the challenge Genji issued is happening. Him and Lúcio versus Hanzo and Satya. Should be entertaining at least.”

“He asked you to set this up?”

“Apparently Ana recommended me.”

Winston hummed, focusing back on his food.

“Figure it should be a contest of some kind. I see some varieties of capture the flag in here. Arena should give Hanzo some high spots but also have enough area for Lúcio to navigate.”
“You know quite a lot about their abilities.”

“Well it’s my business to know, ain’t it? Working with them and all.” McCree tapped on a couple of the preset maps, trying to get a rough idea of what he was looking for.

“I suppose it explains why you often come up with those attack plans.”

“Just throwing in my two cents, Chief, don’t have to take it.”

Another hum. McCree was suddenly suspicious that Winston was trying to imply something, but the scientist never explained. In the end, McCree let it go.

“Winston,” Athena spoke up. “Torbjörn would like to show you a few things down in the workshop.”

“On my way,” Winston finished off the last banana. “You good, Jesse?”

“Yeah I’ll be fine. I’ll message you if I can’t figure something out.”

The scientist seemed satisfied with that and left. McCree almost felt strange sitting in this lab all by himself. He tried to ignore it, focusing instead on how many platforms he needed.

“Athena? Do you have some videos of the last few simulations Satya did?”

“I do, would you like to see them?”

“Yeah, could help me out. Also let me know when it’s close to four. I have to go meet Angie.”

“Very well.”

McCree didn’t dare be late to see her. She never took that sort of thing well. Her punctuality was almost terrifying at times. Along with healing the pair of them had been working out ways to use McCree’s ashes as items the rest of the team could carry around in case of emergencies. The struggle was finding the right materials and the right containers.

Athena brought the videos up and McCree cracked his knuckles before scrolling through them.

Time to get to work.

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Hanzo gasped for air when his back hit the ground. He stared up at the cloudy sky, praying for his vision to focus.

Zarya leaned over him, tilting her head. “Are you alright my friend?”

“Fine,” he choked out as he sat up. “Perhaps we should have brought a sparring mat out here.”

“You must quit hesitating.” She got into another ready stance. “That was the entire purpose of this exercise.”

While Hanzo knew that was true he wasn’t entirely sure he could take her down. The suit she had
on right now had been specially designed to absorb his electric attacks. Not only that, it allowed Mei to calculate how much energy he was putting out as well. She stood nearby, tablet in hand, going over the readings. Hanzo needed to get the hang of using his electricity during combat, learning to control it. How to output lethal and nonlethal doses.

“Your output is still pretty low.” Mei frowned. “Sure you can’t give it some more... spark?”

Zarya laughed at the pun. Hanzo rolled his eyes, but smiled.

Initially, he had just been striking Zarya while she blocked his punches. When that wasn’t yielding enough energy she offered to make it into a real fight. Perhaps the intensity would force Hanzo to put as much as he could into his attacks.

But he kept hesitating, which resulted in Zarya throwing him onto the ground for the fifth time in a row.

His ribs hurt.

“Do you need to rest?” Zarya’s voice sounded calm but her smirk said something else entirely.

“One more,” he took a deep breath. “Then we can rest.”

“Stop hesitating,” she said. “I am certain this suit can take almost anything you can produce.”

“Zarya, shh.” Mei hid her face behind the tablet.

Hanzo agreed, but it seemed doing so was trickier than he thought. He’d rather not rely on anger to summon his power. That created far too many risks.

“Feel the current,” Tsuki spoke up.

“There is energy all around you,” Umi followed. “Find it. Draw it in. Let it out.”

“Let us guide you.”

He could feel the pair of them now, moving in circles around his chest. He followed the sensation, let it build.

Sparks built up on his palms as he darted forward. The dragons hadn’t moved. He couldn’t strike hard yet, not yet.

He feinted a strike. Zarya reached out to block. Instead he grabbed her wrist, using it as leverage as he leapt off the ground. He jumped clean over her head, already knowing trying to drag her down would be useless. Instead he landed, sweeping a leg to knock her off her feet. The strike worked, but not for long. Her hands caught her fall and she pushed herself back up. Hanzo had to jump back to avoid the knee aimed at his face. It was a miracle he didn’t have a broken nose by now.

His heart pounded in his chest. The dragons moved faster.

Zarya charged this time. Blocking her attacks would be useless, as Hanzo already discovered. Thankfully her punches followed a pattern. Left, right, right, uppercut. He imagined she wasn’t putting much thought in where to aim her attacks during training.
Sweat ran over his forehead. Tsuki and Umi rushed from his chest to his left arm.

He didn’t need instructions for that. He grabbed Zarya’s next punch before striking out towards her chest. The sparks flashed before they made contact. The nodes and channels on the suit lit up as the electricity shot out into the air. He could see the sparks travel over the dark material as she stumbled back.

“A—are you alright?” He was unnerved by the shock on her face.

Then it broke into a grin. “Finally, a real attack!”

“That was so much better, Hanzo.” Mei jumped. “An attack like that could probably kill three people at once, assuming they’re unguarded.”

He tried to push aside the unpleasantries of that thought. The situation could arise where he’d need that sort of power.

“Again.” Zarya narrowed her eyes.

“No, we should rest. At least for a bit. I cannot imagine how many bruises I have on my back.”

“Need some ice?” Mei offered.

“No thank you.”

“I believe he would prefer something warmer.” Zarya snickered.

Hanzo pretended he didn’t hear that, finding a nearby rock to sit down on. This combat training was helping, at least. With his dragons speaking to him more he was slowly beginning to realize how much he could do with these abilities.

But it still didn’t feel like enough. He thought about the numerous things that Jesse could do. Even Lúcio and Bastion had been coming up with all kinds of new ideas, and their spirits couldn’t be more than a few years old.

“Hanzo?”

His gaze shot up to Mei who was standing next to him.

“My apologies, were you speaking to me?”

“I was asking if there was anything else you’d like to try testing. I can design more equipment if need be.”

He sighed, running fingers over his scalp to try and clear out some of the lingering static. No doubt his hair would be an absolute mess later. “To be honest, I’ve been trying to think of other ways to use this.”

“Have you tried affecting the weather?”

He blinked before raising an eyebrow. “What?”
“Well,” she fiddled with her tablet again as Zarya came to look over her shoulder. “It’s much cloudier out here than when we started. I suppose being next to the ocean it wasn’t that strange, but I certainly didn’t see this many on the radar an hour ago.”

Mei always checked the weather frequently when the team was outside. He assumed it was a force of habit, or something related to her work.

“Have you ever tried it before?”

“No,” Hanzo frowned. “I would not even know where to begin. I was not aware that was something spirits could do.”

Mei shrugged. “Bastion can summon entire trees. Your dragons are pretty powerful.”

He considered it for a few moments, recalling stories of his ancestors causing typhoons and earthquakes. Such a thing felt more like tales rather than reality.

Is this something his dragons could do?

“With enough practice,” Tsuki said.

“It requires patience,” Umi added.

“It is worth trying,” he said. “May I ask for your assistance on this?”

“Of course,” Mei grinned. “We’ll figure it out somehow, I’m sure.”

“Electricity is not all offensive,” Zarya suddenly spoke up. “Correct me if I am wrong, but people sometimes use it for medical purposes, yes?”

Mei seemed to think about it for a moment. “Well, yes, sometimes you can use it to stimulate and relax muscles. Also a jump start if someone... flatlines.” She cringed.

“Perhaps,” Zarya straightened up and crossed her arms. “It could also be used for our... omnic allies.” She made a face as if the word was bitter on her tongue. Then she cleared her throat. “Our normal methods of healing would be useless on them. Torbjörn might be able tell you more.”

Hanzo thought back to when he helped Bastion recover from that EMP. While he didn’t know much about mechanics he could certainly fix any sort of short circuit in a flash. Perhaps it wouldn’t hurt to learn how their systems worked as well. The more people on the team who knew how to make quick repairs the better.

“It’s a start.” Mei grinned. “So, who’s ready for a few more rounds?”

“You know I always am.” Zarya gave her a pinch and the scientist squeaked. She swatted back. Zarya only laughed.

Hanzo smiled, then frowned at the idea of doing any more of this. His back only ached more after sitting down.

But if he kept going it would offer the perfect excuse to knock on Jesse’s door. After a week of
sharing the same bed he found himself restless on his own once more. No doubt the cowboy would be willing to help. For a moment he thought about those warm hands trailing over his shoulders, running down his spine.

“Hanzo?”

He jumped again, trying to cover his surprise by standing up. “Yes, my apologies. It would be good to see if I can replicate what I did before.”

“If you can dodge long enough.” Zarya taunted as she went back into position.

Hanzo studied her muscles, visible under the material of the suit.

Once again he debated if this was a good idea.

Chapter End Notes

SO If some of you haven't already noticed, this is now part of a series. I decided to upload some side stories I've written for this AU so you have easier access. They're all Reaper76 atm but there might be others in the future.

Additionally I've gotten a Ko-fi recently, which I sadly cannot link on AO3 due to their terms of service but you can find a link on my tumblr (Ceata88) if you'd like to throw some additional support my way.

ALSO also, I mentioned last time but I'm in a McHanzo zine. We've been hard at work and have recently started posting previews which you can find over on the tumblr page (toashesfanzine.tumblr.com) It's gonna be fantastic and I hope you guys give it a look.
“And it seems Lúcio got the flag,” McCree snickered into the microphone in his hand. He sat comfortably in the control center for the training room, watching the events unfold from multiple cameras. He jokingly asked Athena if he could narrate all this. She allowed it. He was also fairly certain she was streaming it into the living room.

Too bad the only reactions McCree could get were Ana’s.

“You’re lucky they can’t hear you.” She shook her head. “Or you’d be giving them a disadvantage.”

McCree shrugged. “He’s slowly making his way back while his teammate, Genji, is still keeping Hanzo distracted.”

The cyborg ninja darted from one platform to another. Hanzo kept him at bay with arrows, occasionally darting after him.

McCree had set the arena with plenty of platforms and corners. The paths were clear enough for Lúcio to move around, but the passageways allowed for the others to hide.

He’d put Hanzo’s flag in a high spot while Genji’s was in a low one. It made it more challenging for the opposite team to reach it.

Strangely enough, McCree hadn’t seen Satya much the entire match.

“On my way back Genji,” Lúcio was chiming into their comms. Hanzo and Satya wouldn’t be able to hear him. “Looks like this game is-"

There was a high pitched screech loud enough that McCree didn’t need the microphones to hear it. He watched in amazement as Lúcio appeared over the top of the platforms for a brief moment before he dropped back down.

“Lúcio?” Genji froze for a moment. “Are you alright?”

“Fine just uh, a little stuck.”

Satya’s laughter came over the speakers. “I have pinned down one annoying fly.”

McCree changed the cameras around until he could get a view of Lúcio. The musician was now stuck upside down, a number of golden threads surrounding him. He was glaring at the floor where
the flag now lay. Satya casually stepped over to it before she picked it up and dusted it off.

McCree whistled. “Seems our lovely light lady snatched up the frog. Is Genji going to be able to turn this back around?”

As if he was responding, Genji leapt down from the platform. Hanzo tried to follow him with an arrow but the ninja must have avoided it.

“Satya, Genji is headed your way.”

“Understood.” She quit taunting Lúcio and ran back down the path, flag still in hand.

Lúcio struggled in vain against the webbing. It wasn’t until Genji showed up that he got free. The ninja cut through the threads in a flash, making sure to stand below to catch the musician before he hit the ground.

“Aw, what a romantic rescue.” McCree snickered.

He couldn’t hear what they were saying to each other, but Genji nodded before putting the musician down. They both ran in the same direction.

Hanzo had been following Genji but now moved his attention towards their base. Likely trying to keep an eye on Satya.

“She’s picked up a lot with those abilities.” Ana commented, leaning against the chair. “She’s been training almost non-stop.”

McCree wasn’t unaware. Almost every day he saw her either down here or headed in that direction. He wasn’t sure what she was trying to gain or prove, but at this point she had to be close.

Satya slipped into the enemy base with ease, snatching up the flag. It was a shame McCree had to forbid the use of her teleporter, otherwise she’d have this in the bag.

As it was she slipped back out, keeping her eyes on the pathways.

Then something must have caught her attention. She paused and turned, slowing her pace toward the corner.

“Hanzo?” She drew close. “What are you doing over here?”

“What are you talking about?” He replied.

She realized the mistake too late. Lúcio darted around the corner and blasted her backwards with the amplifier. She lost her grip on both of the flags, rolling across the ground.

Genji came around next, making a dash toward the flags. Satya was back up in seconds, her arm glowed before she fired out a shield. It was wide enough to take up the whole hallway.

McCree switched camera’s just to see the look on Lúcio’s face. The pair of them flew backwards until the shield forced them into the wall.

Satya snatched up the flags again.
“Seems the surprise attack wasn’t enough.” McCree said. “But Genji is quick to recover. He’s aiming for it.”

An arrow struck the ground.

“Only to be cut off by Hanzo. Tough luck.”

Satya snapped out her threads toward the top of the platform. They pulled her off the ground and she dashed up the rest of the wall before she stood on the roof. McCree whistled again.

“Damn, when’d she learn that trick?”

“I believe she got Hanzo’s assistance with that trick.”

Figured, but she wasn’t the only one who could climb fast. Genji was right behind her again. Reaching the top only made him a more open target to Hanzo’s arrows.

“Hanzo,” Satya got the archer’s attention. McCree couldn’t tell what they were communicating, but he saw Hanzo nod.

Satya leapt down from the building. Genji followed after. The ninja had her beat on speed but she used the turns to her advantage. It was strange, though. It almost looked like she was running in circles.

“What’s she up to.” McCree said.

Finally she seemed to take the wrong turn, leading to a dead end. Genji quickly cornered her, although his approach was slow and careful.

“You’ve run out of places to hide.” He taunted.

“I have no need to hide.” She smiled at him. Her fingers seemed to hold something that she gave a sharp tug.

McCree could only catch the flash of the gold threads, seeing the number of them Genji had picked up. All of them must have gone tight because suddenly Genji’s arms were forced against his sides. He lost his balance and hit the ground. Satya laughed, her hand over her mouth.

“Oooh, down he goes folks. Seems Satya’s much trickier than she looks.”

With her threads back out she scaled the nearby wall and finally reached their base with the flag in hand. The lights in the room shifted to a blue to indicate who won.

“That was dirty.” Genji spat into the line which had switched to being open.

“You are just a sore loser.” Hanzo replied. “Admit you underestimated her and perhaps we will agree to a rematch.”

“We better have a rematch.” Lúcio said. “You guys aren’t winning next time.”

McCree laughed as he shut down the simulation. The platforms all moved back into the floor or
the wall.

“Fight about it later guys.” McCree spoke into the microphone. “We recorded the footage if you want it.”

“You better delete me hanging upside down, Eastwood.” Lúcio said.

“Mmm, nah, I think I’ll keep that.”

He chuckled at the frustrated sounds coming out of the mic. “Hey Athena, think you can analyze and compile the footage for each of them?”

“Already working on it, Agent McCree.” She replied.

“Good work,” Ana squeezed his shoulder and headed for the door. “I think you’ll do a fine job with this.”

McCree frowned. Do a fine job with what? He turned to ask her but the door had already shut.

Strange.

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“I did not know you could paint.”

Satya hovered over Hanzo’s shoulder as he made careful strokes on the red clay pot. The pair of them were outside of Bastion’s green house, taking their break there after that training session.

Hanzo would have been surprised if they had lost with the amount of planning they did for it.

Genji and Lúcio got along very well, but they needed to work on slowing down.

“I only know a certain number of things.” Hanzo confessed. “Traditional symbols and such. Dragons.” He chuckled as he added the details on the tail. “But I could not think of much else to do in order to thank Bastion for all their gifts.”

Yet another flower crown sat on his head. Occasionally, he had to push the petals out of the way in order to see what he was working on.

“They will love it.” She said. “We must think of something to put in it.”

“I was going to leave that up to them, unless you have an idea.”

She was lost in thought for a moment, finger tapping on her lower lip. Hanzo didn’t interrupt.

However, both of them were distracted by Genji shouting out a greeting as he came up the path. A frown flashed across Satya’s face before it took on a more neutral tone.

Hanzo snorted and returned to his work. “Come to plea for a lighter sentence for losing our bet?”

“Bet?” Satya said. “I was not aware of this.”

“It was only between me and Hanzo.” Genji replied as he sauntered over. “Though perhaps you
can join in when we have a rematch.”

She seemed to consider it, but shook her head and moved to the greenhouse.

“But no, that is not why I am here.” Genji leaned against Hanzo’s chair and watch him work. “Besides, most of your usual punishments won’t work anymore.”

“Jesse has showed me a number of rather embarrassing songs. Perhaps I’ll have you sing one to Lúcio.”

His brother leaned closer. “You wouldn’t.”

“I am considering it.”

“Well, perhaps this will make you reconsider.” He straightened up. “Lúcio and I were going to town before he leaves. Thought I would invite you, Jesse, Angela and Fareeha to join us.”

Hanzo hummed as he thought about it. After all, he and Jesse had hardly been on an actual date. Plenty of training sessions and quiet moments outside, but not a date.

“Have you asked him?”

“Not yet,” Genji said. “Angela and Fareeha are coming though.”

“If he is willing then I will join you.”

“Good,” he headed back towards the path. “I look forward to you reducing my sentence.”

Hanzo gave him a nod. Then he carefully put the pot to the side and got his communicator.

> Jesse

> ? what’s up darlin?

> What is the most embarrassing romantic song you can think of?

> Ever heard of “She thinks my tractor’s sexy” ?

Chapter End Notes

Have you guys heard the nightcore version of that song? It’s unbelievable.
Hanzo stepped out of his room where Jesse was waiting to leave. He was surprised his boyfriend didn’t have his hat or serape. Just a red flannel shirt and a pair of jeans. At least the belt buckle was still present.

Jesse looked up from his communicator. “Whoa. Holy cow darlin’.”

Hanzo frowned. “What?”

“Didn’t even know you owned casual clothes.”

He rolled his eyes. Just because he felt more comfortable in traditional clothing didn’t mean that was all he owned. He thought about digging up something nicer, but in the end the black t-shirt and khakis won out.

He focused back on Jesse whose gaze was fixed on Hanzo’s chest.

“Is something wrong?”

“What?” He snapped up straight. “What, no, uh...” He tugged at his collar. “It ah, suits you.”

Hanzo leaned closer, noticing that Jesse’s cheeks were turning darker. He glanced down at the shirt again, not finding anything out of the ordinary. Perhaps it was a little tight but–

Ah.

He shook his head to keep himself from smirking. He could tease Jesse later.

“Come, the others will be waiting on us.”

“I call shotgun.”

“You cannot if we are late.”

The pair of them laughed and sprinted off to the hangar. Angela and Fareeha were already in the car. Fareeha stuck out her tongue when Jesse whined about being stuck in the back.

The drive to town only took twenty minutes, most of it filled with arguing over music. After that was shut off it switched to arguing about what song Jesse should sing. Fareeha ended that when she suggested Bohemian Rhapsody. Soon the rest of the car joined in, leaving Hanzo mildly confused. It was strange he hadn’t heard this song before now.
They found a far off lot to park in and walked the rest of the way to town.

“Do we want food first?” Lúcio casually skated next to Genji. “I want food first.”

“Oh!” Angela turned to Jesse. “We should go to that buffet. Remember?”

“No,” Fareeha cut in. “Future vision says if we do that, both of you are going to get sick.”

Jesse snorted, stepping closer to Hanzo. “Your future vision ruins all the surprises.”

“I’m certain Hanzo would not appreciate you puking on his lap.”

Hanzo grimaced at the thought. Genji chuckled.

“We’ll find something on the way.” Fareeha said. “I don’t need future vision to see Angela eyeing that boutique.”

Angela pretended to turn away from the windows of the store featuring a floral dress and a number of accessories. All of them headed inside. There wasn’t much that caught Hanzo’s eye, but it only took a moment for all of them to start digging. Lúcio and Genji were comparing dresses. Angela glanced at the jewelry and Fareeha was looking through the tops.

Hanzo turned to find Jesse next to a set of hat stands. He grinned as he held up a floral sun hat.

Hanzo moved closer to study it. “You seem excited.”

“Well, told Bastion weeks ago I’d get them one of these. Zenyatta too.”

He glanced at a few, clearly designed for beach goers. “I would get one with a ribbon or something similar for the monk. His hat would need to lean back out of his eyes.”

Jesse squinted for a moment, thinking. “Wait, you mean those blue dots are his actual eyes?”

Hanzo frowned. “Yes? What else would they be for.”

“Dunno, I just never... that’s a little unsettling.”

He laughed and picked up a yellow one. “I cannot blame you. Many omnis like him were designed to look more human.” He turned the hat around in his hands before handing it to Jesse. “I think this would suit him.”

The cowboy almost looked surprised before he smirked. “Aw, should I tell him it was from you?”


“Hey Hanzo, what do you think?”

He glanced to the side to see his brother strike a pose. He was wearing a sundress, orange flowers on a white background, that managed to fit over his armor.

Jesse let off a mock gasp. “Genji in clothes again? Someone take a photo of this rare sighting.”
“Oh hush,” Genji said. “I’ve spoken about getting some new clothes for ages.”

“Yeah but you never actually did.”

“He’s not wrong you know,” Lúcio pulled out his phone. “Some pics would be great.”

Genji struck a few more poses. Hanzo rolled his eyes at the dramatics of it all.

“They suit you,” he finally said.

Now it was Genji’s turn to gasp. “Hanzo paying me a compliment? Someone record this rare sighting.”

He rolled his eyes again. Jesse hid his laughter behind the hat in his hands.

“Bet they’d suit you too Hanzo.” Lúcio lowered his phone.

He shook his head. “No, these are... not the right kind.”

The musician smirked. “Try somewhere else then?”

He turned away and didn’t answer that. Even if Lúcio was right he didn’t particularly feel like trying it out in a large crowd.

“What about you, Eastwood? I saw this one–”

“No.”

The answer was so sharp and sudden it almost made Hanzo jump. He turned back around to look at Jesse who was gripping the hat a little too tight. Then his fingers relaxed.

“Oh, sorry, didn’t mean to snap. Just not really my thing personally.”

Lúcio was quiet before he shrugged it off. “It’s cool. Come on Genji, let’s try out a few more.”

Hanzo studied Jesse’s expression as he put Zenyatta’s future hat on his head and kept searching through the others. His eyes were moving around much too fast.

“Are you okay?” He spoke quietly.

“Aw, I’m fine darlin’.” Jesse smiled at him. “Don’t worry yourself about it at least. I’ll feel better when I eat something.”

“Well then, I suggest you find Bastion a hat so we can go looking.”

Jesse laughed. “Yes sir.”

He eventually decided on the largest one they had, white and decorated with pink flowers. Jesse announced they were off to find food. With Genji and Lúcio still looking at clothes they simply said they’d catch up later.
It didn’t take them long to find a place to eat, even without Fareeha’s vision. The group could smell the melted sugar and spices from two blocks away. Jesse grabbed Hanzo’s arm and tried to run on ahead. Fareeha did the same with Angela.

“Both of you knock it off.” Angela shouted, almost losing her grip on her shopping bag.

Fareeha only ran faster.

The race ended when they turned the corner. Hanzo almost crashed into Jesse with the sudden stop. The street was lined with stands. Some selling foods, others selling handmade accessories or paintings. A weekend market perhaps? He’d never bothered going into town that often.

“Well this ain’t fair.” His boyfriend sighed. “How am I supposed to pick something out of all this?” He glanced over at Hanzo. “What are you in the mood for darlin’?”

Hanzo shrugged and crossed his arms. “I imagine you are more familiar with the food here than I am. I will probably just steal some of yours.”

“Think so, huh?”

“I am not as picky as you might think.” Hanzo met his challenging gaze. “And by the sound of it you want to buy more than you could eat.”

“Do you really want him to pick out all of your food?” Fareeha said.

“As if you can talk.” Angela added. “Half a bowl of leftover rice is not dinner.”

“And coffee isn’t breakfast.”

Both of them stuck their tongues out at each other before breaking into a fit of giggles. They locked their arms together as they headed off to find something to eat. Jesse dashed after them.

Hanzo let his boyfriend run ahead, trying to take in everything else on the street. The smells were almost too distracting.

“Looking for something?”

He turned to the sound of the electronic voice. An omnic sat behind their shopping stand, head resting on its fingers. Their four round eyes seemed to stare through him. He glanced down at the table, seeing rows and rows of jewelry ranging from pendants to bracelets. Most of it seemed to be made with quality gemstones.

He glanced down the street. Jesse was nowhere in sight. He let himself wander closer.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” The omnic seemed to laugh.

“Did you make these yourself?”

“Yup. Name’s Nickal, feminine pronouns, best jeweler in town.” She tilted her head. “Well, some might argue otherwise, but they’re wrong.”

Hanzo smirked, studying some of the earrings. The cuts on some of the stones were flawless. He
gestured toward them. “May I?”

“Oh go right ahead. My partner’s hanging nearby in case anyone tries to run off with them. She’s quick too.”

It was close to a threat, but Hanzo had no plans to steal anything. He picked up a pair of sapphire earrings, looking at wire shaped over the stones, making it look like waves.

“If I can inquire,” she spoke up. “Is tall and handsome your boyfriend?”

He kept himself from frowning as he put the earrings back on the table. “Was it that obvious?”

“Nah, I mean I figured that or best friend. Close at least.”

“You’re trying to convince me to buy something for him.”

“Ah, I’ve been caught.” She held up her hands. “Well, if not this time around maybe in the future huh? I’m always willing to haggle if you’re low on funds too.”

“That doesn’t seem like a solid business practice.”

She laughed at that, folding her hands together. “Well, do you see any prices on the table?”

He glanced down. “No.”

“Exactly. I’d probably tell a guy like you a necklace is between fifty to two-hundred dollars depending on the materials. But I can pick out the rich tourists. They’re the ones I sell rings to for three thousand.”

Hanzo almost choked at the amount, but knew she wasn’t wrong. People who had the money wouldn’t think twice about spending it on something like this.

“Just find something you like, or that your boyfriend would like, I bet we could make a deal.”

This was probably a bad idea. Did Jesse even like jewelry? Did belt buckles count?

Maybe something simple.

“Do you... have anything related to a phoenix?”

“Not exactly, but I bet I have something that’d still suit your fancy.”

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“Hanzo,” Jesse whined as the pair of them walked back to the car.

“What?”

“Stomach hurts.”

“I told you that it was foolish to get two orders of those... profiteroles wasn’t it?”
“But they were so good.”

“You can rest in the car.”

Their whole group wound up separated with all the shops they wanted to visit. In the end they just agreed to meet at the car when they were done. Hanzo would have done some more looking around if Jesse hadn’t started complaining.

“Hope we’re the first ones there at least.” Jesse sighed. “Fareeha is not getting the front seat again.”

“Childish.”

“You got tiny legs Hanzo, you don’t need the front seat.”

Hanzo figured he should be insulted but he smiled instead, not offering a comeback.

“Oh, by the way.” Jesse fished around in one of the bags in his hand. “Found something for you earlier, before I got all that food.”

Hanzo considered the irony as he reached for the pendant in his pocket. Then he paused. He should let Jesse go first.

“Here,” Jesse tugged out a sash from one end, the rest of it trailing behind. Hanzo could tell it was hand painted, a deep blue decorated with cloud patterns. It was almost a blend between the sky and the sea. “I know you’re fond of the one you got, but you know, thought it might be nice.” He rubbed the back of his neck, avoiding eye contact.

Hanzo didn’t hesitate to pull his hair down for a moment, neatly draping his silk sash over his arm. He took the other one out of Jesse’s hand, pulling his hair back up into its usual style.

“How does it look?” He turned his head a bit.

For a moment Jesse just stared, eyes wide. “Looks good. Suits you.”

Hanzo smiled. “Thank you, Jesse.”

“Aw, is no big deal.” He was rubbing his neck again. “Figured I should get you a little something. I mean, I’m still behind Bastion.”

Hanzo laughed at that, pulling the pendant out of his pocket. “I found something for you as well.”

“Aw, darlin’, you didn’t have to do that.” Jesse said while still holding out his hand.

Hanzo shrugged and gently placed the necklace in his palm. “You did not have to get me this sash.”

“Yeah, yeah, guess that’s fair.” Jesse pulled the jewelry closer. “Whoa, hang on a minute, is that real jade?”

“Yes.” The pendant Hanzo decided on was made up of jade, a crescent moon shape on the right side. Inside of that was the shape of a bird, a quetzal as Nickal called it.
“Hanzo please tell me you did not drop that much money on me.”

He snorted, as if Jesse wasn’t worth it. “If it helps, she struck me a bargain for it.”

“Holy hell, Hanzo.” Jesse held it up. “Is that a phoenix?”

“No, not really at least. She said it was meant to symbolize an eclipse.”

Jesse shook his head. “Down to the fine details huh? That’s just like you.” He undid the clasp and pulled the chain around his neck. “How does it look?”

Hanzo tilted his head, reaching out to fix the pendant toward the center. “It suits you.”

“Might suit me better if this collar wasn’t getting in the way.”

Hanzo didn’t get to inquire into that. Jesse was already undoing the top two buttons on his shirt, pulling it open so the pendant rested on his skin.

He couldn’t keep himself from staring. Jesse chest shone with a thin layer of sweat. The dark curls of his chest hair were more than visible now.

“You okay there darlin’?”

Hanzo forced his gaze to move up. “Y-yes. Fine.”

Jesse didn’t seem to believe him, but shrugged and began moving down the road again.

Hanzo numbly followed after, wishing they’d gotten some water bottles. He imagined it would take dumping on one his head to banish the thoughts of pinning Jesse against the hood of the car.

“What’s the matter brother?” Genji’s sudden presence almost made him jump out of his skin. “You look a little... warm.”

Hanzo crossed his arms. He tried to fix his gaze forward only now noticing that Jesse’s jeans were tighter than he first thought. “The weather is rather warm here, if you didn’t notice.”

“Uh huh.” Genji chuckled. “Right, right. So, enjoying the view?”

“Silence.”

“After you told everyone about the supply closet? No way.”

“I am never going out with you again.”

“Sure, sure, hey Lúcio. Come get a photo of how red Hanzo’s face is.”

Hanzo could hear the sound of the musician’s skates approaching from behind.

He broke into a run.
whaaaat noooo I didn't insert myself into this fic no wayyyyyy.....
McCree grumbled as he rummaged through the cupboards. All his favorite cereal was gone. Hana had eaten the last of the poptarts. And someone didn’t put the lid back on the oatmeal properly, leaving the moths to have a field day in it.

He was too tired to make eggs.

McCree sighed and shut the door, opening the fridge instead. Maybe they had some bread or pastries he could heat up.

Nope.

They needed to go on another grocery trip soon.

He shut the fridge, resting his head against it. Too tired for this, even if he had slept in until eleven.

“You’re finally up.”

Without removing his head from the fridge he turned it to look at Hanzo. “Don’t give me that. You’re the one who told me to go back to sleep.”

“Yes, because I had to be up at five.” Hanzo crossed his arms. “Are you alright?”

“Sleepy.”

Hanzo didn’t reply to that.

McCree had a heck of a time sleeping last night. Deciding to watch that scary movie with Genji did little to ease up his nightmares.

“Sit.”

McCree blinked. “Huh?”

“Go sit down. I will make you something to eat.”

“Aw, come on darlin’. You don’t have to do that.”

Hanzo shoved him away from the fridge and toward the bar. “Sit.”

“Okay, okay, got it.” McCree complied, taking a seat and watching Hanzo as he dug through the
He reached under his serape to roll the pendant between his fingers. The hell had he done lately to deserve all of this?

His communicator buzzed—a miracle he remembered to bring it with him today—and he popped it open to view a message from Hana.

> Hey. So me and Dad™ want to use the training room for simulation levels but Genji’s being a butt and insisting he needs it. Who gets it first?

McCree frowned at the message. The hell was this?

> What are u asking me for??

> Cause Winston isn't here, remember? So who.

That still didn’t make a lick of sense. So what if Winston wasn’t here? He didn’t have the authority to give out commands.

Whatever, if she was asking him he’d just help her figure it out.

> What does Genji want it for?

> He wants to use the training bots for something. Dad™ was going to have me take on his simulation challenge. He insists I won’t be able to beat his record.

McCree rolled his eyes.

> You know he’s just taunting you to make you train right?

> So? I’m going to beat him.

McCree sighed, thumbing through the facts.

> You can go first. Genji can find a sparring partner if he needs to move around that bad, or wait his turn.

> Hah! Okay thanks.

McCree dropped his communicator on the counter, recognizing the smell of pepper and scrambled eggs.

His communicator buzzed again. It was from Ana.

> Jesse. Jack and I were planning a mission soon. Can you help me go over what supplies we can take? I know things are a bit limited at the moment.

His head hurt for a moment, but he perked up when Hanzo set some coffee on the counter. He took a long sip. It was good, really good. He’d gotten great at making this stuff.

> Why are u asking me ???
> Jesse dear, did Winston not tell you that you are in charge while he is out?

He almost spat out his coffee, gasping and choking for a moment. Hanzo glanced back but Jesse held up a hand to wave off his concern.

He took a few slow breaths before replying.

> I’m sorry what??????

> Indeed, you can ask him yourself if you must. Until then do you have time to check supplies with me?

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. He took another sip of coffee.

> Yeah, fine. This evening? Or do you need to do it earlier.

> This evening is fine. Thank you.

He dropped the device again, letting his head rest on the counter. What the hell was going on.

After a quick moment to compose himself he sent a message to Winston, hoping the scientist had a signal.

> Winston wtf????

The reply was almost immediate.

> What’s wrong? Did something happen?

> What’s all this business about me being in charge.

> Oh, did I not tell you? My apologies. But I DID send out an announcement for it. When was the last time you checked your inbox?

Jesse frowned, closing his messages to check. It had been a while, at least. It seems Winston had sent him all kinds of data to comb through that he’d never noticed before, whoops. He opened the most recent one, confirming that yes, indeed, it was right there in digital text.

What the hell?

He was about to ask why, until Winston sent another message.

> Sorry, can’t explain right now. I’ll check in later.

Figures.

“Did something happen?”

He looked up at Hanzo who stood there with a plate full of scrambled eggs and fried potatoes. Smelled like heaven. For a moment McCree almost forgot what was going on.
“Sort of,” he took the plate. “Did you know Winston left me in charge?”

“Yes.”

“Is that why you made me breakfast?”

Hanzo smirked and chuckled. “No. I made you breakfast because you had a hard time sleeping last night.” He stepped around the counter, putting down the silverware. “And because I wanted to.” He kissed McCree on the cheek. “Now eat, I imagine you’re going to have a busy day.”

McCree watched him leave, ignoring the humming in his chest. He tried to bury it with a forkful of eggs. Tasted even better than they smelled.

He only got two bites in when his phone buzzed again.

Damn it.

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McCree already felt like he was being pulled in a dozen directions. Not even that much was going on at the moment. He kept trying to comb through the stuff Winston sent him only to get messages from one of his other teammates asking for permission or his opinion. Why did it even matter on some of these? They had to be questions better left for Winston when he got back.

“Athena,” he spoke as soon as he got in the base. Torbjörn had just been showing him the new defensive turrets.

“Yes Agent McCree?”

“Why the hell did Winston think this was a good idea?”

She paused for a little while. “There are a number of reasons. Among them is your history with Blackwatch, your quick decision making, and the good reputation you have with everyone here.”

“What, are you serious? That... that can’t be right.”

“No?”

He tried to think of an argument. He’d never really thought about being well liked on base, but come to think of it he was on good terms with everyone in some aspect or another.

He didn’t realize Winston kept tabs on this sort of thing.

“I’ll just ask him for details later.” He said. “Thanks.”

“Of course,” her tone was cheerful but he could feel her sass.

He headed further inside when his communicator was going off yet again. Another message from Ana.

> Brigitte wants to improve her combat abilities with her spirit. Think you can set up a couple of simulations?
McCree knew he could say no. He could just tell Ana to do it herself, as if she didn’t know how. He knew he could.

> Yeah that’s fine. I’ll get started in a few.

> Thanks dear!

He was half tempted to look for a drink, but he knew Reinhardt had finished the last of the alcohol off two days ago. They really needed to go shopping.

McCree made his way down to the training room. He was about to just head in and start working but he could hear the sounds of a fight. He headed into the main room to see Genji sparring with Zenyatta.

McCree had never seen the omnic physically fight before, but it was obvious now how Genji got so much faster in his time away. The omnic was quick, his strikes were precise, landing a sharp kick to Genji’s shoulder. The ninja was forced to retreat while Zenyatta simply floated there.

“Shit,” McCree tipped his hat back as he stepped over to Hanzo who was watching as well. “Didn’t know Zen could do all that.”

“I did,” Hanzo mumbled.

“Hah, you challenged him to a fight once?”

“It was not one of my better days.”

McCree was almost disappointed he missed that. “How bad did he kick your ass?”

“I am not telling you. If you wish to find out you can challenge him yourself.”

“Eh, I think I’ll pass on that.” McCree held up his hands. He watched a bit longer as Zenyatta drifted out of the way of Genji’s sword. With a strike of his palm Genji fell to his side, rolling over to get back up.

“You are slower than usual, my student.” The omnic said. “I think you are getting frustrated.”

“I cannot lose our next match. Not after what Hanzo pulled.” Genji’s head snapped around to stare at his brother.

Hanzo smirked. McCree found himself chuckling at the memory. Just before Lúcio, Satya and Winston left, Genji had burst into the room, singing that atrocious song that McCree had suggested. Hana recorded the whole thing.

“I admit you might be able to best me.” Hanzo tilted his head. “But good luck besting her.”

Genji growled until Zenyatta put a hand on his shoulder.

“Genji, perhaps you should take a break.”
The ninja’s shoulders dropped and nodded. He immediately sat on the floor to meditate, Zenyatta floating across from him.

Well, no one else was using the room so McCree supposed that it’d be fine.

“So, how has the day gone so far, commander.” Hanzo smirked at him.

“Oh don’t you start. It ain’t like that at all.”

His boyfriend just hummed in response.

“And for the record it’s a headache. People asking questions all the time. Now Ana wants me to make some simulations for Brigitte.”

“The one you made for our match was well done. I imagine she simply values your input.”

“Yeah well-”

“And,” Hanzo turned to face him. “As far as I can tell you are doing a fine job, in spite of your stress.”

McCree stuttered for a moment, reaching to rub the back of his neck. “I don’t think it’s that big of a deal.”

“Perhaps not, but I at least know Hana was quite happy with your decision.”

“Oh yeah, did she manage to beat his record?”

“No,” Hanzo frowned. “She missed too many targets on level eight.”

“Damn,” McCree sighed. “Still, she got to level eight on her first try? That’s pretty impressive.”

“You should see if Athena recorded it. It was quite amazing to watch.”

“Yeah, after I finish these simulations. Maybe I can give her a few pointers if she’s up for that.” McCree at least prayed Jack wasn’t being a smug dick about it. Those simulations had been designed for super soldiers. Physically impossible for most other people. Not only did it require a lot of speed and precision, but a lot of stamina as well. McCree had tried it a few times when he was training. He never got past level six before exhaustion caught up with him.

Not only did the difficulty increase every time, but there were no breaks in between. As soon as you dropped the last target the next level began.

“Jesse.”

He blinked. “Hm?”

“Any dinner ideas?”

He thought for a moment and shrugged. “Do we even have enough in the base to cook with?”

“Reinhardt and I were going to go shopping in a little bit.”
“Get some whiskey.”

Hanzo narrowed his eyes.

“What? Angie said I could have some... in light doses.”

His boyfriend rolled his eyes. “That’s not dinner.”

“Be better to ask Hana, she might want the pick me up.”

Hanzo considered it and nodded. “I shall see you later.”

McCree didn’t let the archer get far before spinning him back around, hand on his waist. “Now hang on a sec partner. I still haven’t thanked you for breakfast this morning.”

Hanzo smirked. “That is hardly necessary.”

McCree only hummed before pulling his boyfriend into a kiss. In spite of it being “hardly necessary” Hanzo was quick to pull himself closer. Sparks snapped against McCree’s ear as Hanzo’s fingers threaded into his hair.

“Can you not take that outside?” Genji’s voice interrupted.

The pair of them turned to glare at the ninja. Hanzo actually stuck out his tongue before letting go. “I shall see you later, Jesse.” He opened the door but paused, glancing back. “And then we can continue uninterrupted.”

Somehow McCree could still feel the sparks under his skin. Genji made a disgusted noise when the door shut.

“Oh can it, Shimada. You’re just jealous ‘cause your boyfriend ain’t here.”

“Don’t you have work to do?”

Yeah, the ninja was still in a bitter mood. McCree decided to let it alone and headed out himself.

Chapter End Notes

Genji’s determined to win so he can make Hanzo dress in a cheap cowboy costume
McCree scanned through the cameras once before he brought up the floor map again. Lúcio and Satya’s locations still showed up clearly.

“Still clear, Eastwood?”

“Yeah,” he responded. “Take it slow. I don’t have a camera for that upcoming hallway.”

Winston had contacted him this morning, asking if he could sit in his lab to keep an extra eye on everything. The team was currently infiltrating one of Vishkar’s more secure facilities outside of Numbani. While Satya had chosen to betray the company she was still seeking out more damning evidence to smear their name. During her own research she’d tried to track down records of their dealings with a number of companies in Mexico.

Only to later find that most of these companies didn’t actually exist.

So who had they been dealing with?

As if their definition of “progress” and “peace” weren’t bad enough. Now it was entirely possible Vishkar was aiding a number of criminals.

It didn’t exactly surprise McCree, but it made the situation a whole lot messier.

Lúcio and Satya had agreed to dig up the information together, using her knowledge of the building’s schematics. Winston was nearby, keeping security on lockdown, mining data, and watching the perimeter. With that much on hand it was no wonder he asked McCree for help.

“Couldn’t you have just teleported us inside?” Lúcio was whispering.

“Doing so would have no doubt caused their security to go off. Teleporting out would be far easier.”

“No bickering you two.” McCree scanned the cameras again. He was honestly surprised they’d been getting along this far. “The floor is still clear for now. Hurry toward the end of the hall.”

He didn’t see them acknowledge him, but a few moments later they were both on the move, coming into view. He could tell Lúcio was taunting her as he skated past.

“They doing okay?”

McCree turned for a moment to see Lena coming into the lab. She wasn’t the first visitor to come by and check in. Genji had already shown up three times until McCree kicked him out for
interfering.

“Yeah, they’re fine. Place is quiet as nothing else when security is off. Lúcio was right about all of them breaking for lunch at the same time too.”

Lena leaned over him to look in the cameras. He followed her gaze where Satya stood on guard as Lúcio undid one of the security locks.

“Worrying about your crush?” McCree smirked.

Lena tried to shove him out of the chair. “Hush up you, it’s not like that.”

“Uh huh, sure, sorry doll but even with those goggles your goo-goo eyes are too obvious.”

She puffed out her cheeks and turned away.

“I mean, I can’t blame you, she’s pretty and all.”

“Well,” she shoved him again. “I am not thinking about it right now. Just wanted to check in.”

“Like I said, it’s fine.” McCree scanned through the cameras again. “Nothing much to– whoa, hang on.”

“What?” Winston spoke up.

“Uh, Lú, got at least six people moving into that hall you’re heading into. Guessing they just came out of a meeting.”

“There is nowhere nearby for us to hide.” Satya said.

“Well good news is they’re just standing there at the moment.” McCree glanced at the map, wishing for an alternative route but there wasn’t one. “Guessing the teleporter still isn’t an option.”

“Unless we need to escape, no.”

“There’s no one else in that area.” Winston said. “Perhaps if we could get them out of the way?”

“A good plan, but we’d need something to do it all at once.” McCree jumped when Lena put a hand on his shoulder. He almost forgot she was there. Her gaze was fixed on the camera screens. “I imagine if any of them got far enough they’d set off the alarm.”

“I know I could, but it wouldn’t be quiet.” Lúcio said. “Vaswani, what about that shield trick you did to me and Genji?”

“It would force them back, but it would not knock them out.”

“Don’t worry, I can handle that much. Have they moved, Eastwood?”

“Nope, still talking.”

He didn’t pick up whatever Lúcio and Satya were saying to each other at that point. Satya got into a ready position while Lúcio finished with the lock on the door. They both nodded at each other
before Lúcio finished getting through the lock. He ducked to the side just as the door flew open.

McCree couldn’t hear anything, but he still witnessed it all unfold from the camera. The people in the hall turned to look, only for their expressions to shift into shock. Lena was giggling as a couple tried to dive out of the way. Too slow. The shield slammed into them, knocking them down the hall. Lúcio skated in after it.

All the Vishkar agents were pressed against the wall when the shield finally dropped. Only three managed to get up when Lúcio tossed something at their feet. The disk-like object sparked before electricity jumped through the air, clinging to anyone nearby. It only took two seconds for it to shut off. All the employees hit the ground.


“Ah, I’m glad.” He said. “We’ve still been testing it.”

“You weren’t sure it would work?” Satya was annoyed but kept moving to the main office.

“No, but it did.” Lúcio said. “Don’t worry about it. We’re still clear, right Eastwood?”

“Yeah,” McCree flipped through a couple more cameras. “Just try to be quick. No telling how long they’ll be out.”

The pair worked in silence apart from Winston’s instructing on where to send the data. Lena said a short goodbye as she headed out, wishing them a safe trip back. McCree watched her go, a faint smile on his face.

“So, Eastwood,” Lúcio chimed up.

“Yeah?”

“You know your mic was on the whole time right?”

McCree froze. His gaze shot over to Satya who shifted uncomfortably next to the door.

“Hell,” he ran a hand over his face. “Uh, can we pretend that y’all heard none of that?”

“I already knew.” Winston said.

Of course he did, but Satya didn’t. Hell, fuck, Lena was going to kill him. He’d be lucky if he didn’t royally screw up their relationship all together.

“Do not feel bad.” Satya spoke up. “I... shall wait until she tells me herself.”

McCree was tempted to reply, or even thank her, but kept his hand on his mouth. Saying something else might just make it worse.


“Yes.”

McCree kept watching until they teleported out of the building. He shut down the cameras and the
map, watching Athena sort through data for a few moments.

“All good, Chief?”

Winston grumbled into the line but eventually replied. “Yes. We’ll be heading back in the morning. Thanks for your help.”


Winston was still grumbling when the line cut off.

McCree got up and stretched, still enjoying the fact he could do it without aggravating his injury.

“How’s it look, Clem?” He headed out of the lab. “Think the doc’ll let me do some training?”

“It should be fine, assuming, of course, you don’t over do it.”

McCree chuckled as he let her flames run over his shoulders. Her form materialized on his arm. “Now when have I ever done that?”

She stuck her beak in the air, but the feathers on her neck flashed yellow. “You’re not as funny as you think.”

“I can tell you’re laughing.”

“And where did this sudden ego come from?”

“I’m in a good mood.”

She hummed. “Surprising.”

McCree frowned. “What does that mean?”

“No, I will not drag up the thoughts in the back of your head. Not right now at least. Go see Lady Ziegler.”

McCree couldn’t ask for clarification. Clementine vanished into the air.

Besides, she was right. He could worry about all of that later.

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McCree resisted the urge to leap off the platform in his excitement. Angela approved him to go back to training, with a warning. At least this time he planned to follow it.

“You ready Clem? I’m gonna master this thing today.”

“You can’t try this from a shorter platform?”

“I already know how to glide. I can catch myself.”

She gave a low hum. For a moment the events of his last attempt flashed through his mind.
“I’m in better shape this time.”

“Fine, but I would prefer it if someone else was here.”

McCree glanced over the edge and then up at the surrounding trees. He was determined to fly over them, hover even. “Bastion’s busy.”

“I’d bet a certain dragon child isn’t.”

“What if I want to surprise him?”

“With a broken leg?”

“Quit sassing me, you oven roasted turkey.”

“Lady Ziegler? Lady Song? Young Shimada? Someone?”

“Look, I’m going to surprise all of them by flying by the window so–”

“Jesse?”

The voice was so sudden McCree almost lost his footing. He stumbled away from the edge of the platform and glanced around for the source.

There was Hanzo, staring up at the platform with his arms crossed. His stare was very disapproving.

“Before you say anything,” McCree pointed at him. “Angela said it was okay.”

“I know, she told me. She also said I should keep an eye on you anyway.”

“I’m fine.”

Hanzo’s expression didn’t change.

“Hanzo,” McCree pouted. “You’re gonna ruin the surprise.”

The archer sighed but lowered his shoulders. “I would rather do that than be surprised by you running into something again. You can surprise Ana by sneaking up behind her on the roof.”

McCree laughed at the image and didn’t bother to correct Hanzo that Ana was one of the hardest people to sneak up on. Gabriel could only manage it if she was particularly distracted. Having only one eye only made her ears stronger.

“Fine, fine,” McCree waved as he moved back to the edge of the platform. “You can stay. Prepare to be dazzled.”

Whatever Hanzo said in response was too quiet for McCree to hear. Flames burst out of his shoulders before taking shape. The feeling of them was much more comfortable than last time. He opened and closed them a couple of times to make sure he still had control of them.
Here went nothing.

McCree took a running start before he leapt off the platform. Time seemed to slow down as he took in the drop, hand on his hat to keep it from going anywhere. He felt the wind rush past his ears before his wings opened up. His momentum shifted, letting him glide forward. He had mastered this much before, weaving around the trees, trying not to think too hard about how his wings could form around them. Lift, he needed to figure out how to get lift. Flapping his wings was easy enough but the air seemed to go through them.

“Jesse.” Hanzo shouted. The cowboy glanced back to see the archer running after him. “Do not stray so far.”

McCree glanced ahead before shooting him a smile. “Hey, catch me if you can.” His excitement bubbled in his chest and he started laughing until it made his wings spark. The force made him jump up. He fanned his wings out to slow down before he crashed into something.

So that was it.

He channeled his excitement into his flames. The energy burst out so quick he couldn’t slow it down this time. He rocketed above the trees, almost losing his balance.

“Whoa.” He hovered for a few moments, taking in the view. “Would you look at that. I think I’m getting the hang of it.”

He tested the bursts a few more times, measuring how much it actually took to make him move up, and ignored the temptation to launch himself even higher. He’d already lost sight of Hanzo. No doubt the archer was somewhere below, annoyed that McCree was messing around this much.

Before he could lower himself he heard a rustle in the branches behind him. When he spun around he saw Hanzo looking right at him, clinging to the trunk.

“The hell?” McCree almost dropped to the ground before he caught himself. “What are you doing darlin’?”

“I believe you asked me to catch you.”

“Ain’t that a little dangerous?”

Hanzo smirked. “I believe my knowledge of climbing exceeds your knowledge of flying.”

McCree glared, letting his irritation carry him higher into the air. “Oh it’s on now.”

He rushed forward, letting the wind do most of the work for him. His lift still needed practice. Twice he almost ran into the top of a tree. His uncertainty kept his gaze forward, but he’d occasionally spare a glance backwards.

Hanzo was currently having no trouble keeping up.

McCree frowned again. Faster, he needed to go faster. How did he go faster?

“Please do not over do it.” Clementine repeated her warning.
“I ain’t losing.”

“Don’t be childish. Besides, in my experience a chase is no fun if they can never catch up.”

He screeched to a halt at that. “What?”

She laughed for a while, almost sounding shy. “Wolves love to play chase.”

“You know what. I’m sorry I asked.”

He heard her snort and could practically feel her feathers bristling. “Well at least now you can find out I’m right.”

“What–”

A hand gripped his ankle and tugged him down. He shouted, trying to keep himself up but the shock made his wings distort. He felt gravity take over, feeling branches brush past his cheek.

Two hands grabbed his wrists and caught him. His chest hit the trunk of the tree and he coughed from the impact.

“Jesse? Are you alright?”

He wasn’t sure if he should glare at Hanzo for making him fall or smile at him for saving his life.

“Fine, fine.” His feet scrambled for something solid. When they found a nearby branch he tugged himself over. Hanzo let him cling to the trunk.

“Christ in heaven, Hanzo. Give me a little warning next time.”

“This is why I told you not to stray so far.”

“Well I have to practice going up, don’t I?”

Hanzo rolled his eyes before he climbed down a few branches. “Only you would make training this risky.”

McCree smirked and leaned closer. “And that’s why I’m so damn good at what I do.”

His boyfriend only hummed and studied his face. “I still caught you.”

“So you did darlin’.”

“So,” Hanzo leaned closer. “Do I get a reward for that?”

McCree glanced at Hanzo’s lips but didn’t move. “Well, what does my noble knight request of me?”

Hanzo hummed again. Their noses brushed together. “A kiss would be nice. Then perhaps, for a few moments, I can understand what it is like to fly.”

“Poetry.”
When Hanzo kissed him he loosened his grip on the tree so he could move closer. His concern about his footing was fading quick, and completely vanished when Hanzo’s hand slid over his neck. The archer’s thumb ran over his beard. Sparks ran through it, down to the roots, and this time McCree failed to keep himself quiet.

That short moan seemed to make everything move faster. Hanzo jerked McCree closer before his hand moved down to the cowboy’s collar. The first button popped open with ease. Fingers trailed down to his chest...

McCree felt the branch creak before he heard it. He snapped back to regain his grip, but the motion threw Hanzo off balance.

Instinct kicked in. McCree’s wings reappeared the moment his hand caught Hanzo. Even then there was no recovering. They either fell off one direction or the other.

McCree picked Hanzo’s.

The archer panicked for a moment as McCree practically shoved them both out of the tree. Hanzo clung to the cowboy’s neck, almost choking him.

But McCree kept his focus, fanning out his wings to slow down their fall until they came to a complete stop. He kept them hovering in the air as he waited for Hanzo to calm down.

Although, he had to admit, the image of Hanzo hiding his face in McCree’s shoulder was pretty adorable.

When Hanzo did open his eyes and glance down the tension completely left his system. His grip relaxed and he let his head fall back. “That was a bad idea.”

“Yeah, probably.” McCree laughed. “Make a funny story though.”

“We are not telling anyone about this.”

“I dunno, I might have to tell Genji at least.”

Hanzo lifted his head back up and glared. “No. Now put me down.”

McCree was a half second away from letting them float to the ground, but then he got a better idea. He didn’t realize he was grinning until Hanzo spoke up.

“Whatever you are thinking, I demand you stop.”

“What’s that? Fly up?”

“That is not what I said and you know it. Put me down.”

“No comprendo.”

“Jesse—”

McCree let his wings rocket the pair of them into the air.
Hanzo screamed.

McCree knew he shouldn’t laugh, almost couldn’t with how tight Hanzo was hanging onto him. Still, the sound manage to burst out of him as he went higher and higher.

“Jesse McCree!” Hanzo shouted in his ear. “I demand you put me down.”

“Down huh? Got it.”

Hanzo didn’t catch on quick enough to say anything. He just screamed again as McCree closed his wings and let himself fall backwards.

The archer squeezed the air out of his lungs. He tightened his own grip, just in case. The pair of them slipped past the branches. McCree felt a couple of leaves brush against his cheek before he opened up his wings again. The sudden stop knocked the rest of the air out of him, leaving him with no choice but to let his feet touch the ground.

The moment Hanzo realized they were out of the air he jumped out of McCree’s grip, glaring. A lot of his hair had come loose from his pony tail, and between his static and the wind not a single strand was pointed in the same direction.

McCree snorted, desperate to hold back his laughter, but that quickly failed. He still hadn’t gotten a chance to catch his breath, making it more of a mixture between wheezing and shouting.

Hanzo’s response was to send out a sharp spark. It connected with McCree’s cheek, making him jump back.

“Ow! Come on darlin’, what was that for?”

“You know very well. That was not funny.”

“It was a little funny.”

“If you had lost control again we both would have been dead.”

“Hanzo,” McCree held up his hands as he stepped over. “I know I’m still learning but I’d never drop you. Not on my life.”

“That is what concerns me.”

He chuckled and shrugged. “I can come back.”

“That does not make it any better.”

“Fine, fine,” he shrugged. “Won’t do it again without your permission. Promise.”

That only seemed to satisfy Hanzo so much. He snorted and turned away, heading into the trees. “I am going back to the base.”

“Hanzo.”
“I suggest you do the same, or at least find a safer place to fly.”

“Hanzo.” McCree groaned and chased after.

“Do not try and stop me.”

“I’m not darlin’. Just hang on a sec.”

Hanzo stopped, almost turning before McCree held his shoulders in place. He undid the knot on Hanzo’s sash, draping it over his wrist as he smoothed the loose strands back.

Once again Hanzo shifted from an angry stone gargoyle to a small mountain stream. McCree could feel the leftover static, and was careful to keep his prosthetic joints from getting tangled.

“Not sure you want to walk back in there looking like that, yeah? Then Genji will definitely want the story.”

Hanzo just hummed in agreement.

McCree let his boyfriend tie his hair back up, making a mental note to memorize how to do it himself. When it was done, the only tell that anything had happened was the lingering blush on Hanzo’s cheeks.

“Thank you.” He said.

“No problem. I’ll see you tonight, yeah? Unless I’m banned to the couch.” McCree rubbed his neck.

“No, I’ll see you tonight, if not sooner.” Hanzo narrowed his eyes anyway. “But do not do that again.”

“Promise.”

Hanzo seemed much more satisfied this time. McCree didn’t follow him when he left, glancing up at the trees again.

“Ready to try again, Clem?”

“Please at least do it closer to other people in case you get hurt.”

“Yeah, fine,” McCree rolled his shoulders as he headed back towards the base. “I need to fly by some windows anyway.”
It wasn’t an uncommon nightmare for him, that time in eighth grade. His teachers had always been respectful of his pronouns and the spelling of his new name. Either because they were genuinely understanding or because his mother made it clear that there were no other options.

The students when they found out though... not so much.

Them shoving him into the girls bathroom was only the start.

And this time the lovely commentary of that owl was included.

It didn’t last, at least. The same moment one of the girls pulled out the lipstick everything went dark. He could feel the sand against his skin as Clementine pulled him to the surface. He gasped for air, clawing the rest of the way out before collapsing on the sand.

It was over. It was just a dream. That’s what he tried to tell himself but he kept wiping at his face and his cheeks. He tugged at his shirt to check for a binder that was no longer there.

“Are you alright?” Clementine sat on the sand in front of him, her head tilted to the side.

McCree just groaned and collapsed, hiding his face in the ground. Dysphoria wasn’t anything new for him, but it had been a while since it had been this bad.

Warm hands gently took his face. He glanced up to see Clementine in her human form, resting McCree’s head on her lap.

“I’m afraid to say I still don’t know the best ways to help with this.” She ran her fingers through his hair, pushing the strands away from his eyes.

“You dealt with this before?” At least her flames were comforting. He let his eyes shut, picturing those winter nights in front of the fireplace.

“Of course, you and Master Reyes are not the only masters I’ve had that have struggled with this.”

“This happened to Gabe?”

She chuckled. “Of course.”

“Never noticed.”

“He didn’t want you to, although I mentioned it might help you in the long run. He was rarely comfortable about discussing it with anyone, even Jack most of the time.”

“Nah, I can get that.” McCree glanced at the side, trying to go over a list of how many people in the base even knew at the moment. It wasn’t that he thought they’d react badly, more so he just never really cared to mention it.
“Guessing spirits never have to deal with things like this.” He glanced at her face, watching the flames of her hair move.

“No, in a sense we have no concept of gender. It is often what is assigned to us. People considered me feminine and I decided to follow along.”

“So, if you could be manly, would you?”

Clementine just shrugged. “Frankly I’ve never been able to tell the difference. Facial features, body types, they’re all things humans of any gender can have.”

“Then what was your first impression of me?”

She frowned at him, eyebrow raised. “Considering I was in Master Reyes’s head my first impression was that you were a ‘noisy punk’ who had no manners.”

McCree laughed.

“And then that you were just a frightened child who was doing the best he could with the cards he was dealt.”

His laughter stopped. He studied Clementine’s expression although it was unnecessary. He could feel her concern and something else curling in his chest as her finger trailed along the side of his face.

“Does that ever get conflicting?” McCree frowned.

“What?”

“Worrying about someone just because your master does. I mean, what if you don’t like someone and they do? What if, because of what you’ve been through, you know they’re up to something shady?”

She seemed to study him for a while, unmoving apart from the gentle shift of her flames.

“It wouldn’t matter, if I did. I could warn them, perhaps, but in the end my only choice would be to obey them. As with any spirit who is under the command of their host.”

“That has to suck.”

“No, at least...” Clementine pulled her hand away. The wind picked up. “In my experience I’ve rarely had my master actually assert their power over me. An ideal relationship with any spirit requires communication and understanding.”

“But,” McCree pointed up at her. “That doesn’t always happen.”

“No.” The air got cold. “It doesn’t.”

“You’ve seen it happen before.”

“Master McCree, if it is all the same to you, this is not something I wish to discuss.”
“Why not? I mean, I don’t want to pry, but why not?”

She looked away from him, toward the horizon. Her flames seemed to go cold. “I do not like to imagine ending up in the same state.”

Curiosity gnawed at the back of his head but with the wind growing colder he decided to drop it. A topic for another day, perhaps. For now it seemed that they both needed some time to think by themselves.

McCree snapped himself awake, the desert shifting into Hanzo’s room. He got a view of the clock. 6:15. Not too early at least.

Only when he was awake enough did he notice the dragons were out again, sleeping on either side of his hand. He reached up to pet one when a noise interrupted him. He glanced down at Hanzo whose head rested against his arm, mouth slightly open.

Was he snoring? McCree swore he was imagining it until he heard it again and slapped his free hand over his mouth to keep himself from laughing.

It wasn’t what he expected when Genji mentioned it. Not loud or the kind that echoed in the room like Ana’s. It was much quieter, more like a wheeze that faded into a squeak.

He could not handle how adorable this was right now.

McCree shoved back the urge to hug Hanzo. He didn’t want to wake his boyfriend up. Instead he moved a hand over to lightly move any loose strands of hair back into place. Hanzo didn’t flinch, didn’t stir, he just snored again.

McCree shut his eyes, enjoying the sound for a few minutes until it stopped. Hanzo shifted and groaned before he opened his eyes, glancing around.

“Mornin’.” McCree couldn’t stop smiling.

Hanzo shut his eyes again. “You seem to be in high spirits.”

“You never told me your snoring was that adorable.”

His boyfriend sat up, plenty awake now. “What?”

“You were snoring and it’s probably the cutest damn thing I’ve ever seen.”

Hanzo’s cheeks went red. The dragons awoke from their spots on the pillow and floated over to his shoulder.

“I am... sorry if I woke you.”

“Nah, woke myself up.” McCree ran a hand over his face as he sat up. Only now was he aware of how dry his eyes felt.

Hanzo’s shy expression shifted to concern as he moved closer. “Another nightmare?”

“Don’t worry about it. Phoenix pulled me out. And uh, rather not discuss it.”
Hanzo hummed in agreement. He was slow to kiss McCree on the cheek, just in case he wanted to pull away.

McCree savored the contact, bumping their foreheads together.

“Perhaps there is still a way for me to take your mind off it.” Hanzo kissed the corner of his mouth.

“Hm, maybe, but I have to say that snoring gives you terrible morning breath.” McCree chuckled.

Hanzo glanced at him, annoyed, before his expression softened. “I might have a solution for that.”

“Oh?”

McCree didn’t get much warning. Hanzo pressed a quick kiss to his throat, then another before moving up. McCree sucked in a breath and let his head tilt back. As if this wasn’t normally enough to drive him insane the static just made it worse. Every single nerve in his body was awake and he shivered when Hanzo’s fingers trailed across his stomach.

Hanzo’s kisses moved over his jaw to his ear. “Jesse,” he whispered.

“Y-yeah?” McCree’s throat felt dry. He swallowed when Hanzo’s leg slid over his lap. He was hyper aware of how high his body temperature was rising.

“You did not have any plans this morning, did you?”

Well if he did he certainly couldn’t remember them now. McCree let his eyes drift closed as Hanzo’s hand slid up his shirt.

Too far.

The second Hanzo’s fingertips went over his scar McCree jerked back, too fast. His head slammed into the wall and he curled over, hands over the injury.

“Jesse? Are you alright?”

“Fine,” he shot back up before Hanzo could touch him again. “J-just uh, just, you reminded me I have uh, the others are coming back this morning. Gotta take care of a few things.”

He didn’t give Hanzo much chance to respond. He was too busy panicking, grabbing his clothes before rushing out the door. He didn’t stop running until he got close to his room, his breathing finally slowing down.

He turned to the wall and fell forward, letting his forehead slam into the metal.

“Fuck.”

“Smooth.”

“Do not want your commentary right now.” Jesse cursed as he opened his door. “You know why I did that.”
“Yes, but I imagine there were much better ways of asking him to stop.”

“Look,” McCree dug around for a new shirt. “I’ll explain it to him later, okay? Later.”

Her hum was full of disapproval but she didn’t argue any further.

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McCree didn’t see Hanzo during breakfast, or even after the group had arrived. He expected the archer to be there to greet Satya as she returned. McCree didn’t really go to look for him, too occupied with watching Satya react to Lena charging in, cheering.

He prayed that situation worked out or he wouldn’t forgive himself.

He didn’t see Hanzo until he headed to the firing range to try and get rid of some of his own frustration. No wonder Hanzo was avoiding him. McCree had practically tried to teleport through the wall to get away.

Hanzo was already there, already practicing. McCree felt a flash of nostalgia as he watched him, glare focused on the targets.

“Not interrupting am I?” He said.

Hanzo lowered his weapon as he looked over. “No. I can... leave if you want.”

McCree snorted. “What? Nah. It’s been ages since we’ve had a contest. I might be falling behind at this point.” He stepped closer. “Besides I–”

“I am sorry.”

McCree blinked. “Huh?”

“I overstepped my bounds this morning. I did not mean to make you uncomfortable.”

“Aw, hell darlin’, no. You didn’t.”

Hanzo frowned. “I find that hard to believe.”

“Look, it wasn’t you. Just... bad timing.” McCree said. “I promise I’m not mad or upset. I mean, hell, I should be apologizing for doing that. I could have just asked you to stop.”

His boyfriend glanced at the floor. “Unless you thought I would not.”

“No!” McCree snapped. “No, god no I do not think that. Come on, look at me.”

Hanzo did.

“I know you ain’t gonna do something that would upset me. Not intentionally. You didn’t do anything wrong, okay?”

Hanzo didn’t respond.
“Hanzo.”

“Fine,” the archer sighed. “But I apologize all the same. It was not wise to do something like that when you just awoke from a nightmare.”

“Apology accepted, don’t worry about it okay? Now come on. Best two out of three.”

McCree won the first round. Hanzo won the second, which lead to McCree pretending to blame Athena for rigging it. It was hard to tell if she got the joke or not, but Hanzo was laughing all the same.

“Do not be a sore loser, Jesse.”

“You know I’m kidding darlin’.”

“Somewhat, but you are a sore loser.”

“Even though you’re wrong it doesn’t matter. It’s best two out of three, and I’m winning this next one.”

“We’ll see about that.”

McCree was confident, for a while, taking down targets with ease, reloading fast enough that he didn’t miss a single one.

At least, not until one of Hanzo’s dragons wrapped around his head.

“Hey!” He shouted, the blue light from it obscuring his vision. “Get off me.”

Hanzo was laughing again.

“You’re cheating.”

“You never said using spirits was against the rules.”

McCree cursed. The dragon didn’t budge until the timer went off, moving to sit on top of his hat.

“I believe I won that.” Hanzo wouldn’t stop smiling as he tweaked the string on his bow.

“You, Hanzo, are a low and dirty cheater. What happened to honor.”

“It was not in the rules.”

“I take it back, you would intentionally upset me.”

“Sore loser.”

McCree glared, taking his hat off to shoo the dragon away. It fluttered off with a snort, returning to Hanzo’s arm. “Yeah, well, how about next time I just set your pants on fire?”

Hanzo leaned his bow against the wall before crossing his arms. “Perhaps next time we should
simply do combat training instead.”

McCree wouldn’t entirely mind that. Despite the fact he let Genji beat the tar out of him more than once it wasn’t that he was incapable of besting the ninja. He’d just have to make sure to watch out for the static. A strong enough blast would leave his left arm useless.

“I’ll consider it, if only to wipe that smug look off your face.”

“As if you need combat training to do that.”

It took McCree a second to understand what Hanzo was implying. The archer’s gaze never left his. His smile had dropped.

McCree didn’t move. Hanzo didn’t either. The cowboy wasn’t even sure what to say. Yes. No. He’d jump all in if there wasn’t for the simple fact he’d never discussed this gender business before.

Finally Hanzo did move, only to step closer. “Jesse, why did you panic this morning?”

“Huh? I told you darlin’. Bad timing.”

“Bad timing how? Because it was the morning? Because you had work? Because you just had a nightmare?”

“I...” Hell, he didn’t want to talk about this right now. “The last one, sort of.”

“Sort of?”

“What does it even matter?”

“Is this something you want, Jesse?”

McCree was going to ask for clarification but didn’t get the chance.

“Because it is... something I want, and I would like to help you find a solution to whatever it is that is making you hesitate.”

McCree ignored the rush of heat through his system, even with the puff of smoke that escaped from his lips. He coughed and covered his mouth.

“If you would rather wait longer, or it is simply a preference of yours, I would like to know that as well.”

“Nope.” The word came out as a squeak and McCree had to clear his throat. “No, waiting is uh, not the issue it’s um... I’m a little nervous about...” He made some vague signs with his hands, none of which made any sense. He knew he needed to be clear about this, just state it outright, but his nerves were getting the better of him. “Uh, I’m not—No I am—uh, I guess you could say that we don’t use the same equipment.”

McCree realized how terrible the wording for that was with the sheer confusion on Hanzo’s face. He glanced back at his bow and raised an eyebrow.

“Of course we don’t. I fail to see what our choice in weapons has to do with this.”
“No, fuck,” McCree ran both his hands over his face. “I don’t mean that kind of equipment.”

Hanzo continued to look baffled but he must have realized as his eyes went wide and he stood up straight.

McCree flinched.

“Jesse,” Hanzo’s voice was calm. McCree glanced back to see the archer was moving closer. “You were rather tired at the time, so perhaps you do not remember, but I have seen you with your shirt off.”

What? McCree tried to remember when that was. He’d always worn a shirt when they shared a bed. He never changed in Hanzo’s room. He scraped through encounter after encounter but came up with nothing.

“It was before training, after you had been helping Torbjörn outside. Since your undershirt was so sweaty you wanted to take it off.”

McCree froze. Now he remembered. He had been exhausted at the time from working outside. It completely skipped his mind that Hanzo didn’t already know.

“Shit, darlin’, that long? Why not say something?”

Hanzo shrugged. “Say what? It is not something that concerns me, nor was it any of my business.”

McCree frowned, putting his hands on his hips. “Come on now, there are plenty of things that aren’t your business that you’ve pried into.”

Hanzo’s cheeks turned pink and he look away. “Perhaps, but something like this does not change my opinion of you. You are Jesse McCree, frustrating cowboy, foolish hero, always keen on speaking your mind except when it matters most.”

“Guess we have that in common, huh?”

Hanzo laughed at that and moved closer. He reached up to touch McCree’s face and he chose not to pull away from it.

“You were my rival, my friend, and now the person I would like to share that affection with. That has not changed.”

“Aw, hell darlin’.”

“I apologize.” Hanzo didn’t remove his hand, thumb brushing over McCree’s cheek. “I thought you knew that I knew.”

McCree studied his fond expression for a moment and something fluttered in his chest, threatening to burst out. “Huh.”

“What is it?”

“I mean, you knew and you were still... this morning...”
Hanzo’s hand moved down, grabbing McCree’s collar and jerking him forward. “Unfortunately, I am not bold enough to mention the number of times I have already wanted to try that.” Those dark brown eyes kept glancing down at McCree’s lips. “But, perhaps I am bold enough to mention that I would like to try it again. If that is alright with you.”

Heat ran through McCree’s system like a wave. He didn’t pull back, felt himself moving closer.

“More than alright, way more than alright. Just uh, not too fast.” He glanced around the room. “And uh, might want to get out of here first.”

Hanzo almost looked like he was going to disagree, but he let go. “Yes, that sentiment is shared. The benches in here are terribly uncomfortable.”

“Oh?” McCree tried to turn his smooth back on, lingering close to Hanzo as he gathered his equipment. “And how would you know that?”

Hanzo smirked, those dark eyes fixed on him again. “Genji once told me you complained about it for a week.”

McCree was sputtering all over again. “Wait, wait, hang on, you and Genji talked about that?”

“He insisted on giving me advice.”

“For–?! What is wrong with him?”

“You’re only asking that question now?”

McCree grumbled, considering it for a moment. “... What else did he tell you?”

Hanzo was still smiling as he walked past. “You will just have to find out.”

“You’re terrible, Hanzo.”

“Perhaps,” his boyfriend glanced back as the door opened. “Now hurry up. I would rather not be interrupted by the others calling us for dinner.”

McCree almost tripped in his scramble to get out the door. Hanzo laughed. The sound left McCree wanting to kiss him.

But not right now.

There’d be plenty of that soon enough.

Chapter End Notes

Part 14 is in the works, gonna try and get it done before the month is up
*Stumbles in*

Hahahahahaha

heeeeeey.......

Nope, haven't quit yet, sorry for the delays. Tons of projects on top of upcoming holidays : ) Well hopefully most of it'll be cleared soon (That's what I always say isn't it...)

Hope y'all ready for the ride this part is about to start tho

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It only took a month for things to go from bad to worse.

It all started with Angela. She’d gone with Mei to assist with relief efforts in Nanjing after an earthquake.

It was a bit of a miracle really. The distraction of a child had her turning just enough to make the fatal bullet hit her shoulder instead. And Angela, being Angela, was more concerned with getting the child and everyone else under cover before treating her injury.

She’d only recently recovered.

A week later–while Winston, Ana and Torbjörn tried to trace the bullet–Lúcio got hit after a concert.

Just as the lights went down the bullet went off. It missed. Genji and Hana were there, ready to track the sniper, but Lúcio was far more worried about getting the crowd out of the way.

“You really think they can keep up with me?” He taunted.

They did.

With two more shots Lúcio knew he had to draw the fire away from civilians. That’s when the fourth shot hit. Not its intended target, but the bullet cut into the circuitry of his skates. The power cut off. His legs wouldn’t move.

For a few moments he considered himself dead until he got some unexpected help. Junkrat seemed oblivious to the chaos, asking for an autograph. Roadhog had to pull both of them to safety.

It wasn’t ideal, but with a promised autograph and five hundred dollars the duo saved Lúcio’s life.

For a week they lingered on base, despite the numerous arguments if it should be allowed.
“They are criminals,” Satya spat.

“We’re all criminals,” Hana pointed out. “And their track record is pretty mild.”

“They leveled a building.” Angela glared, more dangerous than McCree had ever seen. “I remember.”

McCree put a hand on her shoulder. The tension would only aggravate her injury.

In the end, the junkers had places to go. Winston handed over a communicator. Allies were always good to have, even if they didn’t have the same goals.

McCree could only pray that was the end of it.

Three days later his hopes were ruined.

Zarya and Mei were going to travel Russia for a bit, assisting with the looming omnic crisis. While there was no telling how long it would be, Zenyatta insisted on tagging along for some of it. Strangely enough, Zarya allowed it.

A bullet hit him in the spine.

Mei called them, her panic making it hard to get the details. It was repairable, at least, engineers already working on the damage. However, the second the bullet struck, Zenyatta went down. Zarya went on the defensive. Mei had almost sworn it killed him.

The moment he was repaired he returned to the base, spending most of his time assuring Genji that he was alright.

By now everyone was on edge. Whether they showed it or not, McCree could feel it. Genji was angry, frightened, his temper appearing over the smallest things. Fareeha was no better, spending so long training her vision that she was left with a severe migraine.

Whenever Zarya would check in she would try and be subtle about asking after Zenyatta. She often tried to get Mei to go back, in case their enemy was still nearby. Somehow the lack of danger only made her more anxious.

Hana was one of the worst, in a sense, acting like they’d all be fine. She rarely left Lúcio’s side. There was blood under her fingernails.

McCree wasn’t bold enough to point it out, but Jack must have. He heard them screaming at each other in the training room.

McCree certainly didn’t have the energy to help any of them. Instead he focused his anxiety on research. He looked at satellite images of the locations, used the simulation map to try recreating it. He needed to find out why this was happening.

Twice he might pass off as coincidence, but not three times.

“Jesse?”
McCree glanced over at Winston.

“What are you doing in my lab?”

“Sorry Chief,” McCree leaned back in his seat. “Trying to pin down who’s targeting us and why.”

Winston came over, looking at the screen. “Ana suspects it’s Widowmaker.”

“See, I’d believe that, but that doesn’t answer all of my questions.”

“What do you mean?”

“Why go after Angela, Lúcio and Zenyatta? Why not Zarya? Or Mei? Both of them are still in the same area. She’s been targeting our supports.” He tapped open the mission logs again. “On top of that, how the hell does she know where they’ll be?”

“Trust me, I’ve been wondering the same thing. Athena hasn’t detected anything in our systems.”

“But she could miss something.”

“Unlikely,” the A.I. responded. “But I cannot rule out the possibility.”

“Well we have to assume they’re getting the data somehow. Torbjörn already confirmed the bullets are from the same gun.” McCree pulled up the ballistics. “That’s too much distance to cover to be a coincidence.”

Winston sighed. “Then what do we do? Tracking her is far too difficult, we’ve already tried. Something keeps wiping her trail.”

McCree hummed, considering his options. If something was getting in, he trusted that Athena and Winston could find a solution, but it might take time.

“If we need logs, I’d stick to paper until we find the leak. But...” He glanced over the data. “It might be worth posting one more.”

“Meaning?”

“Call a meeting in thirty. I might have an idea.”

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McCree didn’t expect everyone to show up. He’d listed it as optional. Even then, everyone on base crowded into the room, including Bastion. The omnic grew a few flowers to give to Hana who was biting her nails again.

McCree wasn’t sure about leading this meeting, never had before, but right now he was the only one who could. He prayed that someone would take over along the way.

He cut off the chatter with a sharp whistle. Every eye in the room turned toward him.

“So,” he cleared his throat. “I’m sure y’all have noticed, but we have a problem.”
“That’s putting it lightly.” Genji almost growled from his position near the front.

McCree took a breath to get rid of his irritation. “Genji, I know why you’re upset, but save your attitude for later.”

The ninja looked away. Zenyatta put a hand on his shoulder.

“We already confirmed the bullets are from the same gun, meaning it’s more than likely the same shooter.”

“Widowmaker,” Ana hissed.

“But how can she know our locations?” Hana said. “I mean, Lúcio’s concert was public but still.”

“Don’t know that either.” McCree fiddled with the brim of his hat. “Best we can figure is someone found a leak that allows them to slip in and out unnoticed. Until Winston finds it I suggest you save anything important on paper.”

“And then what?” Hanzo asked. “We cannot afford to hide.”

“Why I called you guys here, actually. Might have an idea. If our enemy is Widowmaker, and we don’t have any solid proof it is, tracking her down is useless. But our enemy has been targeting our supports. It’s safe to say they’ll do it again.”

“You want to use one of them as bait.” Fareeha spoke up, glaring at him.

McCree held up his hands. “Only if they’re okay with it.”

“I am,” Ana said. “I’ve been waiting for this rematch for too long.”

“I would also like to assist in any way I can.” Satya added. “I refuse to sit by like I did the last time this happened.”

“It won’t be enough,” Jack’s visor was off, his gaze fixed on the space above Genji. “If they sniff out that it’s a setup it’ll be useless.”

“So make a real mission out of it.” Ana argued. “With what Satya dug up in Vishkar you and I have plenty of places to dig through. We can log it down as one of those.”

“But you can’t go by yourselves.” Hana snapped. “She could easily bring back up along.”

McCree shrugged. “So we send a few more people and don’t list them in the report. Lie in wait for her to show up.”

“It’s too risky.” Angela said. “Ana’s the only healer in a condition to go on missions and you’re making her into a target. What if something goes wrong?”

“I have to agree.” Genji added. “And I doubt it’s worth them risking their lives a second time.”

Ana snorted, leaning back in her chair. “We’ll take Jesse with us.”

McCree blinked, looking over at her. “Pardon?”
“You can heal, can’t you? Or did I hallucinate all that training you’ve been doing.”

“Well, yes?”

“On top of that, Talon doesn’t know you can.”

“That might not be true.” Jack said. “Reaper knows what that phoenix can do. We can’t ignore the possibility that he’s told them.”

Ana grinned. “How about a disguise then?”

McCree felt himself getting confused all over again. What exactly was she thinking?

“Just something that would make him hard to recognize at first. They wouldn’t know what to expect out of him.”

Ah, now he was getting it. An entirely new alias is what she meant, like Soldier 76 and the Shrike. While he was never comfortable parting with his cowboy hat he’d done it more than once for undercover jobs.

And what a joy those were.

“Oh no,” Fareeha said. “Just look at his face mom. What have you started.”

McCree only now noticed his grin and tried to cover it.

“It better not be anything like your beach disguise.” Genji chimed in.

Hanzo raised an eyebrow. “Beach disguise?”

Ana was snorting from laughing while McCree glared at Genji.

“We ain’t here to talk about that.”

“Well now I want to talk about it,” Lúcio added.

“Guys, focus.” McCree said. “I’ll do a Q&A later, we need a plan.”

“We should find our location first.” Satya interrupted. “As you said, you have picked up a few places to look into, but finding one that would work to our advantage would be the best.”

McCree nodded. “Considering it’s a sniper we need a place where we can have eyes on the tallest building.”

Hanzo said, “Is that an invitation?”

“You know what? Yes. The more keen eyes we have the better.”

Lena raised her hand, determination on her face. “If we’re setting up a team I’m volunteering. I have a score to settle.”
“Yeah?” Fareeha tilted her head in Lena’s direction. “Get in line.”

“After me.” Genji said.

Suddenly the room erupted with people insisting on why they should go. Either to hunt down Widowmaker or provide back up. McCree’s attempts to speak over them were futile. He snatched his glove off before whistling with his fingers.

The sound cut through the noise and everyone fell silent.

“Sorry, but not everyone can go. Too much chaos isn’t going to help us in this situation. Lena’s ability to pursue Widowmaker is going to come in handy. If some of you insist on being nearby for back-up, that’s fine.” His gaze scanned the crowd, most people seeming resigned to the decision. “Except you, Genji.”

The ninja raised his shoulders. “Excuse me?”

“You heard me. This situation has you all out of sorts. Your temper is on the fritz.”

Lúcio cringed. “Eastwood isn’t wrong.”

Genji looked like he was about to argue, his vents hissing out air before he slouched back in his seat. “Fine.”

“Let’s take a break.” Ana said. “I think we could all use it. Jack and I will find a location to investigate. We can finish making a plan from there.”

“Hey,” Lena said. “If Jesse’s going for a new alias can I get one as well?”

Jack responded. “Like what?”

“I’m going to be Sonic.”

“No.”

“Why not?” Hana rolled her eyes. “Because she’d steal your color scheme?”

Lúcio whistled. Ana was laughing again. McCree just shook his head and moved away from the front of the room.

He already had work to do.

Chapter End Notes

Appreciate your patience again guys. I know how tormenting it can be to wait for updates hhhhh

If you enjoy this fic and want to show some extra support please considering buying me a ko-fi off my tumblr page. A lot of expenses are hitting me hard as of late
“I mean, I think it could use some more gold trim.” McCree rubbed at his chin, studying the new outfit he’d been working on for this mission. At first he figured Mei’s mariachi idea had been too much, but between her and Torbjörn they made it work. The red might be too noticeable but there was plenty of black to counteract it. All of it was padded down with armor, although nothing as heavy duty as his chest plate. A close range shot could do him in.

Clementine sat on his shoulder. “Aren’t you supposed to be hiding? Is this not too loud?”

“Technically making myself a target is part of the strategy.” McCree pointed out before snatching up the hat. “This at least could use some more trim.”

“You are lucky Lady Zhou is patient enough to help you.”

“Oh it’s nothing,” Mei waved a hand. “It’s pretty fun actually.”

“I still think I could use a different codename.” McCree put the hat back.

“Fifty shades of red,” Clementine mumbled.

“Ha ha, no.” He glared at her. “Besides, what does that make you?”

Mei’s giggling interrupted them. “Why not just keep it simple? Like Phoenix?”

“I am not going to be affiliated with this.” Clementine snorted.

“Too late hun, I’m gonna be using those wings all night.”

She raised the feathers on her neck before her form burst into flames, vanishing.

“I did not think she’d be so against it.” Mei picked up the hat herself, feeling around the brim.

“She’s mostly worried about me making a target out of myself, but it’s not like I won’t have some protection with this outfit.” He watched her for a moment, drawing out patterns onto the material. “Thanks for helping with this by the way. You didn’t have to come back.”

“Well, Zarya was adamant about it.” Mei sighed. “I understand that she is worried, and why, but it’s not like I’m not worried about her too.”

“She’s coming back soon too, ain’t she?”

“Yeah. I only agreed to come back if she promised we could head out again after this is all dealt
“I image there’s a lot we can take care of if we get Widow out of the way.”

“Um, Jesse?”

McCree tried to meet her gaze but she was staring at the floor. “Yeah?”

“Are you worried that Reaper is going to show up?”

He sighed, not sure if she was guessing or if he was really that transparent. “Yeah, it’s possible, but I’m better prepared this time.”

“Sorry,” she fiddled with the jacket. “Guess I’m getting too anxious.”

“Nah, I understand. C’mere.”

Mei practically rushed into the hug, squeezing tight. McCree ignored the pain in his ribs and patted her head. Even with a plan in place the stress on the base was only getting worse and worse. If McCree didn’t understand everyone’s concerns he might have gone mad by the number of people checking in on him. Even Jack was hovering more than usual.

As for Mei, well, McCree couldn’t begin to guess what was going on in her head, but he imagined there was a lot of it.

“How is it going?”

Both of them turned to see Hanzo leaning against the doorframe.

“Hanzo,” McCree grinned and nudged Mei next to the outfit. “She’s gonna add some more patterns but what do you think?”

Hanzo squinted a bit, as if someone suddenly shined a flashlight on him. “It is... loud.”

“Good, that’s the idea.”

“It is still a foolish plan.”

“Yeah, yeah, you and bird mom have told me a dozen times.” He let go of Mei. “But if you’re around, you’ll have my back.”

Hanzo snorted, his gaze scanning the disguise. “It suits you, somehow.”

“I told him,” Mei smiled. “If he gets out of there with it intact he has to keep it for the halloween party.”

McCree snorted. “We’ll see about that. Genji was talkin’ matching costumes.”

Hanzo hummed, possibly imagining it. “Are you free now, Jesse?”

“Sure am, you have something in mind?” McCree winked.
Hanzo scoffed, a faint smile on his face. “You still need to practice your flying for this mission.”

“Well that sounds less fun.”

Mei giggled and gave him a nudge. “Go on, I’ll see what I can get done.”

“Alright, but if you need more help give me a call.”

Mei agreed and McCree followed Hanzo out into the hall. The archer’s body language said it was all work and no play. His shoulders were stiff, arms crossed.

“You know I have my flying down by now, right?”

“You need to evade better.”

“What? You planning to shoot me?”

“We have bullets for that.”

McCree groaned. “Still hurt like a bitch.”

“You heal fast.”

“Well,” McCree spun so he was in front of Hanzo. “Are there any prizes involved?”

“No,” Hanzo’s eyes scanned his face. “Unless you dodge an entire clip. Then…” He stepped closer, standing on his toes so he could whisper in McCree’s ear. “Perhaps we could take a… break.”

McCree felt the heat rush to his cheeks but he grinned. “I’m gonna nail this.”

“Hm.”

“Then I’m gonna nail you.”

Hanzo laughed but pushed him to keep walking. “Foolish.”

McCree couldn’t dodge an entire clip.

He tried, lord did he try. But his best was only four, and after so many tries he couldn’t keep his wings solid.

Hanzo took some pity on him, kissing every one of his remaining bruises before insisting McCree get some rest.

McCree did, but complained about it the whole time.

Now he was curled up in the living room with an almost empty cup of tea. He had his holoscreen on, reading what he could best describe as a fantasy western series. The supernatural and cowboys mixed pretty well.
“Hey Eastwood,” Lúcio suddenly plopped onto the couch.

“Hey Lú, what’s up?”

The musician didn’t respond at first, seeming entranced by the words on the screen. “Oh, think you can make a couple of simulations for me and Genji?”

“Another one? You’re determined to win next time, aren’t you.”

Lúcio laughed. “Well, he is. Don’t tell him, but I wouldn’t mind him losing another bet.” He fell back on the sofa. “But it’s also to keep him distracted while you’re on that mission. I know he’s fretting about it.”

McCree hummed in agreement, closing the book. “What kind were you looking for?”

“Stealth would be good. I’ve got some stuff I want to test out. Maybe a mission simulation? Something to help with our coordination.”

“Speaking of that, how’s your combat training going?”

Lúcio smirked. “With Morrison? On hold. Apparently screaming in his ear is an ‘unsavory tactic.’”

McCree snorted. “Did he really say that?”

The musician repeated it in Jack’s voice.

McCree’s laughter made standing up a bit of a challenge. He grabbed the tea mug, sipping down the rest of it. “Alright, I’ll try and get them done tonight.”

“Thanks Eastwood.” Lúcio glanced at the table. “You mind lending me what you were reading?”

“Nah, just ask Athena. My archive isn’t locked.”

“Sound dangerous. What if I find your secret love for supernatural romance.”

McCree shook his head. “Sorry, but you can’t shame my interest in books.” He headed to the kitchen before pausing and glancing back. “You should see Jack’s though.”

“Is it locked?”

“Nope.”

Lúcio grinned at him before he jumped up and sped out of the room.

McCree rinsed out his mug before heading downstairs. That many simulations might be a challenge, but he figured he could use some old ones as a base.

When he reached the control room, he noticed something was off. Was that shouting? He paused, listened more closely, moved toward the training room.

Hana was screaming. “Still want to critique my aim you...” The shouts faded into Korean.
Jack’s voice was calm in response. “Hana, you need to calm down.”

“I am calm!”

“Then why are you screaming?”

Hana gave a frustrated shout and stomped toward the door. “I hope you actually get shot!”

McCree didn’t have time to back up. The door flew open. Hana looked shocked before she glared at him too.

“Hana?”

She ignored him and stormed past.

McCree shouted after her but she just kept going. He decided it’d be better not to chase.

Instead he peered into the room. Jack’s back was turned, shutting down whatever had been going on.

McCree didn’t hesitate to ask questions as he walked over. “The fuck happened?”

Jack shut the screen off and glanced in McCree’s direction. Now the damage was obvious. There was a bruise on his face, just below the eye and circular in shape. It was already pretty dark.

“She shot me.” Jack turned all the way around and crossed his arms.

McCree was torn between laughing and sympathizing. “Well, did you deserve it?”

“I told her that her aim was off center.”

McCree rolled his eyes. “Jack, you know how antsy she is right now. The hell are you two doing down here all the time? She should be de-stressing.”

“Hey,” Jack raised his voice. “She’s the one who insists we do this all the time.”

“Then say no.”

“We both know it’s never that easy with her. I tried it. She won’t leave me alone.”

“Cause she’s scared,” McCree glanced at the floor, noting the new scuff marks from stray bullets. “She’s tough as nails, but I don’t think she’s fond of the idea of losing teammates again.” He glanced at the injury again. “How’d she take you off guard anyway?”

Jack sighed and rubbed the back of his neck. “My wolf’s predictions are typically based on reading an opponent’s intent. That wasn’t intentional.”

“Seems too well aimed to be not intentional.”

Jack snorted. “I’m not a mind reader, but my guess is it was just a response to high emotions.”
“You gonna ask her to apologize?” McCree half-teased.

Jack’s answer was short. “No.” He stepped around McCree, heading for the door.

“Whoa, wait up.” McCree grabbed Jack’s shoulder. The man flinched out of his grip and spun around. “Let me fix that up for you.”


“Sure but I can help you heal faster.”

Another step. “I’m fine.”

McCree took off his glove and lifted his hand. “Stop being a stubborn ass and let me help.”

“I said I’m fine.”

His hand hovered next to Jack’s cheek. “Won’t even take a–”

The slap was harsh, quick. At first McCree didn’t even register the cuts on his wrist until he saw the ice cover Jack’s fingers.

The soldier gripped his arm as he took another step back. “Don’t touch me.”

It took too long for the shock to wear off. McCree kept glancing between Jack and the blood on his arm. Thankfully they were minor enough that he could already see Clementine patching them up.

Then everything fell into place. He snapped his glove back on, shooting Jack a glare that he probably couldn’t even see. “Fine, have it your way. Go see Angela or Ana instead. You at least trust them right?”

Jack didn’t respond. McCree stormed past him this time, making sure to bump into him. The soldier flinched again.

McCree didn’t look back. He retreated into the control room, sitting down in the corner so he didn’t have to look at the camera feeds.

He thought Jack was getting better. So much for that. The man still blamed him for all that shit, didn’t he.

Well, McCree couldn’t really blame him. He’d probably feel the same if a single person was the reason he lost everything he cared about.

“Excuse me?” Clementine spoke up. “Master McCree, none of that was your fault.”

“Then why does it feel that way?”

“Don’t think on Jack, he can figure out his own emotional constipation.”

The phrasing made him laugh but the good mood quickly fled. He’d take a few minutes and then get to work.
At least making simulations would be a good distraction.
McCree hated playing the waiting game.

It was the first thing Gabe drilled into him when he joined Blackwatch. Wait for an order. Wait for a target. Wait for an opening. Even if you had to sit in the same spot for five hours, you waited.

McCree learned it. He did it well. But he still hated it.

He and Lena were currently tucked in a nearby alley. No security cams, no wandering pedestrians to give away their position.

Jack was in the nearby office building, owned by one of the “companies” Vishkar had dealings with. Ana had a watchful eye on him and all the other floors.

Hanzo and Satya were keeping an eye out for Widowmaker. The pair had trailed a number of Satya’s threads on the roof to detect movement.

It was a part of the plan Lena had mixed feelings about.

“Why can’t we hide closer?” She whispered. “What if something goes wrong and we’re not quick enough?”

“Between our snipers and Satya’s abilities there’s no way she’s sneaking up on us.” McCree studied her expression. “They’ll be alright.”

Lena huffed. “Sorry, I’m just–”

“I know.” McCree had his own source of anxiety. Missions always ran the risk of going sideways and Widowmaker might not come alone.

You’ve got your eyes peeled right?

“Trust me,” Clementine replied. “I won’t be quiet if I see him this time.”

He sighed.

All he could do was wait.

The minutes felt like hours. Jack would send in the occasional update, but there was nothing more. McCree kept one hand on Peacekeeper while his prosthetic kept adjusting the mask on his face. It never sat right on his nose.
“Someone’s here.” Satya’s voice was calm but every one of McCree’s nerves woke up as he got ready to run.

Before she could give a location the shot ran through the air followed by the shattering of glass. The building’s alarm started going off.

“Shit, Soldier?” Ana cursed. “I don’t have a visual.”

“I do,” Hanzo said. “Symmetra and I are in pursuit.”

“Soldier,” Ana kept going. “Are you alright?”

“Fine,” Jack said. “Tracer, Phoenix, draw her fire and slow her down.”

“On it,” Lena blinked out of the alley and down the street. McCree smiled, chasing after before summoning his wings to go even faster. For now he kept his flying low, not wanting to draw too much attention without having her location.

“She triggered a trap.” Satya said. “We need to pin her down.”

“On my way!” Lena chimed in.

She zipped down the street so quick that McCree couldn’t hope to keep up. Instead he let himself move higher, trying to get a visual on his team or any other possible threats. Perhaps he should check on Jack. The soldier said he was fine but it was possible he was injured.

Then again, he made it clear last time he didn’t want any help.

McCree was distracted as he gazed through the windows. The sound of gunfire drew him back and he whipped his head around to find the source.

Hanzo spoke up. “Are you two alright?”

“Fine,” Lena answered with a cough. “But we lost visual. Anyone see her?”

McCree finally spotted the cloud of smoke rising from one of the buildings. He took over, hovering over it as he looked around. Satya was tugging on her threads, trying to detect something. Lena stood with her pistols at the ready.

He thought he spotted movement two buildings over. He risked flying closer, even landing as his wings vanished in the air. He rested his hand on Peacekeeper.

Ana shouted into the line. “Phoenix! Two o’ clock!”

His gaze snapped over, able to catch the glint of Widowmaker’s barrel before the shot went off.

He hit the ground to dodge it, almost missing when she fled. His wings were back out, lifting him back into the air. “Found her.”

“So have I.” Ana said. “Phoenix, keep her in the open.”

McCree rushed ahead, cutting off Widowmaker before she could jump down into the alley below.
She aimed another shot at his head. He let himself drop to avoid it. Her second attempt was cut off by one of Ana’s sleep darts. Widowmaker weaved to the side, aiming to run when Lena reappeared.

“Well, that was a bit close,” she grinned and aimed her pistols. 

Widowmaker was cornered.

Suddenly there was a shot from somewhere else, loud. McCree didn’t have time to react before the bullet cut through one of his wings. Both of them sparked and vanished into the air. He shouted as he dropped, almost missing the edge of the building. His shoulder strained as he tried to keep his grip, his chest slamming into the brick.

He glanced up in time to see Widowmaker leap over him onto the next building.

Lena looked over, already reaching toward him. “You okay?”

“Fine, chase her. I can catch myself.”

She hesitated for a brief moment before blinking on ahead. McCree took a few deep breaths to slow his heart down before he brought his wings back. He let go of the edge, slowly hovering to the ground as he looked around.

Who the fuck shot him?

“You guys see who that was?” He asked.

“No,” Ana said. “I apologize, my focus was on Widowmaker.”

“I am not in the right position.” Hanzo said.

McCree kept looking around. The shot had to come from down here somewhere, but he couldn’t see anything.

That only made him more nervous.

“Master McCree.”

Everything seemed to go cold. He could feel Clementine’s fear and he snapped Peacekeeper out of his holster. He briefly shut his eyes to get a look around.

After all, only one thing so far struck that kind of emotion in her.

The dark space around him seemed to glow. He slowly followed it until he saw the source of light.

Those two glowing eyes.

The owl tilted its head, smiling. “Vaquero.”

He froze. Images from his nightmares flashed around in his head. He opened his eyes. The alley was still empty, but he knew someone had to be nearby.

“Guys,” he spoke into his comm. “We have company.”
Jack responded. “What kind of company?”

McCree glanced down, watching the shadows move back and curl up into a familiar figure.

“Reaper.”
“What?” Hanzo shouted into the line. “Get out of there.”

Yeah, that wasn’t likely. “Sorry but I’m going to keep him busy. You guys focus on getting Widow.”

“That is too risky.”

“I can hold out for a little while. Focus on the mission.”

“Hanzo, I’ll back him up when I’m done here.” Jack said. “If too many of us chase him down it’ll be useless.”

The whole time Reaper hadn’t moved. He just stood there at the end of the alley, guns not even drawn.

“So, what?” McCree tightened his grip on his gun. “We pick up where we left off last time... Gabe?”

Reaper didn’t even flinch at the name. He just laughed before shifting back into a cloud and taking off.

“Oh no you don’t.” McCree took off after it.

Reaper must have been toying with him, McCree wasn’t unaware, but it was better to keep the mercenary occupied and away from the rest of his team. The shadow slid along the ground, ducking in and out of side streets. McCree stayed close on it’s trail, listening for updates from his team.

“Symmetra?” Hanzo’s panic almost had him screeching to a halt. “Can you hear me?”

“I am fine,” Her voice was rough. “I am away from the gas.”

Widowmaker must have used a venom mine. McCree kept his eyes focused ahead.

“I’m going back.” Lena said.

“No,” Satya snapped. “I will be fine. Phoenix, those ashes you gave us are equipped to deal with poisons, correct?”

“Yup,” he skidded to a stop when Reaper took a sudden turn. “Purple lid.”
Hanzo spoke up. “Are you still alright?”

“Well getting just a bit tired. Bastard just keeps running.”

“Make sure he doesn’t lure you anywhere.”

Hell, that was a good point. Right now McCree could just be playing into another trap.

Time to cut this chase short.

He watched carefully, although with street lights as the only source it was hard to keep track. He held his gun out, acting as if he was going to shoot the shadow.

The moment it weaved left he fired.

Clementine followed his bullet out, rushing across the ground in front of Reaper’s intended exit. A trail of fire followed after, rising up from the ground like a wall. She continued her flight, circling around Reaper before finally vanishing.

Reaper reformed, glancing at the flames before looking at McCree.

“What’s wrong? Not scared of a little fire are you?” McCree got his next shot ready.

Reaper snorted, still studying him before he said, “You look ridiculous.”

McCree flinched, raising his gun. “You looked in a mirror lately? Now no more running you bird brained bastard. I want to talk to Gabe.”

Reaper laughed, taking a step forward. “How do you know you’re not talking to him?”

“How senselessly optimistic. Who taught you that? Couldn’t have been Jack.”

McCree pressed his finger against the trigger.

“Guess it’ll just make it easier to get my revenge on you.”

McCree fired. Reaper already shifted into smoke, rushing forward. He didn’t have time to fire again. Reaper’s claws latched onto his shoulder, trying to shove him back.

McCree summoned his flames, letting them rush up from his fingers to his neck. Reaper let go. With his knuckles still ignited McCree aimed a punch. It connected, but it didn’t hit as hard as he was hoping.

“Revenge for what you damn bird? I never did a thing to you.”

“Still think it’s not me in here, huh?” Reaper spun back, gun forming in his hand. “You think you can run off like that and leave me to die?”

McCree flinched almost a second too long. He barely ducked out of the way of the bullet, feeling the shockwaves brush over his hat.
“Sorry, but I ain’t buying that shit. You’re not Gabe.” McCree fired back.

The bullet hit. Reaper shifted into smoke, quickly trailing away. The fire from earlier was dying down.

When the mercenary reformed a pair of black wings followed. For a few moments McCree swore he saw stars in them.

Then Reaper took off.

McCree cursed, snapping his own wings out to give chase. He took a moment to listen to his comm. His team was losing track of Widowmaker. Not good.

He had to keep Reaper out of the fight or they’d lose her for sure.

“Master McCree,” Clementine spoke up. “I am sure you’re aware but I’m going to advise caution. There is always a purpose for anything Gabriel does, or my brother.”

“That ain’t Gabe. It can’t be Gabe.”

She was quiet for a moment. “In the fullest sense, no. But it is some part of him.”

Cool, great, fantastic. No wonder whoever it was kept arguing with him.

He flew faster, determined to catch Reaper before anything else happened. McCree could hear him talking, although he couldn’t make out a word of it. Faster, faster, he used his own anger to spur himself forward. His hand reached out. Almost there.

“Phoenix!” Ana screamed into the line.

His gaze snapped down. He saw Widowmaker perched, her rifle aimed right at him.

He halted to a stop, soon enough that the bullet flew in front of him. However the shock had his wings falling apart. He scrambled in the air a few moments, barely reforming them in time to catch himself above the ground.

His sigh of relief was shoved out of his lungs when something landed on top of him. He gasped, face hitting concrete. Everything spun for a moment. His gaze snapped to Reaper. Bastard was laughing again, huge wings blocking out the light.

McCree’s attempts to throw him off were useless. Even when he managed long enough to roll over Reaper shoved him down again, claws wrapping around his throat. McCree tried to burn him off again, but the lack of air made it hard for him to focus.

“Damn it Gabe,” He choked out. His gun, where was his gun? “Knock it off.”

“Oh, I’m Gabe now huh?”

McCree glared at Reaper, only now realizing he could see his eyes. Suddenly, in the darkness of the mask, two glowing white eyes stared back at him.
He couldn’t gasp in shock.

“You know, vaquero.” Reaper leaned closer. “You were right. You haven’t done a thing to me.” His voice shifted into something hauntingly familiar as he whispered. “But my sister did.”

There was a click. Reaper pressed the shotgun to his forehead.

“Wonder how long it would take her to fix an injury like this?”

McCree scrambled to get free. To breath. To do something.

“Gabe?” He gasped out. Maybe he was talking to the owl right now. Maybe it had been Gabriel earlier, some dark part of him. But the other Gabriel had to be in there, somewhere. “Damn it, Gabe?” His throat hurt. His lungs were starting to burn.

“Papá?”

Suddenly the pressure on his throat and his forehead vanished. The glow in Reaper’s eyes was gone.

“Gabe?” McCree called out again, pushing the shotgun to the side as he tried to sit up. “You there?”

The claws that hovered over his throat were shaking. McCree studied Reaper’s mask, desperate to be able to see his face. What the hell was going on?

Finally he heard Gabriel mumble, “Killer.”

“What?”

He didn’t get an explanation. The white eyes reappeared. Reaper growled, shoving McCree back against the concrete. He raised his shotgun.

There was another growl. McCree didn’t have time to glance at the source. A blur of white flashed in front of him and suddenly the weight on his body was gone. He sat up, finding his gun before turning back to check on Reaper. Now the mercenary was pinned to the ground by Jack’s wolf. The spirit was still growling, the fur on its back raised.

“You,” it’s voice seemed to shake the ground. “This is all your fault. You did this to her.”

Reaper actually laughed. The wolf growled again, rearing back as if it was going to attack.

A sharp whistle made it pause. McCree turned once more to see Jack running over.

“Sending him after me again, huh Jack?” Reaper continued to taunt.

The bark made McCree jump. His heart stopped. It was so loud he could feel it run through the ground, the air, through his lungs. The air seemed to freeze. The faint static sound from the street lamps went quiet.

For a moment, McCree couldn’t hear anything.
Then Jack whistled again and it felt like everything was moving again. At first the wolf didn’t budge until Jack did it again. Finally the spirit stepped away, Reaper lying completely still in the ground. He wasn’t dead was he? That wasn’t possible.

The wolf padded over to Jack before vanishing in the air. The soldier’s gaze was fixed on Reaper before it snapped over to McCree.

“You alright?”

McCree glanced over at Reaper again, still unconscious on the ground. Just how powerful was that wolf? McCree had no idea what it was capable of.

And what the hell did Reaper mean by “again?”

McCree looked back at Jack and the anger snapped up so quick a few sparks came off his shoulders.

“What the fuck was that Jack?” He growled, putting his gun away.

Jack pressed his eyebrows together. “What are you talking about?”

“I said you wish.” McCree slapped his hand away, only wishing he could make it hurt as much as Jack did. “You wish you could just trade my life for his, don’t you? That’d he never given me this damn bird?”

The soldier was frozen for a moment, hand still hovering in the air. “The hell... McCree you can’t possibly—” He stopped and straightened up.

McCree saw him glance to the side, tried to follow his line of sight, but suddenly Jack slammed into him. McCree’s back hit the ground. The blast of gunfire sounded louder than ever before.

His eyes went wide as he scrambled back up.

McCree saw him glance to the side, tried to follow his line of sight, but suddenly Jack slammed into him. McCree’s back hit the ground. The blast of gunfire sounded louder than ever before.

McCree glanced to see the cause. Reaper was back up, shotguns still out as he slowly stepped forward.

“Predictable,” he muttered. “Knew you’d take the bullet, no matter where I aimed it. You haven’t changed a bit.”

McCree didn’t think as he darted forward, drawing his gun. He positioned himself between Jack
and Reaper, determined not to get tossed aside this time.

Reaper was laughing again, nodding at the revolver in McCree’s hand. “You really think you can shoot me?”

McCree studied the shotguns. Two against one were odds he could beat, although they weren’t something he preferred. “I’ve done it before. Know it wouldn’t kill you.”

The shotguns vanished. Reaper kept moving forward. “Maybe I’d let it. Maybe I’d let it kill him. What would you do then, vaquero? Would you follow him?”

His heart stopped. He felt himself hesitating. Not good. He had to focus but he couldn’t shake the damn nightmare.

“I got her,” Ana’s voice in the comm made him flinch. “Nailed her with a sleep dart.”

They had Widowmaker? That was some good news at least, but it did nothing for McCree’s current situation.

Then suddenly Reaper shifted into smoke. His form darted across the ground. In a futile attempt McCree fired at it once, but it shot up the side of a building and vanished.

He would have kept chasing but another gasp of air kept him grounded. There’s no way in hell he could leave Jack in this state.

“Guys, watch out,” he pocketed his gun as he spun around. “Reaper vanished, probably headed to your location now.”

“Are you alright?” Hanzo was asking for what felt like the thirtieth time.

“Fine, but Soldier’s down. We need to get him out of here ASAP.” McCree lit up a flame in his palm, trying to get Jack to move his hands away.

“Don’t,” Jack gasped, almost trying to slide out of reach.

“Damn it jackass, this is no time to be stubborn. Let me at least stop all this bleeding.”

His attempts to keep McCree back were weak, but he still kept trying.

McCree was about to snap again but paused when he noticed the tears on Jack’s face.

“Don’t,” his voice was shaking. “I can’t... reminds me too much of him.”

McCree paused before he gritted his teeth and pressed both hands to the injury. Even with the flames Jack’s body wouldn’t relax.

“You could have just told me that in the training room.” McCree spat. “I get it, okay? She reminds me of him too. But he gave me this damn thing to keep me alive and like it or not I’m going to use her to keep you alive too. You can bitch at me when you’re not fucking dying.”

“Ana?” Tracer’s voice came in over the line. “Are you alright?”
“Fine,” her voice sounded strained. “Damn it. Does anyone see Widow?”

“No,” Hanzo said. “I believe he took her with him.”

“Damn it, we were so close.”

“Worry about it later, Soldier needs medical assistance and Symmetra could benefit from it as well.”

Cool, two dying teammates and a mission failure. There was no telling if Widowmaker would come after them again. Luring her out would just cause another handful of risks.

Clearly McCree still wasn’t ready to face him head on.

Jack seemed to breathe a little easier but McCree still didn’t move his hands. Not until someone else arrived.

*Hey Clem?*

“Yes?”

*What did you do to him?*

She was silent for a while, to a point McCree figured she wouldn’t even answer.

“I did the same thing that his old masters, the ones that drove him to madness, had done...

“I turned him into a prisoner.”

Chapter End Notes

ouch geez, that's not good
“Spill it, all of it.”

“I don’t know everything. Only what he told me.”

“Then what did he tell you?”

“He tried to convince me to ‘free’ both of us. He told me that, in the end, the humans would just turn me into a weapon. I had to assume that in the past someone did that to him. But my masters never did.”

“So that’s what you meant by ‘ending up in the same state’. Why not just tell me sooner?”

“It does no good to feel sympathy for him Master McCree. He will not return it.”

“Trust me, I don’t. But knowing his motivations would only make it easier to stop him, wouldn’t it?”

“He won’t stop. If you wish to reason with him your only option is to trap him first, or at least get him away from Master Reyes.”

“Meaning?”

“Even if my brother is in control he is still influenced by Master Reyes’s thoughts and feelings. It’s why he’s so intent on hurting you and Jack.”

“There’s no way Gabe would want to hurt me.”

“Humans are messy things, Master McCree.”

A cold breeze rushed by him. McCree tried to blink and open his eyes but he could only see black. It took until now to realize that conversation was just an echo from earlier. Where was he?

“Vaquero.”

He couldn’t move. He felt something drift over his shoulder, wrap around his arm.

“Sígueme.” It tugged on him, urging him back.

McCree tried to break free. His feet were stuck in the ground, slowly sinking.
“Sígueme.” The voice slowly drifted from the owl’s haunting tone to Gabriel’s.

No. He had to snap out of it. It was just a nightmare.

The harder he pulled the lower he sunk. The louder the voice got in his ear. Begging him to follow, to stay, to not run away this time.

The moment his nose slipped below the surface he startled awake. He gasped for air, desperate to breathe before he recognized his own room. It had probably been foolish to try sleeping alone, but his head was too cluttered. He wanted some space.

So much for that.

He sat up, rubbing a hand over his face to get the sleepiness out of his eyes. It had been more or less chaos since they got back, with making sure Jack and Satya were okay. Winston asked McCree for details, but being unable to focus the scientist sent him off to bed instead.

Satya recovered just fine, thankfully. She was only spending the night in the med bay in case of any additional side effects. As far as Angela could tell the toxins in her system had been neutralized.

Jack was another matter entirely. While McCree’s healing stopped the bleeding the impact of the shot still left him with three broken ribs and damage to his right lung. Even with his super soldier genetics Angela insisted that he needed at least two weeks to recover. Preferably more.

McCree decided not to remind her about the number of times Jack signed himself out of the med bay early because “I’m the strike commander.”

A part of McCree wanted to talk to Jack. The other desperately tried to avoid him. There wasn’t much sense to it. They’d run into each other eventually.

Thinking about all of this was making his head hurt. McCree groaned and got out of bed, rubbing at the bruises on his neck. He was almost surprised they were still there.

He headed out the door, intending on walking to Hanzo’s room, but paused when he heard something. It sounded like breathing, heavy and ragged. McCree glanced up and down the hall, his nerves jumping at the sound of footsteps.

He glanced to his left a second time. A pair of glowing green dots stared back.

McCree screamed.

“Jesse,” Jack’s rugged voice answered as he finally staggered into view. “Calm down.”

“Jack?” McCree hissed. “You need to stop sneaking up on people in the dark you– wait. What in God’s name are you doing out here?”

Jack couldn’t possibly be well enough to be walking around. That suspicion was confirmed when the soldier almost collapsed against the wall, his shoulder somehow managing to keep him standing. His hand was pressed against his injury, as as McCree’s eyes adjusted he could see a dark outline.

“Fucking hell,” McCree stepped over. “You’re bleeding you dumbass. The fuck are you doing out
“Looking for you.”

“The hell for, can’t this wait till tomorrow?” McCree tried to nudge Jack back in the direction of the med bay but the soldier wouldn’t budge.

“No, I need to ask you something.”

McCree gave up. “What?”

“Do you really think I’d just trade you for Gabriel?” Jack tried to meet his gaze. The corners of his eyes were red.

McCree paused. He tried to read Jack’s expression, get a read on what he was thinking while he processed the question. “Wouldn’t you?”

“What?” Jack barely caught himself from sliding down the wall, clearly in pain. “No. No I...” He straightened himself back up. “Jesse, if I had to decide between fatally shooting him or letting him shoot you, I’d take the shot.”

McCree felt his blood go cold. “Wh– no. You’re bullshitting me. You wouldn’t do that Jack. Gabe means more to you than anything else in the damn world.”

Jack glared at him. “So what? Maybe he is the most important thing to me but you’re the most important thing to him.”

He didn’t have a response to that. He felt numb.

The soldier hissed in pain, finally giving in and sliding down the wall to sit on the floor. “Let’s say I could do it, I could just trade you for him, do you know what he’d do the moment he came back? Best case scenario he never speaks to me again. Then I just end up losing two people I love...”

McCree sat on the floor next to Jack, still not sure what to say in response. He tapped his fingers against his knee, wishing for a cigar.

“Shouldn’t be surprised you think that way though.” Jack had turned away from him, empty gaze fixed on the ceiling. “Seems I still haven’t shaken my habit of hiding in ignorance.”

“What do you mean?”

“Come on Jesse, I know you were never as close to me as you were to Ana or Gabe, but it’s not like I didn’t give a shit about you. You were Gabe’s kid. You were my kid. You were so damn important to me but like a useless jackass I didn’t notice anything was going wrong until you ran off.” The soldier had to pause, hand pressing harder against his injury. By now McCree could see the faint glimmer of ice running over his skin. “Then I just decided to blame you because it was easier. For some reason you ran off and Gabe got worse and worse. My dumb ass decided it had to be your fault or some shit. And then that fight in the HQ and then... gods, I just kept blaming you.”

Jack’s other hand reached up to press against his eyes. He wasn’t crying was he? McCree glanced around, trying to think of something decent to say.
“Well, I get it, you know?” He rubbed the back of his neck. “With my fight with Gabe and me having the phoenix–”

“No.” Jack’s voice cracked. “None of that was your fault. None of it. I kept telling myself it was because I didn’t want to face the fact that I’d completely failed two people I cared about. And I just kept failing them.” He moved his hand away, blinking before trying to look at the cowboy. “He made me promise, you know. He made me promise that I’d try to find you, keep an eye on you, but I didn’t even try damn it. I couldn’t stand to look you in the eye after what I did to him. It’s my fault he couldn’t escape. I had to go and injure him and then he still risked everything protecting me the god damn...”

His hand was over his eyes again. McCree looked at the floor, clicking the joints in his prosthetic. So that’s what Reaper had meant by “again.” Had the fight really been bad enough for Jack to summon his wolf?

The soldier let out a long, shaky sigh. “It’s no wonder you thought I didn’t give a shit. Hell, you had to threaten me with a bullet to even make me show up here. Kept telling myself I was better on my own. Better to stick to my goal. Better to not get involved with this sort of thing anymore, but I was still just being a coward.” It was hard to tell if his sharp breaths were from tears or the damage to his lung. “Too damn scared of people finding out what I did. Too damn scared of dragging all my problems with me. Too damn scared of having to go through losing someone else I care about.”

McCree began to reach out but flinched back when Jack suddenly sat up, furiously wiping at his eyes.

“I’ll be damned if I let that happen again.” There were still tears in the corners of his eyes, but they stared at McCree with determination. “I don’t give a shit if I have to shoot Reaper a hundred times. Who it is right now, that’s not Gabe. Gabe wouldn’t point a gun at you. I refuse to stand by and let him hurt anyone on a slim chance I could get him him back. I...” That gaze faltered. “Jesse, you know there’s a chance we won’t be able to get him back.”

McCree opened his mouth to argue.

“I know I haven’t looked into everything, but there’s still that chance and... coming to terms with it is the hardest thing I’ve dealt with in my life.”

His mouth hung open, the air almost rushing out of him. Christ, of course. He and Jack had been at such ends the whole time he never even thought about what was going through the soldier’s head with this whole mess. How many times had he fought Reaper knowing it was Gabriel?

“But I’m going to.” Jack continued. “I’m going to find a way to accept the possibility because I don’t want to make the same mistake again. Certainly not with you.”

“Jack you don’t need to–”

“I’m sorry.” The soldier’s voice was falling apart again. “I’m so damn sorry, Jesse. I wasn’t much of a commander, I wasn’t much of a parent, and I wasn’t much of a friend either. I want to fix that but I... I’m sure you...” His speech gave way to a sob. He tried to curl up but it seemed his ribs wouldn’t allow it.

With a lack of solutions coming to mind McCree slowly reach out, putting his hand on Jack’s shoulder. He flinched, almost jerked away when McCree lit a flame, but eventually relaxed.
“Yeah, it sucks right?” McCree muttered. “Reminds me of him all the damn time.”

“Sorry,” Jack mumbled into his arm.

“It’s fine, I get it. But uh, you really should get back to med bay. Angela’s going to have a fit if she caught you out here.”

He snorted and sat up, rubbing at his face once more. “I’m fine.”

“God, now I know why you were so fed up with me when I was recovering.”

Jack actually chuckled for a moment. “I’m not going back there, not right now. Wouldn’t be able to sleep anyway.”

“Fine,” McCree stood up, holding out his hand. “But you can’t sit out here. Didn’t you have some documentary about song birds?”

Jack didn’t notice the hand until McCree tapped his shoulder. He took it, having to stand up slowly using the wall as additional support. “There’s one about Saturn’s moons I’ve been meaning to watch.”

“Sounds perfect.” When Jack struggled to stay upright, McCree slipped under his arm for additional support. “Been too long since I’ve done any reading on them. Should I make tea?”

“Sounds perfect.”

They walked in silence for a bit. McCree knew he should probably find something better to say.

He ground his teeth together. “Thanks, by the way.”

“Hm?”

“For protecting me. Even though I can revive and shit.”

Jack laughed before a sharp wheeze cut him off. “Gabe used to say the same things. Every other mission he’d be lecturing me about it on the way back. Never mattered though. Instincts start screaming ‘protect’ and I fail to ignore them every time.”

“Well I appreciate the thought.”

“He was so excited you know.”

McCree blinked. “Huh?”

“Gabe, when he told me he was giving you that phoenix for your birthday. Worried me. Told him he might still need her with the job position he was in. With the position we were in. He just kept saying that you were always risking your neck far more than he was. That, and he said you’d probably have too much fun with all those fire abilities.”

McCree laughed. “Well he certainly wasn’t wrong about that.”
“He made a good call.”

“I... what? You really think so?”

“Yeah.”

McCree ignored the urge to lift Jack off the floor in a tight hug. The man was still injured after all.

After dropping Jack off on the sofa and tossing him a nearby blanket he went to go make the tea. He left the tea bags in the mugs as he brought them back out. Athena had the documentary paused at the beginning.

“I’ll be sure to describe the pretty images.” McCree joked which earned him a light slap on the arm.

“Watch your mouth.”

“Yeah, yeah, sorry pops.” McCree snagged half the blanket and curled up under it as Athena started the film.

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McCree stirred to the gentle tapping on his shoulder. He tried to turn his head to look up, but the blanket wrapped around his cheek refused to budge. Instead he just opened his eyes, looking around the best he could.

Ana was leaning over the sofa, smiling down at him.

“I should be mad,” she whispered, glancing to the side. “That he’s out here, but he rarely sleeps this well.”

McCree followed her gaze over to Jack. The soldier was completely curled up in the shared blanket, his head resting against the armrest of the sofa.

“Coffee?” She asked.

McCree nodded and yawned. He managed to wiggle his way out of the blankets without waking Jack up. “Guess I should make some breakfast. Return the cinnamon rolls.”

Ana kept her laughter quiet. “He won’t eat those. Try something else.”

“Burnt toast.”

She snorted and headed into the kitchen. McCree followed close behind, snatching up their used tea mugs first.

McCree studied the contents of the fridge. “Guess omelets and hashbrowns couldn’t go too awry. Does he like green pepper?”

“He likes anything as long as it’s not spicy.”

He tsked but gathered the ingredients next to the stove. He started by chopping up the leftover
baked potatoes. He hoped there’d be enough for any hungry wanderers that showed up. Goodness knows they could always smell when someone was cooking.

Speaking of which.

“What’s going on?” Jack more or less croaked from the doorway. His eyes were still shut from sleep, the blanket tight around his shoulders.

“We’re cooking Jack,” Ana said. “I’m sure you’ve heard of it.”

“Hope omelets and hashbrowns sound good.” McCree tossed the potatoes in the pan.

Jack climbed into a chair. He desperately looked like he wanted coffee but there’s no way Angela would allow it right now.

Ana gave him some tea instead. It was at least enough to make his brow relax as he inhaled the steam.

They all worked in silence. When the coffee was ready, Ana left McCree’s next to the stove while she went to go sit next to Jack. McCree could have eavesdropped on their chatter but focused on dicing an onion, tossing some of it in the pan with the potatoes.

By the time the hashbrowns were ready he glanced back to see Ana was gone. Jack was almost asleep on the counter.

“At least tell me what you want in your omelet first, pops.”

Jack took a long sip of his tea, sighing. “Cheese and onions.”

“That’s it?”

“Unless you have ham.”

McCree was sure they did somewhere. He went back to dig in the fridge, finding a packet of if still unopened. He twirled back around, nudging the fridge closed, but froze when he noticed someone else had come in.

Hana stood there, hair still in a messy bun. It didn’t look like she had gotten much sleep. Her gaze was fixed on Jack, expression unreadable.

Jack knew she was there, eyes finally open and staring in her general direction.

Then she snorted, stomping over to the coffee pot. “Shouldn’t you be in the med bay?”

Jack’s eyes tried to follow her. He took another sip of tea. “Good to see you too.”

She puffed out her cheeks, pouring a couple of spoonfuls of sugar into her mug.

McCree just stood there, eyes glancing between the two of them. He hoped this wasn’t going to turn into a fight.

Finally Hana sighed. The spoon clinked against the mug as she let go of it. “You weren’t
supposed to actually get shot.” Her voice was almost too quiet to catch.

Jack gave a faint smile. “I’m sorry too.”

Her cheeks puffed out again. She went back to stirring, probably too fast as some of the coffee splashed onto the counter.

“You better heal fast.” She pulled the spoon out and turned around. “I still have to beat your record.”

“Funny, I was going to tell you that you better not slack off while I’m out of commission.”

“As if.”

McCree stepped back over to the stove. “Alright kids, enough. You want an omelet Hana?”

“Whatsoever dad.” She finally smiled and hopped over to the counter, sitting next to Jack. “Make mine extra spicy.”

Jack rolled his eyes.

“Mama Angela is gonna flip when she finds you in here.” Hana sipped her coffee. “At least now I know where Jesse gets it from.”

McCree spun around, speaking at the same time as Jack.

“We’re nothing alike.”

They both just stared at each other. McCree could smell the onions were getting a little too brown.

Hana laughed so hard she almost fell off the chair.

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