Until the Morning

by Voreadus

Summary

Mei-Ling Zhou is starting to get used to her life being turned upside down, but it seems that since a certain set of Junkers moved onto base it's happening with increasing frequency. Junkrat and Roadhog find themselves contending with their own expectations when their first encounter with their new neighbor turns their world on its head in a way neither was prepared for. Now they have to find out what this change of pace will bring their way when nothing seems to be going right around them.

Notes

Hey! Thanks for reading. I've included some of my own ideas about the personal history of the characters, and beyond that I'm sure not everything is 100% cannon aligning- so consider those bits AU I guess.

The story's timeline assumes Mei woke up and moved into Gibraltar- the current Overwatch base of operations for this story, she's had a few months to settle in when the Junkers are recruited and moved in- where the story begins. If the pace or tone of the story seems to be not your cup of tea, just wait, caus like the weather- it's always changing.

The title of the story is based on one of the songs that gave me the idea for how I wanted the
story to feel: "Until the Morning", by Akron/Family. The chapter titles will probably be lyrics. Ok- I think that's about it! Enjoy!
They were either fighting or...well, she didn't want to think about it. How it had come to this, Mei had no clue.

It seemed like just last week she was enjoying the relative solitude and quiet of her own hallway. Finally adjusting to having a place to call her own again. It wasn't so much the silence she enjoyed, in fact she constantly played music to cover up the eerie quiet, but the peace.

The Junkers were anything but peaceful. Of all the neighbors she could have ended up with it had to be Gibraltar's newest edition, a real criminal element- rude, dirty, and noisy. It must be what...3 am? Not only were they not asleep, but apparently they'd decided to rearrange the furniture by throwing it against the walls. The clanging, and the grunting- she shivered- had been driving her up the wall for the better part of an hour.

The sound of the door sliding open broke her train of thought as a loud squeal rolled through the hallway followed by something clanging off the wall and bouncing after the retreating hysterics. Then, quiet. She held her breath, sure something was about to explode, yet the silence endured save the mechanical sounds of their door sealing shut again.

For a long while there was nothing, and she finally let out her breath. When she was satisfied enough time had passed that she could assume peace had returned for the evening she reluctantly slid her headphones back over her ears.

"Noise canceling, pshh," she sighed out as her playlist resumed, "if only."

She did feel a bit of relief as the orderly stream of data poured back over her screen from the new monitoring stations she'd been able to set up since returning to Overwatch. It was becoming the kind of field work she was looking forward to more than ever with her new noise problem.

The next station demanding her attention was one she'd never thought she'd be eagerly anticipating her return to. Once the Spring thaw had enough time to set in though, she'd be revisiting the Arctic Watch-point to repair the waylaid station that had once sat forgotten for so long.

She shivered involuntarily rubbing the top of her arms with her palms to shake off the memory. Leaning back in her desk chair she could see the sky on the horizon take on the first hints of morning. Her arms went out above her head and she gave herself a long stretch.

Mei had developed her night owl habit from time zone hopping during her research days. That and when she spent time measuring the poles, which her work often required her to do, she saw more night then day. It just settled in as a habit after a while. It had allowed her to enjoy an extension of her solitude outside just her little corner of the base. Not that she was the only one who favored the night, but pretty much all the others who shared the trait enjoyed their personal space as much as she did these days. They'd all gotten pretty good at avoiding each other.

Mei was pretty sure she had an hour or so before someone would be in the common kitchen for her section. Technically, besides the Junkers, from who she saw no evidence had ever set foot in there, she had it all to herself. However, Tracer had learned who had the good tea, and even Dr. Ziegler needed some quiet away from everyone else's problems. She'd run into Ms Vaswani sketching plans on one occasion, and could smell that McCree had enjoyed a forbidden indoor cigar after that one mission no one really wanted to talk about after. Even a tight knit team needed to step away from time to time.
She swirled out of her chair with a smile at the thought that her presence didn't seem to actually interrupt the transient inhabitants from visiting the sanctuary of what was ostensibly now her kitchen. She usually knew why they were there, and would politely greet them, get what she needed, and go back to her room. On occasion they’d strike up a conversation, and she’d gladly put on some tea and let them talk about anything or nothing. In fact she was sure some of them started coming more just for a soothing drink, or a patient ear.

It had helped her settle in, and she felt a little warm remembering some of the hilarious insomnia induced venting, and starry eyed reminiscences she’d gotten to be a part of already. She had been grateful that Winston had provided her with a space that suited her as she readjusted to her reality now. Somewhere with spacious rooms, not the military bunks squeezed into closets that some of the base’s housing consisted of. He hadn’t pried, but he had certainly been right to assume she’d want something a little less closed in, and it had been a relief not to talk about it again.

Mei hummed to herself as she focused on the good things about where she was, putting on a coat loose over the pajamas she was wearing, and swinging out into the hallway. She ran her fingers along the faintly glowing night lights illuminating the walls as she made her way to the kitchen for a nightcap.

She couldn’t help but think about the Junkers again though, and how they now both shared this space. Winston had explained how it made sense for her. Not being one of the, “on call” members on the team. Her missions usually required briefings, and maps, and coordination. It wasn’t that she couldn’t fight, but she was also a specialist, and so her missions required planning. That's how he’d explained it anyway. Why she didn’t need to be in the barracks with most of the others, why she got to sit out on the more military operations type missions.

So, what did that make the Junkers? Specialists also? She bristled a bit at being grouped in with them, but took comfort in the fact that they weren’t deployed without a considerable amount of planning either.

*Can’t imagine why Winston wouldn’t want them blowing up every mission!*  

She laughed to herself. So, yeah, she supposed it made sense. She wondered idly if Winston had recruited them solely to keep them out of Overwatch's way, and out of trouble. Still, it didn’t keep her from being a bit frustrated at whatever association had been made that left them sharing the same space.

She had just started to shrug off the grumpy thoughts her mind conjured up about them when she turned into the kitchen with a yawn. She’d have her tea, and…

There was one of the Junkers. In the kitchen. She almost jumped out of her skin at the sight of him, hunched over under the stove light- the only one on in the kitchen. It was the big one.. *Roadhog*? He was intent on something out of her sight surrounded by ruin.

Drawers were pulled out, sitting on the counters among their strewn out contents, and the cabinets were nearly all open. She’d noticed the emergency medical kit was nearest to him, turned out of all its contents, bandages unraveled, and a punctured bag of saline dripping down onto the floor.

She could see, as he let out labored breaths, that his mask was resting on top of his head as he worked frantically. As she was staring at him quietly in the dark, it occurred to her that he might be injured, and now it was too late to leave quietly. What if he needed help? At the very least she didn't want him to bleed all over the cooking surfaces.

As she was about to clear her throat to announce herself he threw something hard against the tile
back-splash of the stove, and Mei threw up a hand to her lips to cover her startled squeak.

The first thing he did upon realizing he wasn’t alone was to slam the mask back down over his face before he rounded on her with a low throaty growl.

“I’m sorry! Sorry. So sorry… to have startled you,” Mei put her palms up in surrender. “Are you okay? Should I get Dr. Ziegler?”

He made an amused noise at the idea as he towered above her in the dim room, the hitches in his breathing seemed to be smoothing out with his mask back in place, but somehow she was still sure he was scowling, and for a moment it was intimidating.

“I can just,” she pointed over her shoulder backing away, “leave, also.”

She could only describe his reply as a sarcastic rumble, or maybe condescending. His chin thrusting toward the door in a gesture that screamed, “yeah, no surprise there. Run away already.”

While she wasn’t sure how she’d read so much into so little, she knew she was right, and this huge jerk did not get to take her as some shrinking violet! Mei-Ling Zhou had promised herself she would never just roll over to confrontation.

She took a confident step toward him. “Just, let me see. Please,” she barked, despite the polite addition to her demand, as her hand jutted out impatiently to summon him closer.

He studied her with a bit more interest now. He seemed to be assessing if she was challenging him, or being stubborn. She could see he certainly wasn’t threatened by her, and if anything he seemed amused at her sudden spunk.

She studied him back, but there was nothing to see. No bruises, burns, or bleeding wounds. He blocked her as she tried to move around behind him, keeping her from seeing his back, or what he’d been doing behind it if not tending wounds. She gave him another surveying look and scrunched her face up as she tried to make eye contact.

He rubbed a hand over his belly lazily, scratching an itch near the tattoo that stretched across it. He still refused to let her pass, and didn’t seemed particularly bothered by the idea of standing in silence without offering any further explanation.

Reflexively her hands went to her hips. A memory shocked through her. The gesture was something she’d learned from her...her mother.

Roadhog leaned over close, “ya done starin’?” His voice gritted.

She had been distracted in her memory, by how she’d picked up a habit from a woman she’d never get to see again. She shook her head to clear her thoughts, disgusted at herself for letting her mind go there even though she’d promised to set it aside.

So, it had taken her a moment to register Roadhog’s question. His tone. By the time she realized he had thought she was gawking, he had already read her reaction to the memory as the answer to his question. That she was disgusted by the suggestion she’d be looking at him at all.

He retreated from her a bit, as if she was something that smelled particularly bad, and needed to be avoided.

“Go away,” he demanded it. As if that was that. Turning away from her and back to his work.
She wasn’t sure exactly why the simple order had rubbed her so wrong. That it had ruffled her to imagine he’d think she was someone so shallowly judgmental, maybe even more so at the thought that she cared what his opinion was at all. Who was he to assume something about her anyway?!

Before she knew it she had puffed back up, fists planted on her hips again in optimal scolding stance.

“Hey!” She marched toward his back, but he didn’t acknowledge her.

“Hey! Now this,” she motioned around her vigorously even though he couldn’t see, “it’s a common area. As in we share it! You can’t just. I mean, look at this mess! I don’t have to leave just because you demand it! I was just trying to help. You.. you…”

She watched him tense up as she searched for the right word for what she thought of him right this moment, like he was sure she was about to say just the wrong thing, and she cut herself short in fear he was right. He kept his back to her for a few more moments before violently snatching something off the stove.

He had stretched himself to his full height, she swore his ponytail almost dusted the ceiling tiles, he was massive. Truly, impressively, massive. It was all highlighted with an aura of frustration and anger she didn’t understand, but it felt formidable as he started to turn to her slowly.

Clutched in his hand was the last thing she would have ever guessed. A giant Pachimari plush, obviously old and patchy from years of wear. She could see that it was freshly damaged though, a torn seam from tip to tentacle over its left eye. She finally realized what he had been doing when she spotted the suturing thread hanging in knotted tangles around it’s base, the hooked needle still dangling from the clumsy stitches.

She barely had time to register shock when he grunted out, “Fine,” pushing past her, knocking her off balance as he stomped out. With almost comical emphasis she could hear the spool of suturing thread bounce along the floor as it unraveled in his wake, still attached to his jumbled sewing project somewhere.

*Rude!*

She scrabbled to get her balance back as she could hear him slam a fist against a wall down the way somewhere.

“Rude,” she huffed to the empty room in her native tongue moving to lean against the counters and assess the damage.

She started roughly closing cabinets and slamming drawers back onto their rollers. She threw a rag over the puddle on the floor and scooped the nearly empty saline bag into the sink to finish draining. *Wasteful!* She saw that various ready prepared syringes had scattered in front of the coffee maker, and she placed them back into the emergency medical kit. *Messy!* She shuffled a few clean mugs back into the cupboard, and turned over a badly chipped plate before tossing it in the bin. *Careless!*

“Rude!” she repeated louder, echoing a bit in the small room. She felt her cheeks warm with indignation.

She steadied herself, and re-rolled the splinting bandages that had fallen from the counter, and put the antimicrobial solution back in its place among the various other scary looking things in the kit that reminded her even the kitchen at Overwatch could find itself turned into a triage center. She noted the painkillers, sedatives, and most frighteningly various agents used to help counteract the effects of
certain chemical weapons.

She ran the back of her thumb across her forehead to wipe away the bit of sweat that had beaded up as her heart rate had soared, and faintly she found her way to the table. These spells seemed to be cropping up more and more. She drug one of the chairs out noisily, and flopped into it, putting her elbows on the table and her face in her hands, letting out a pent up scream into her palms.

“Who made this mess?”

She could hear the voice distinctly in her mind as it reached through the past. She could almost see her mother leaning in the doorway of the kitchen in the home she had grown up in, the same age as Mei was now. She could imagine the way her hand had gone up to her hip when she had seen her daughter sulking at the table among the broken up bits of a diorama she had been so proud of.

Her mom hadn’t been talking about that though. Mei knew. She was the mess, and she had been so angry with the jerk who had inflicted it on her. Her little fists balled up, but her mother had floated across the kitchen to sit in front of her. Calmly leaning her cheek against her fist as she rested her elbow on the table. She watched Mei quietly.

She was so pretty. She’d always dismiss it when Mei would say something, waving it off with stories about how radiant and graceful she had been in her day, but she was. She was beautiful with her fuller cheeks, and her delicate fingers. Her deep warm eyes were patient behind wispy hair that draped effortlessly over her temples, pinned behind her head in a loose bun. She was pretty in that easy way, like she couldn’t even help it, and it reminded Mei to try and love herself, because no matter how little she saw it, she had part of that in her.

She remembered how her eyes had finally started to sting with tears seeing her mother watch her. She cried over the bully who had smashed her hard work. Over the frustration and failure she felt at letting it happen, that she had no friends to speak up and stop it, and that she hadn’t even managed to glue it back together despite all her effort.

She had so much to give. She wanted to give. She loved everything so much, so strongly, and she just wanted to share it. What a mess.

She felt the heavy tears on her cheeks now too. Over the fact that she still couldn’t really find her mother in herself when she searched the mirror, and how she worried she’d forget the gentle beauty of her smile under the kitchen table light that night.

“You’ve already made it halfway down the road,” she smiled as her daughter's tears finally dried up.

Mei’s hair had clung to her wet cheeks pitiably, and her mother had lifted her chin up to inspect her ruddy nose, and swollen eyes with a tsk. Her mother stood up. Mei loved watching her move- like fabric dancing underwater, as she swung around to stand behind her. Her hands swooped around to delicately gather up Mei’s hair combing it out softly with her nails.

Suddenly she felt a fluid twist in her mother's wrist as she swirled Mei’s hair into a small bun, and the strange feeling of a hairpin sliding along her scalp to hold it in place. Her mother’s hair fell in curtains down Mei’s shoulder as she leaned over her to kiss her cheek.

Mei’s hand darted up into her hair and she didn’t need to see it to know the shape of the ornament her mother had been wearing since before Mei could even make memories. Mei sniffled in surprise, almost letting the tears start up again, but her mother’s warm hand cupping her cheek made her hold it in bravely.
“I’ll get the glue,” her mother’s voice sung out with a new idea, “it can’t be the same, but whose to say it won’t be better as something new?”
“Ey, Roadie,” Junkrat’s irritating voice returning through the door broke the silent vigil Mako was observing as he sulked in the darkest corner of their room, “What’s this ya think?”

Mako had tried to ignore him, thinking he could just come back in like nothing happened, but the bastard had chucked something straight at his head. Mako was at least satisfied as he snatched the little box from the air with an ease that he knew secretly unnerved Rat.

“Nearly tripped over the thing,” Junkrat sauntered over with his head cradled in his hands as they linked behind his head, “Could’a died.”

Mako let out a huffy little laugh at his dramatics.

“Oi, think that's funny, eh?” The cocky whip of a man plopped himself down right in front of Mako on the floor, “Could’a landed smack dab on me face,” he attempted his most charming expression gesturing over his features to present what could have been lost, “messed up all this. Then where’d we be?”

Mako ignored him, turning the box over in his palm to study it. It didn’t take a genius to figure out who it belonged to.

“So, why’s that icy girly leavin' stuff at the door for me to trip over?”

Case in point.

Junkrat wriggled his fingers toward the lacquered object, with its inlay of snowy tree branches, “Think it’ll explode?” He let out a tear of laughter as his fingers touched the surface and then danced away in an arc to imply what the force of that might look like.

“Eh,” Mako shrugged as he tried to delicately unhook the little latch, watching Rat squint and lean away in anticipation.

After a moment of genuine disappointment flashed across Junkrat’s face Mako had to fend him off as he was practically curled up in his lap now trying to get a better look inside.

Mako sighed. Staying mad at Junkrat was typically pointless, and he could argue with him later. It was easy to see they had both moved on to this new thing now, the mystery of it, and honestly Mako couldn’t say he wasn’t intrigued.

Junkrat used his distracted moment to pull down Mako’s hand and snatch the neatly folded note that sat on top of what was inside the box. Junkrat puzzled at it for a moment trying to hold a thoughtful look at the message before passing it over to Mako, who knew perfectly well he couldn’t read it for himself.

“Please return when you are finished. -Mei”

Mako read it aloud, “to himself”. Junkrat looked at the paper like it contained some ominous riddle, but it didn’t take Mako long to glean the intent.
“Hey, what’s it mean Hog?” Junkrat snatched the note back up holding it to the light, and then tossing it over his shoulder so he could have his hands free to paw at Mako’s wrists as he pulled them down to get a better look at the object he held.

“What’s all this then? Ya’ pop a button or somethin’?” Junkrat turned to him with a snaggly grin.

Mako swept the waif of a creature off his lap with the back of his free hand, knocking him on his ass. He knew perfectly well why Mako might be in need of a sewing kit. He turned his back on Junkrat to remind him that he could hold a grudge.

“Ah, common’,” Junkrat protested, springing easily to his feet, and putting a hand on Mako’s shoulder, “that was pretty funny!”

Mako could hear his laughter cut off short as he shrugged the hand off his shoulder.

The smaller Junker was silent for a moment, “Pfft, fine,” he huffed, “be a sulky giant- see if I care ya’ great big loaf! Some pretty little thing comes along, bats her eyelashes your way, and -poof- ya forget all about me!” His voice rose and fell with dramatic emphasis as he pretended to stumble away when Mako looked back over his shoulder with earnest disdain.

“Ya hurt me Roadie,” he thrust an invisible sword through his chest, “right in the ole’ ticker.”

With that he fell backward onto the bed feigning the most prolonged death throes he could manage. After enjoying the silence of Junkrat’s untimely demise for a while Mako couldn’t hold back his retort any longer.

“As if anyone could forget you’re around,” he smiled to himself as he twisted around to put the little box on the desk next to the Pachimari.

Junkrat popped up his legs into the air to get enough momentum to stand in one motion, and started to ramble his way toward Mako- clacking his prosthetic leg emphatically against the floor. When he was a few steps away Mako could hear him ready himself as he launched through the air to slam into his back, clinging on where he had landed with gusto.

Mako’s large hand reached behind him pulling Rat up onto his shoulder limply. Junkrat was draped over him like a demented stole, and he let out a thoughtful sigh as they both looked over at the disemboweled stuffed creature on the desk.

“Ey, Roadie?” He tested Mako’s mood, and seemed to take the resulting silence as promising, “Sorry, mate.” His head gestured toward the thing he’d destroyed, or at least started to. Apologies were rare form. Maybe the tiny little box, with its wintry scene, sitting on their doorstep had made him feel guilty. Or Jealous? Mako let himself enjoy the thought for a moment, a mirthful grunt rolling out as he turned around toward the bed.

Junkrat gave a delighted trill of laughter as Mako roughly thrust him off his shoulder like a sack of blighted potatoes. If potatoes were bony.

“Commin’ to bed,” Rat gave him a suggestive eyebrow wiggle as he spread himself over the sheets in what he must have thought was a seductive manner.

Mako slid his mask off and Junkrat hopped to stand on the mattress so they could see eye to eye. He let the twitchy Junker lean himself into his belly until he was supporting his whole weight against Mako’s torso.
“Mmm,” Mako let out a tired groan, it had been a draining day, he leaned his forehead into Junkrat’s, “In a bit.”

His tone was gusty. Even if he was exhausted, even if Junkrat was mostly why he was exhausted, it wasn’t hard to give into the younger man’s enthusiastic energy. Just, well, he wasn’t sure he had it in him tonight.

He could see Jamison’s face. Even this close. He wore a soft smile. Something not so rushed, not in a hurry, or tucked away behind the frantic pace of what it meant to be Junkrat.

“I’ll keep it warm for ya’ then old man,” Jamie settled into his reply, even as Mako could feel Junkrat’s energy tweaking along the edges of the statement, wanting to pester him into hurrying. To curl up with him right now, but he saw Jamie gather up the sentiment before it made its way out.

Mako was grateful for Junkrat’s rare moments of restraint. It was a balance they had struck. Each seeing the other in a way no one else could. It hadn’t always been that way. What they were now was a monument to survival, greed, neediness, and most of all isolation.

He pushed Junkrat over and he flopped stiff as a board flat against the sheets. Mako turned to leave him to fumble around in bed as he pulled off his prosthesis and tossed them aimlessly away.

Mako drifted back into his thoughts as he ambled to the desk.

They’d been outside of society for so long that law hardly seemed relevant. They’d operated in a place isolated from order. From safety. From comfort. The land was desolate, lonely, and life was tenuous at best where scavenging was the only productive means of eking out a living.

Mako had been strong. Jamie was clever. Roadhog was bold, and Junkrat was resourceful. Together they’d built something, even if it had been based at first on mutual greed, he could sit here now contemplating the journey that it took to be in a place where it was safe to reflect at all.

Junkrat’s snores broke his train of thought before he even made it back to the desk to try his hand at this sewing thing again. It took him a moment to slip back into what it was that had pulled them through all that. Thoughts about getting to be alive, together. Like, a cheesy poster, motivating the viewer with kittens and encouraging words. A brilliant time to be alive. Together they had gotten a chance to live.

It was something beyond survival, and it had given Roadhog a chance to remember what it had been like to be Mako. When life was just living. It let him be ok with what life could be now.

The freedom of it had forged something, expanding them, from the inside out. Bold had become ruthless, and resourceful became boisterous, became brazen. They became motherfucking, unstoppable, indestructible, undeniable.

They could own the world, but who wanted the responsibility? So they stole it instead, just to do it, and it felt right back then. Together they thought big, and big things followed. They’d gotten away with stuff they’d never even needed to do. Together they had everything they needed to survive and more. Now they could want again, and that was a new kind of hunger.

It had taken a lot to change things. Not them, not really. You could never truly be free of the cruel animal inside. The creature that isolation shapes. They held it back as much as they dared now, because you never knew when you’d need to survive again. Close your fist to hide the claws, mask the fangs, but just enough. Just enough to reach this new thing that had offered itself up, and they found themselves wanting it. Stability. Belonging? Change, maybe at the least.
They sure had gotten it. In spades.

Now, Mako sighed hopelessly at the contents of the box, and the newest change it represented. He was vexed by the sewing supplies almost as much as he was at their owner.

He felt like she’d snuck up on him in a private moment and gawked, but could barely look at him when he’d turned around and called her out. He knew he was something to look at, but he was too old to care about what people thought when they did. Still didn’t keep it from stinging a bit now for some reason.

He was used to the Junker’s way. He never knew what any of that lot thought of him caus they were too afraid to die if they spoke up. Rightfully so. In all honesty beauty was never something important in the Waste, not to him, not to anyone. Who had time? Strength was the highest measure of desirability, and he had enough of that to go around.

The thing that seemed to peck at his brain was the way everyone had to get an eyeful everywhere he went now. It was never in the nice way. Hell, it wasn’t even in the scared shitless way most of the time. Sometimes people stared so hard and so shamelessly he thought he should charge admission. It drove him crazy that he couldn’t even blow their stupid eyes out of their vapid faces. That wasn’t civilized.

Well, he’d remembered his mama had taught him it was rude to stare. So where were their civilized manners? Maybe they thought it didn’t count to stare at the tamed Junker. Who knows? But he didn’t care for it.

Even less so from her, and he didn’t know why it mattered. She was just some girl. She hadn’t bothered to give them the time of day until she was forced into it. She hadn’t been particularly pleasant even then. In fact, she seemed downright repulsed.

Yet here was this little box, with sewing supplies, proving that assumption wrong. She was loaning him the tools to mend something that was broken. Was that the message? Or was she just worried he might turn his back on her in the next mission if she didn’t make up for her offense?

He tried to thread the needle as he worked himself up over it, but failed miserably. Surprise.

He put the supplies neatly back in the box. A pretty little thing. It looked old and expensive, but well loved. It had a presence that felt like his Pachimari did as it smiled up at him. Something important.

He bent over to grab the little slip of paper Rat had thrown carelessly, and smoothed his fingers over it on the blank side. He grabbed a pen from the mug of various utensils sitting on the desk, and carefully wrote back before neatly replacing the paper in the box as it had been before.

He’d tried to think about her fists pressed into her hips, her firecracker sparks reminded him a bit of Rat, and he thought about her face. The way she’d changed from scornful to scowling in a way that he didn’t get. She had looked genuinely worried when she had thought he was hurt. She seemed more frightened by him then repulsed when he was being honest with himself about it. Guess she watches the news.

He let his vanity go. His secret bit of self consciousness. She hadn’t approached him like an animal in the circus. Sure she looked, but he couldn’t remember it being in any way that wasn’t appropriate for stumbling in on a frantic man who was pushing just over two meters tall and almost as wide, in the dark hours of the morning, hunched over in a dimly lit kitchen surrounded by a chaos.

He slid the latch of the box back into place with a cleansing breath. He thought about how the deep
dark grain of the wood reminded him of her eyes. He knew them. Eyes that seemed far away. Old beyond their time. Or, more accurately, a look carved from isolation.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed this one! A bit more angst, but set-up is almost done. Got a Mei chapter coming up next!
“Couldn’t get the hang of it. Thanks anyway. -RH”

Mei stood in her doorway reading the note with bleary eyes.

She had laid in bed awake for a few hours last night before she had decided to grab the little box off her shelf. She couldn’t shake all the feelings that had rolled around her head after falling into her memories again earlier. It had hit her in her exhausted turmoil that she was having some guilt, or second thoughts...maybe empathy for the Junkers.

So, she found herself again in the halls, in her pajamas, but this time at their door. She had reached up for the call button, dusted in sooty fingerprints, a few times before deciding she wasn’t ready for that much interaction just yet. She fiddled around her giant pockets until she found her field notebook, and had torn a page out to leave the note he had written his reply on the back of.

He had returned it the same way she had left it. On the doorstep. It made her wonder if he had lingered outside the door with the same hesitancy she had before setting the little sewing kit outside to wait for her instead of handing it over in person.

Either way she was grateful he had returned it whole. She turned back into her room to set the box back up on the shelf with some of her other precious things. The things she had found waiting for her when she arrived here at Gibraltar in a tiny aged storage container on her desk. She didn’t know how Winston had managed to recover some of the artifacts of her life before, but each thing that she’d pulled from the container was a last precious connection to a memory she’d never had a chance to say goodbye to. Including the sewing kit.

She fiddled with it, arranging it just so, a bit shocked with herself she’d even considered loaning it to anyone. Of leaving it on the doorstep of two people whose favorite hobbies seemed to be destruction and disorder. Things were certainly changing, and she wondered if it was possible she was suffering some judgment impairing side effect from her prolonged cryostasis.

She was finally happy with the placement of her keepsake around the very same moment that she realized she still couldn’t shake that feeling. The one that had brought her to their door last night.

“Couldn’t get the hang of it.”

She snatched it back off the shelf impulsively. She sighed, and turned back to the door. Judgment impairing indeed.

When she had made it halfway down the hall to the Junker’s door she had already started to panic at the idea that was carrying her there. In a few more steps she swung back around so sharply in the other direction you’d think there was some force repelling her, and her footfalls got faster and faster until she was literally running away toward the kitchen.

She burst through the door barely able to catch a breath, much to the surprise of Tracer who was just taking a kettle of water off the stove.

“Oh!” the energetic woman chirped, “morning, luv!”

Mei managed to focus her eyes just enough to see around the little spots dancing in her vision, and before she knew it Tracer was standing next to her with a delicate hand on her elbow to steady her. She found herself ushered into a chair.
“What’s the hurry then? I know you aren’t so keen on my tea that it had you running down the hall. Should I grab the doc?”

Mei put her palm in front of her to signal she was fine, but Tracer didn’t seem less concerned.

“I didn’t get very much sleep. I guess I was just worried I had left the stove on last night when I smelled something down the hall,” she lied.

Tracer gave her a skeptical look, but dropped it, and it wasn’t long before Mei’s heart rate evened back out and they were both enjoying a warm cup of earl grey.

They carried on casual conversation about some ongoing and upcoming missions, and gossiped a bit about romantic rumors surrounding various agents. It was fairly par for the course, and Mei was always relieved to talk with the plucky Brit. Somehow though, the longer the conversation carried on, the more she was compelled to tell her about what had happened last night - even if another part of her, a big one, just wanted to forget.

“You sure there isn’t something on your mind?” Tracer leaned in to give her an encouraging look as if she knew there must be something interesting.

“Well…” Mei’s tone conveyed her conflict, which seemed to make Tracer even more intent on her, “…I suppose there was that thing that happened last night.”

“That thing?”

Tracer was practically about to topple from her chair she had leaned in so close.


“Oh, common! Spit it out!”

“Okay, ok,” Mei motioned for her to sit back down, “I, well last night, I might have…”

Tracer’s leg was bouncing with excitement, distracting Mei.

“Seriously,” Tracer looked down at her leg, balling a fist against it to consciously stop the habit, “I’ll be still, just go, go- I’m dying here!”

“I met one of the Junkers,” she spat out, “sorta.”

Mei ran through the story in her head, and the more she thought about it, the more she realized she didn’t want to tell it. Felt a little bad for thinking about telling it. She knew Roadhog hadn’t expected anyone to see what he had been doing. He had tried to hide it, and she had pushed her way in.

She couldn’t tell anyone. She wouldn’t.

“What is sorta? You can’t say that and not follow up!”

“I mean, I, uh…” she fumbled for a story that wasn’t a lie feeling guilty about earlier, “I just ran into him in the kitchen late last night. He didn’t say much. He seemed distracted I guess.”

*Close enough.*

“Seriously?” Tracer settled back into her chair with a deflated thud crossing her arms over her chest. “If that’s your idea of an exciting event in your day then I really need to get you out more!”
“Are you calling me boring?!” Mei feigned indignity, but was glad Tracer wasn’t pushing for more.

“Yes. Definitely,” she deadpanned. “Which means you have to come with me tonight.”

The woman’s eyes lit up again as she leaned forward in her chair once more to snatch up one of Mei’s hands between her own. A twinkle sparkled through her eye, “so you’ll come right?”

Mei looked suspicious, “to what, exactly?”

“Oh, nothing big,” Tracer waved a hand dismissively, “just some little thing Lucio has been talking about. Just a weeknight event, ya know, some dancing. Drinks. Getting into the kinda trouble that’s worth talking about!”

Mei let her eyes roll toward the heavens a bit, but a little distraction didn’t sound horrible. She’d heard about these, ‘little things’ the agents went to sometimes, but honestly it did sound like the fun kind of trouble.

“Fine.”

Tracer squealed with joy, pumping a fist into the air, “it’s gonna be a blast! I promise!”

After Mei insured her that she could find the place on her own, since most of the crew was coming straight off a mission together, Tracer seemed satisfied to leave her to her day.

“You won’t leave me hanging, promise?” She asked for the fifth time heading out the door.

“What else would I be doing? I’ll catch the bus over after dark. I promise, promise, promise! Now go do your job before I get in trouble,” Mei scolded.

Then she was alone again in the kitchen.

She sighed, thinking about having to find something to wear, and needing to wash her hair. She fiddled with the little sewing box she’d stuffed into her pocket when she’d seen Tracer.

Well, if she was going to try going out dancing tonight, she thought, might as well double down on new and uncomfortable experiences.

She pushed the chair out, and headed back down the hall much more resolutely this time until she stood with her fingers floating above the grimy doorbell she’d run away from several times.

She pressed the button. She counted down. At ten seconds she panicked again.

_Guess no one’s in, I’ll try again later- yes. Later. No one will be the wiser._

She had made it a good way back toward her room when she heard the door hiss open behind her with a croaky voice, “Yeah, yeah- hold up!”

_Junkrat._ Her mind assigned the name to his voice. It had taken a second before he had spotted her escaping down the hallway.

“Ey, snowflake- yer doing it wrong.”

She winced at his voice, freezing a moment before turning on her heels to face him.

“Excuse me?”
He scratched the back of his head, ruffling what was left of his messy hair, as he looked pointedly from his doorstep to her, “Doorbell dash.”

She raised an eyebrow and shrugged to indicate she had no idea what he meant.

“Ya know,” he gesticulated aimlessly, “ya ring the bell, then ya run away. Ding dong ditch? Nicky nine doors?” He leaned in the doorway as he tried to explain.

She noticed he didn’t have the prosthetic arm she had seen him wearing when the two Junker’s had been introduced to the group at the last briefing. She’d probably woken him up since he was only wearing some shorts, and the peg leg prosthetic she was sure must be bad for his posture.

She had taken a few steps back toward him, trying to look anywhere but the half naked mess of a man.

“It’s a prank,” he seemed compelled to explain, “Yer supposed to leave somethin’ on the stoop before you ring. Then ya book it before they can answer.”

Mei lifted a finger to interject that, technically, she’d left something at one point, but he cut her off.

“Yeah, not like that- something nasty. Not a box of craftin’ supplies.”

For some reason she found herself nodding thoughtfully at his explanation.

“So ya tryin’ to orphan some glue sticks and safety scissors this time?” Junkrat pointed at the box she had in her hand again as he crossed his arms over his chest lazily mirroring her stance.

“Uh,” she gaped for a second, “no.”

He stood and stared at her hazily, and she was waiting on something until she realized it was her that needed to move the conversation forward.

“Is...is Mr. Rutledge in?”

For a moment she swore she saw a countdown tick by behind his eyes as her question settled in. When it finally clicked he let out an explosive laughter unlike she’d heard in all her life. She took a step back as his face started to turn red and he sank to the floor- unable to hold himself up under the strain of his hysterics.

“Mr...Ha!...hahaha...Rutledge..” he was puddled up on the floor, tickled to the point of gasping for air, “Mr? Mr..hahaha..Rutle..ha!”

At this point Mei was frozen in horror, but for the second time in less than 24hrs she feared for a Junker’s health as his laughter became choking wheezes, “are you alright?”

“Sure, sure,” he managed to wave a hand dismissively, “Just don’t start callin’ me Mr. Fawkes, yeah?” Which set him off into a whole new fit of laughter.

After he had finally steadied in his convulsions she leaned over to assertively demand to know, “is he here or not?”

“Nah,” his voice cracked from the episode, “Shall I take a message for Sir?” He’d leaned himself to a sitting position in the doorway, and managed to bow at his waist to emphasize his sarcastic display.

“I...” she paused waiting to let his laughter pass again, “I’d like to see if, well…” she furrowed her brow a bit, and he seemed to watch her with interest as her determination built, “Last night, he was in
She turned her eyes up as if trying to recall if she was remembering a detail or if she had imagined it when she started rambling nervously again, “I felt bad, I went off on him over the mess. I just, it wasn’t very polite, and,” she directed a stern look at Junkrat, “he seemed to definitely have other frustrations on his mind.”

Junkrat startled her as he hopped to his feet, standing straight into his full height, and poking out a finger at her, “You dunno anything about us!” His fuse seemed short as he snapped out again, “don’t ya come to my door actin’ all high’n’mighty!”

She stumbled back worried with his raised voice he may try and poke at her with his grimy hands. “Do not touch me;” her voice went cold, and so did his demeanor.

He drew his hand back like she had burned him, realizing himself, and curled back up into his terrible posture. He almost seemed a little embarrassed, “I’m,” he looked away and gestured the remainder of his amputated arm at her, “sorry. Not used to talkin’ to civilized folks, ya know.” He grabbed at what was left of his arm nervously, and wouldn’t look at her.

She took in a sharp breath, she was getting tired of excusing their behavior, “I guess it takes more than a shower, and a roof over your head to learn some common manners! Not that you’ve taken a shower,” she crinkled up her nose stepping toward him as he retreated behind the door, “Once a bully always a bully!”

He let out a laugh that skirted something dark, it skittered over her nerves, and she instantly regretted her words.

Whose being the bully now? Get it together Mei, he said he was sorry- that was uncalled for.

As she was about to give an apology of her own, he straightened himself out a bit to bite back, “A no good bully, am I? Junkrat the bully versus the Ice Queen. Don’t ya got better things to do than stand here tellin’ me how to live my life?”

“Ice Queen?” She spat the words at him indignantly.

“That’s right Snowflake, otherwise known as a frigid bitch,” he lifted his eyebrows making his eyes big for emphasis, “that’d be you.”

She whispered something scathing under her breath in Mandarin.

“I’m...I will not,” she threw her hands up and started to storm off, but didn’t get far before she wanted to say more, “You know what? You are selfish! I came here to offer to help Roadhog fix something- and this is just a hunch here, so correct me if I’m wrong, but I know I’m not- something I am pretty sure you broke.”

He seemed to lean away from her as if her volume hurt his ears, but she wasn’t deterred.

“Now you want to pick a fight with me? Look, I may have been out of line with the way I brought up you two...” she took a breath, her tone cooling as she realized just how much of this she’s instigated, “and what I said about the shower thing. But I’m not going to let you discourage me from doing what I think is right! So you tell Roadhog that I’d like to help him with his sewing project, and if you can’t do that...well, I hope you just crawl back to the gross dirt pile you burrowed out of!”
The last part was for the whole frigid thing.

She was flushed, from anger, and from not having taken many breaths between sentences, but she felt better. She hadn’t gotten to tell someone off in quite a while. Maybe, she needed it, just a little.

“Hey, that’s me home yer talkin’ about!”

He seemed to be trying to think of some way to tit-for-tat the comment, “least my parents aren’t penguins!” He stiffened his limbs out like flippers and waddled around in the entryway.

“I...you idiot,” at first her words were sharp, but before she even started back in she’d cracked a smile, “Penguins don’t even live in the arctic.”

She was shaking her head at him as he continued to make quacking noises with his pantomime.

“Plus, I’m Chinese you mutant kangaroo!”

She’d broken out in a full smile realizing she had been more offended by his lack of habitat understanding then the idea he was implying she was actually from the arctic. He turned around with a puzzled look as he had tuned back into her words.

“A roo joke? Ya serious,” he stopped his penguin impression and smirked at her as she started to cover a laugh, “real original there Snowflake.”

“It’s Mei,” she corrected. “besides, is calling the freshly thawed cryo accident ‘Snowflake’ really a stroke of genius on your part?”

He gave her a mocking glare then went back to his penguin waddle, “sure there’s no relation, caus with the way you walk, ya know?” He put his hands out like flippers to pretend to keep his balance.

“Idiot.”

She still laughed. She needed a laugh.

She realized just how pent up she’d been, and while she’d already had her thoughts on the Junker’s, she knew those kinds of expectations manifest themselves if you focus on them too much. They’d both seemed to already know what the other thought of them, and so it wasn’t hard to pick a fight.

Now it wasn’t as hard as she thought to let it go either.

“I’m sorry if I was rude. It doesn’t make much sense to come and apologize for my manners, and then repeat my behavior,” she apologized formally.

“Nah, I’m sorry I got all hot headed. Just stepped on a bit of a landmine there,” he trailed off a bit searching her expression.

“I guess you could say you got a bit explosive over it?” She had to bite her lips to not grin stupidly.

“Seems like you can be a lil’ cold yourself, yeah?” he let out a roll of laughter.

She pinched the bridge of her nose, closing her eyes in the shame of their puns, but joined his laughter after a bit- even if she was trying to hide it.

“Hey,” he finally asked uncharacteristically soft, “Did ya mean it, about fixin’ up Roadie’s plushie?”

She looked up to study his face, and his clear eyes were looking directly into hers for the first time.
Bright warm eyes. Honest hopeful eyes.

“Sure,” she let the word fall out like a breath, “Yeah, if he wants.”

“It, uh...means an awful lot to him. I know he’d be real happy if you could patch it on up.”

“You sure he’d be okay with it?”

Her question sent a smile splitting across Junkrat’s face, and he didn’t bother answering before clutching her wrist, and scuttling into his room with her in tow.

They were standing in front of the desk when she looked down to where his hand was still on her arm, “Oh, uh. I get carried away sometimes, heh,” he dropped it, and brought his hand nervously up to his bare chest, drumming the fingers over his sternum.

She gave him a bit of a sideways glance. Fidgeting, he stood close enough to her she was worried he’d get soot on her coat. She was alone, with Junkrat, in the messy room of two of the most notorious criminals in the world, and he was pretty much naked. How would that look if anyone saw them? She almost blushed. Almost, but refused. She looked away.

“Well, uh...” he put his hand out as if presenting the stuffed creature like a prize on a game show, “here it is.”

“I see that.”

“So, can ya fix it?”

“Oh, I can do you one better!”
Junkrat made a point of giving the lady her space. She’d been enough of a fireball this morning that he figured keeping his more colorful commentary to himself meant she’d be less likely to storm out before she finished.

He owed Roadie that much. He could keep his ice themed jokes to himself if it meant she’d help him mend his fuckup. To be honest he couldn’t remember why he thought it’d be funny to stick a bomb in the thing anyway. Even if it was just a smoke bomb. Okay, maybe a stink bomb.

He did find it interesting to watch the neat and rhythmic stitching of the little firecracker’s hands as she made her repairs. He found himself floating over to watch here and again. The determined little frown on her face as her tongue would peek out subconsciously throughout the task, the careful way she placed each stitch, and hummed with frustration or satisfaction.

He’d honestly been surprised she’d let him hover without any fuss. So much so, he found himself going out of his way to try and be as polite as he knew how. Still, he seemed drawn by the sound of the needle punching into the fabric, and the sliding sibilant sound of the thread, watching her eyes follow the needle as she weaved it in and out. It was soothing.

By the second hour he’d gotten antsy at the quiet though. Needed to break the silence, “So, uh. You enjoy the weather huh?”

She jumped a little at the sudden break of their congenial quiet, “The climate.”

“Climate?”

“It’s not about liking it or not, it’s about what I can achieve with the knowledge of my research that matters,” she re-threaded her needle, and he could see her let a little half smile inch over her lips.

“Help save the world!” He had positioned himself close behind her shoulder again as he watched her start her next line of stitching.

He saw her hand pause as she answered, “help save the world!”

He let out a little laugh at that, and she turned over her shoulder to give him a withering expression.

“I mean it!” She huffed, and he threw his hands up defensively.

“I’m sure ya do! No offense meant. Just funny the way ya said it, like a comic book hero or somethin’,” he leaned in again.

“That’s the kind of thing we’re working toward, though. Isn’t that what Overwatch is striving to be-heroes?”

He smirked at her idealism.

“Then how’d you explain me and Roadie bein’ here? We ain’t no heroes by your sense of the definition I’d wager?”
She sat the Pachimari down completely and paused a long while, which was making him a bit nervous. She was takin’ the question seriously.

“I guess you’ll just have to figure out what being a hero means to you then,” her tone was resolute, but a bit awkward, and she shifted the conversation holding the stuffed creature back up.

“There. What do you think?” She pushed her glasses up and twisted to face him as she shoved the plushy creature toward his face.

“Color me impressed!” He took the thing from her as she looked on proudly, and he truly was.

“It’s nothing much,” she waved him off as he turned it over in his hands.

But it was something! She’d have made it hard to tell from a new one if it wasn’t for the stains. It wasn’t what he had expected when she said she’d fix it up. It was much more!

“It’s a miracle snowflake!” He tapped the side of her arm with the back of his hand in excitement, “It looks better than new!”

He wasn’t exaggerating. She’d not only fixed the torn seam invisibly, but she’d embroidered the left eye back in, and fixed up all the loose threads in the mouth and cheeks. She’d even managed to make the stuffing fluffy again.

“It’s not quite like new. It could use a bath,” she tilted her head all the way back to look up at him, “not much unlike some people I know.”

“Heh, yeah,” Junkrat took in a deep breath, “Roadie does know how to add his own special scent too a place.”

He smirked at her as she shook her head.

“I think it would really bring out the beauty of the repairs to give it a laundering,” she ran the pad of her thumb thoughtfully over a sooty stain.

“Hey now, a lil’ dirt just adds some character!” Junkrat subconsciously ran his own thumb over his cheek, “some of us can’t just stitch up the broken bits.”

He hadn’t intended that to sound so somber and backtracked to lighten the mood, “not that I’d say no if all it took was a bit of thread to sew some limbs back on, heh.”

“I’m,” she turned to him a bit flustered, “sorry. I wasn’t thinking!”

“What, about calling me out for not washing?” He knew what she meant, but people never seemed to get used to how to deal with approaching the whole missing bits thing, and he’d taken to messing with them about it.

“You know, about your…”

“My hair?” He smoothed it back interrupting, “Rude to talk about a person’s bald spots ya know!”

“Your amputations. I didn’t mean to make light,” she finally belted out, but she had smiled a bit at his hair joke, which he was happy about. Most people wouldn’t even come right out and say it anyway.

“Chill out Snowflake, ya didn’t. I was the one who brought it up.”

He saw her purse her lips, but he knew he was right, and she nodded.
“Well,” she took a deep breath, “I’ve already failed the ‘don’t be that person’ thing, huh?”

“Nah,” he wiggled his cybernetic fingers at her, “there was this one drongo, asked if me mom was an Omnic once. So you could have done worse.”

“I guess I shouldn’t be surprised you’d find that to be an insult,” she looked on disapprovingly.

“Ey, lets save that foot in mouth political correctness thing for the second date, huh?”

He let a trilling laugh loose when she'd tensed up at that last bit.

“Speaking of feet in mouths, that’s how that guy ended up. Good story, I blew off ‘is foot and shoved it down his throat,” he let his laughter escalate as he watched Mei’s face turn in abject horror.

“I’m messing with you, Snowflake,” a sharp toothy grin spread out over his face, “mostly.”

“Idiot.” She’d said it in Chinese, but he didn’t need to know the language to get her inflection.

“I’m going to go to the the washroom to get some detergent on this,” she snatched the stuffed critter from him, “You, and your gross jokes can wait here if you’d like.”

“Oh? And deprive you of my company?” He trotted to follow her toward the door, finally putting on some proper pants over his around the house boxers. “Can’t leave all the work to you. Ya see, I can be a gent if I try!”

“A gentleman would take a polite hint,” she retorted dryly as they turned down the hall to the locker rooms.

“You can tell me straight up if you want me to leave,” he’d been strolling along with his eyes closed, but peaked them open to see her response.

Eyroll, score!

“I don’t care what you do,” she sighed.

“Well, I wanna pester you with more of my bad jokes then,” they'd turned into the washroom part of the shared locker room in their section.

“What, like being within ten feet of an actual shower?” He watched as she let a smug expression settle in.

“Yeah, yeah. Good one,” he conceded. It was.

He hopped up onto the counter-top near one of the sinks lined up along the mirrored wall in front of the bank of shower stalls as she went to dig through the cabinets below.

She started setting little colorful bottles on the counter, making Junkrat a bit jumpy for some reason.

“So, uh, how’d ya learn to sew like that?” He picked up the Pachimari and turned it over in his hands nervously as he filled the silence.

He leaned over the counter to see she’d frozen a bit sticking halfway out of the cavernous storage area.

“When did you get so nosy?” Her voice was muffled.
He watched her from his perch as she resumed her wriggling search for something around the pipes on all fours. He made a conscious effort to sit back again when he’d caught himself watching a bit too long.

“Yeah I get it- curiosity and the cat and all that, but I think it’s just weird,” He held the stuffed animal above him, looking up into its cheery smile.

He heard her bump around in the cubby and he knew better then to look downs as she backed out at that angle, “weird?”

“‘You- avoidin’ the question.”

“I wasn’t avoiding it,” she paused, pushing herself back up and brushing off her knees, “well, I didn’t do it for any fancy reason.”

He quirked an eyebrow at her.

“It was my dad who taught me,” she blurted, suddenly looked a bit distraught, “but I mean, I just…”

“Ya’ just don’t wanna talk about it,” he let his head thunk back against the mirrored wall, “trust me, I get ya.”

He did, really. Plenty of stuff he didn't want to dredge up.

“Yeah, I could see that. You haven’t said two words about yourself,” she reached out to turn on the faucet, and he rolled his head to the side to watch cautiously, “not that any of it would be true anyway.”

“Oh yeah, how would you know?” His face screwed up a little, cautiously offended.

“Your mouth would be moving,” she wore a self satisfied smile as she tested the temperature and plugged the drain.

He couldn't have that!

“Oh, well lying ain’t the only thing my mouth is good at,” he waited till her head whipped around to look at him, and leaned in real close.

As her expression registered with flighty panic he waggled his brows. Just as he was sure she was about to pop he nearly spit in her face with laughter curling back into himself.

“What does that even mean?” She gave a flustered pout and put up her hand between them flicking water at him.

“Whatever you want, doll,” he tried to put on a sultry tone as he leaned his face into his shoulder to wipe off the droplets she’d splashed on his face. Then he looked back up, and cold terror hit him as he saw she had pulled out the power sprayer that sat next to the sink aiming it at him.

“Ya wouldn’t dare!”

Her eyes sparkled with a challenge. **Wrong choice of words!**

He put the stuffed animal between him and the nozzle just as she pulled the trigger on a jet-stream of lukewarm water.

“‘Ya little...” His voice squeaked loudly, and before he could find the appropriate insult she’d let the
stream loose on him again, square in the face as he held the heavy soaked plushie to his chest for
dear life.

He stood up, gobsmacked, as he tried to fend off the water. She finally stopped when his hair fell in
damp layers around his eyes.

“Oops,” she feigned as she gave him one last spray to the chest, “saw something dirty that needed a
bit of washing out.”

Without a word he took a step toward her, and she let out a little laugh, unleashing her weapon
again. Quickly though she realized he was getting too close, as brackish water ran down him in
streams, and she dropped the hose in her backward retreat.

He tried his best to put on his most twisted face as he looked at her from under his soggy locks, and
to not crack a smile as she looked skittish when her back finally hit something solid. He came so
close she had to press into the wall to avoid touching him, and she was wide eyed as he stooped over
her to be face to face, his hands on either side of her pressing the stuffed animal into the wall.

He let the corner of his lip quirk up as he saw her throat bob, swallowing hard, and her doe eyes
sparkled under those thick lashes. His breath practically fogged her glasses he was so close. Then he
did it.

He enjoyed her sharp gasp at the temperature change as he wrung out the drenched Pachimari over
her head. His whole body started to roll with laughter as she gave him the most shocked look he
could imagine.

What did she think was gonna happen? She started it.

She immediately crossed her arms over her chest, but he was so close she had to slide up into him to
do it, and he stepped back right away- seeing her in a state of soggy despair. Clothes all clingy. So he
looked away, trying to be tactful.

“Ya look a bit dis-Mei-d!” He forced his attention elsewhere with the joke.

“You are such an,” her hands clawed up in exasperation, “an ASS!”

He peeked back over at her as she pulled her hairpin out, and gobs of tangled wet hair fell around her
warm cheeks. She stormed past him back to the sinks to paw at her hair, and inspect her very thin
shirt fabric. She shot him an angry glare in the mirror.

“Eh, shouldn’t start what you can’t finish,” he shrugged.

“Oh man,” she finally groaned out seeming to talk to herself, “It’s laundry day, what am I gonna
change into!”

He watched her look around in a panic, right about the time he had started to take off his wet pants.

“What are you doing?!”

He looked down at himself, “takin’ me wet clothes off?”

He saw her eyes snap shut and she took in a deep breath as she started to shiver a bit.

“What you so upset over? Wasn’t this your plan all along, get me all buck naked in the shower?”

He rubbed the palm of his hand in a circle over his chest as he made an exaggerated bedroom face at
the stuffed animal.

“Ughh,” she let out the breath, “I guess if you actually take a shower, then it may have been worth all this.”

He actually thought she was taking this all in stride pretty well considering how stuck up he had thought she was before she showed up at his door this afternoon. Even more so since he was pushing it pretty hard.

“Look,” he held his drenched pants modestly in front of his boxers, “lemme wash real quick like, and then you can have your turn while I fix our wet clothes problem.”

He watched her hug her arms around herself as she nodded skeptically.

It didn’t take him long to wash up, though he hated every second of the weird oleander scented shower gel she’d shoved in his hands as he disappeared toward the showers. He hated showers in general, by the way, thank you very much. It wasn’t super easy to balance on one leg, and only have one arm when you’re trying to clean up. The gym style showers weren’t exactly friendly for his needs.

He knocked over his leg as he fumbled for the towel on the hook outside the shower curtain making a loud clang echo through the room.

“Everything alright?” her voice shook as her teeth chattered together.

He mouthed her words mockingly before spitting out, “as good as I can be!”

He smiled at his own thoughts while he drip dried off and went to grab the plush he had carried with him. As he came back around the corner it was the only thing strategically between him and the air.

“What is wrong with you?” She jittered out.

“Never seen a wet Rat before?” he chuckled to himself as she shook her head, eyes slammed shut again.

She turned roughly and grabbed a towel blindly from the linens, whipping it at him.

He saw her peak her eyes open again as he went to set the plush on the counter and wrap the towel over his hips, but she turned around roughly before she’d seen anything. He found her modesty strangely endearing.

“Go on ahead, I’m gonna run back to me room real quick. I’ll be back with somethin’ to solve our issue here.” He gestured to himself and then her wet clothes with the hand securing what little dignity he had in place.

“Sure, why not?”

“Right then, so I’ll be back in a tick. If ya need a hand I left mine over by the showers,” he gave a maniacal laugh as she waved him off and he watched her slosh toward the showers.

He waited around a moment until the wet sound of her wriggling out of her shirt started, and headed for the exit, turning the corner as it hit the tile with a slopping noise and a groan of discomfort. Okay, so maybe he felt a little guilty about it, but it didn’t stop him from smiling all the way back to the room.
When he got there he noticed that some stuff had been shuffled around. Hog was probably wondering where he had gotten off to, he noted, gotta go find him once I get something for the Snowflake to put on.

He dug through the still reasonably not dirty laundry pile near the bed, and found himself something pretty quick. Still, he didn’t own many shirts to speak of, and what he did have were almost all crop tops. He doubted that would go very far with her...uh, real estate. He held his hands out in front of his chest to get an idea of it, yeah, definitely not. He felt his cheeks get a bit warm thinking about the bits of some delicate lace thing he could see through her shirt. Definitely didn’t have one of those.

*Jeez am I twelve again, gettin’ all warm in the face over some chick’s bra?*

“Focus,” he told himself, changing directions a bit, finding an unworn shirt of Hog’s at the bottom of the pile which kinda had the opposite problem, but too big was probably better then too small. Plus he doubted he had pants that she’d be ok wearing, and at least the shirt would be pretty long. He wondered for a moment if he should bring one of his as a joke, but thought better of it. Plus Hog’s had a Pachimari on it- it was kinda serendipity if he did say so himself.

“Well, won’t that just be picture perfect!”

So he balled it up and headed back to the lockers at a trot.

When he got back she was standing near the mirror, wrapped up in a towel the best she could be, but it seemed to not quite close around her. A little strip of skin went almost all the way up at her hip, and she noticed him looking in the mirror just about that second his eyes had locked on.

“Junkrat!” her voice was scolding as it echoed, and he drew the shirt into himself like a shield, “you left absolutely no hot water, you stupid jerk!”

Wasn’t what he was expecting to be yelled at about. Not by this girl, a ghost of a neighbor, the ice queen he’d joked with Roadie about, who had avoided them both for weeks- now just standing around in a towel like it wasn’t any big deal, and he knew. He knew that she knew. He flushed.

“Put…” he stumbled over his words a bit, “put somethin’ on, would ya. I’m cold just lookin’ at ya!”

“Oh,” she looked down at herself, her tone and expression falling flat, but she recovered it quickly, “Then look somewhere else!” She snapped.

He stuck his hands in his pockets and turned around as she slid the giant shirt over her head.

“What, never seen fresh snow before?” She turned his mocking of her modesty back.

“Just bein’ a gent, remember?”

She let out a snort, “Oh yes, you put Reinhardt to shame!”

He scratched the back of his head awkwardly to wait on her to give him the all good to turn back around.

“You’re fine now,” seemingly reading his thoughts she trailed off a bit with, “nothing left to offend your sight.”

He peaked over his shoulder to see she’d done some fashion magic, pulling the loose bits of the shirt up into one of those hair elastic thingies. She’d made it look kinda...cute.
“Hey,” he realized what she said and turned, “nothing offensive about looking at you,” is what he would have teased if she hadn’t of started slipping on the wet puddle in front of him.

He reached out to catch her as she let out a frightened shriek.
Don't Bother Looking for a Chair

Mako had looked everywhere he could imagine Junkrat could be. The room. Under the laundry, in the kitchen, the entertainment room. The shop. Torbjörn had just shrugged when the Junker had asked after his...ward.

It wasn’t until he was halfway past Mei’s door that he’d gotten a new lead in the form of her wailing shriek.

When he’d finally made it to the hallway leading to the locker rooms he’d half expected to run into a retreating Junkrat with a shiner for having walked in on the little Snowflake, but he’d made it all the way to the door without another sound. Maybe she’d killed him?

“Ey?” he called in the doorway, “Everyone, uh... decent?”

When he didn’t hear an answer he pushed his way through the door.

He felt a strange pull in his chest when he saw Junkrat there, on the floor, with the ice girl all caught up in his arms. Then again he found something interesting about seeing Rat wearing a kinda worried expression looking down at her. Some rare soft side to the man.

“Hey, Hog, that you?” Junkrat turned to beam at him for a moment, and the girl wriggled to free herself from him.

Junkrat turned his attention back to her, helping her to her feet as Mako realized Junkrat was ...clean. He was grinning like a kid, all freckles and flushed face. His hair was still wet. It was, well, pretty adorable.

Then, Mei. She stood nervously hiding her lower lip under her top teeth, pulling down at the hem of...his shirt. She was wearing one of his shirts. The strange girl who had been afraid of him, yelled at him, shrunk away from looking at him, yet tried to make amends- she was in his shirt, tied up around her hips. Pichimari stared up at him from the fabric, all distorted around her soft shape. Her hair was wet too, and he found himself thinking, that well, she was kinda adorable too.

He saw a twinkle in her eyes as she turned to look at Junkrat with a smile that spoke of the secret that brought them together here. Mako felt his breath hitch up a little at it, as Junkrat returned the look, and then they both directed it at him conspiratorially.

“Well, uh…” Junkrat rocked on his heels a bit, “see anything different?”

“You flossed?” Mako’s tone came sarcastically, and Mei giggled with her fist against her lips.

Junkrat turned to Mei, waving his hand toward her to get her to move, and as she did- he saw it.

His Pachimari. It was also a bit damp, with a little towel around its body like it was fresh from the shower. It was his, but clean. Mended. Better than mended.

He moved past them and went straight for it. Picked it up with both hands. Junkrat gave a stilted giggle as the towel fell off.

Mako ran his hands over the prefect seam, tilting it to look into those eyes- plural. The eyes were bright, and the work was thoughtful, and skilled. Not Junkrat.
The quiet frightened rabbit of a neighbor girl turned little firecracker in his shirt. She had reached out with the tools so he could help himself after he had rudely stormed off. She'd given Pichimari a spitshine when he couldn't. She had used her skill to fill in where he lacked. Where Junkrat lacked. Given Pichimari a second chance, his Pichimari.

He looked over his shoulder where she stood with her hands pressed together over her heart and shivering waiting to hear his reaction, but he had no idea what words would be right. It wasn't exactly his area of expertise.

She must have taken his silence as disapproval because she immediately broke into nervous chatter, “I, uh, hope it's alright!” She started in a bit faster now, “Junkrat, you see, he said you wouldn’t mind. I could tell it meant a lot to you, and I was so rude last night…”

Mako could see her ball up her fists in the mirror, looking determined, “No! Not just last night. I’ve…” she looked at his face in the reflection the best she could find, “I've avoided you both. I’m sure that comes as no surprise.”

He saw her look shamefully back at her hands, wringing them nervously. Junkrat kept looking between them frantically wondering how this would play out.

“I watch the news ya know? The two of you have quite a reputation- I mean the Crown Jewels?!” She finally took a breath and Hog turned back to face the two of them.

“Anyway, yeah, you may have done those things. I may not agree with all your views, but you're both here. You’re after something new- maybe better? Just like everyone else. You aren’t your past…” she turned into herself a bit, “so I really hope it’s ok, that I changed your keepsake. I didn’t want to destroy what it meant to you. What makes it special.”

He watched silently as she tried to gather her thoughts back up. He wasn’t sure he'd seen someone else dance around their own pain so eloquently in a long time. Sure, she was being honest- she wanted to apologize, to help, she felt bad, but that was all something torn open at the seams inside her too.

“So, yeah, I hope it’s special in a new way now. Everything deserves a second chance,” she looked up at him with eyes searching for forgiveness, it hadn't been a dig at them, “I guess what I mean to say is, I’m sorry.”

She let a heavy smile turn up her lips, and both her and Junkrat watched him with anticipation.

“It’s good,” he looked back down at the creature.

Junkrat slapped his hand against his knee, and kicked up his feet in a little victory jig, his signature laugh following. The Snowflake looked at him a bit confused.

Junkrat knew him well enough to take his small offering as high praise. From someone else it practically would have been, “I love it. It is the best, and I will cherish it forever.” He could see why she may not take it that way.

Junkrat had wobbled off to grab his arm, and Mako stood silently watching after him. When he finally looked back down at the girl, he noticed how oddly pale she looked. How her lips were ever so slightly blue around the edges, and she hugged herself as she shivered violently.

“You ok?” Mako’s voice was husky with sudden concern.

“I, uh,” she looked startled like she’d been far away when he spoke, “yeah, just a little cold. My coat
Mako saw Junkrat suddenly saunter to her side, stooping to look her over as he adjusted his arm back in place, “yeah, that ain’t a little cold. You look like you’re about to freeze over.”

“I just need to get back to my room and dry off more,” her words shivered out, and she took an unsure step.

Junkrat put his hand out to steady her gently and she looked grateful, “ya forget how to walk?”

She scowled, but was still relying on him for balance.

Well, he did know how to ruin a nice gesture, but they both reached out for her again when her next step looked wobblier than a newborn deer.

“Maybe I just swept you off your feet,” Junkrat laughed as he leaned over to scoop her up bridal style.

Mako laughed to himself as she struggled a bit in embarrassment, or maybe she was worried he’d drop her.

“He won’t,” Mako stepped closer to look down at her in Rat’s arms and tried to ease her fear, “drop you, that is. Stronger than he looks.”

As if to demonstrate Junkrat jumped leg to leg still easily balancing her as her eyes went wide, and she squeaked with worry.

“Not that he’s ever useful about it. Stop scarin’ ‘er Rat.”

Mako motioned his head toward the door, realizing how chatty he’d gotten, and Junkrat followed with her as she continued to tremble, although maybe a little less. Junkrat did always run warm.

Somehow they ended back up in their own room with her, and Mako had immediately gone to the closet to grab the clean spare blanket out, and turn up the heat on their atmosphere controls.

Junkrat sat on the bed, but didn’t let her go, “You think I should go grab that Mercy lady?” He called over to Mako as she squirmed a bit more, “Let her down Rat.”

Junkrat stood back up, slowly sliding his hand out from under her knees and setting her feet back on the ground, where she continued to be wobbly. She ended up sitting down right there at the foot of the bed.

“Really, I’m ok. I can go back to my room. I need to get ready anyway, for tonight.”

“Tonight?” Junkrat looked down into his arms as she avoided eye contact.

“Lena, Tracer- she invited me to a thing. I’ll be fine. I just need to dry my hair.”

Mako stood over them as she squirmed a bit more, “Let her down Rat.”
He dropped the blanket he'd gotten onto her. “Hmmm,” humming disapprovingly as he turned for the small bathrooms that their individual dorms had. He returned with a hair dryer, plugging it into the wall, and handing it to Junkrat who was sitting on the bed behind her.

He looked as if he’d never seen something like it in his entire life, and Mako sighed, “get up.”

Mei looked at him worried he had meant her, but they both watched Junkrat scramble out of Mako’s way as he eased himself onto the bed to sit with Mei between his legs as she faced away from him.

Mako adjusted the settings, and the hairdryer roared to life. The tiny little ice girl looked enjoyably surprised, it made him give a little belly laugh as he waved the dryer back and forth around her hair, and she started to comb it out with her fingers.

Junkrat stood back a bit, watching with open confusion, “Since when did we have a hair thingie like that?”

“Jus’ caus you sleep through my morning routine don’t mean I ain’t got one,” Mako barked at him over the sound, and he saw Mei stifle a laugh- glad she was warming up a bit.

Without thinking he reached out his fingers to work through a tangle. His hands were huge compared to her head, and he tried to be gentle as he eased through it. Then, to his surprise, she leaned into his hand ever so slightly making him realize what he was doing.

He tried not to jerk his hand away, but he must have, because he saw her stiffen up making little fists around the edge of the blanket and pulling it tighter around her.

He waved the drier around a few more minutes until her hair seemed reasonably dry, and clicked the thing off. She let the blanket fall down her shoulders a bit, and wore a look that seemed oddly comfortable considering her earlier state.

Mako let her have her space as she tried her balance again, and she seemed alright. She turned to give him a truly warm smile, “thank you for not panicking. That helped a lot, I feel much better.”

He nodded at her, and she gave him a bit of a sly smile holding her hand out toward the blowdryer.

He handed it over, and she turned her gaze on Junkrat.

“Let me,” she pointed it at him, “it’ll be nice to sit next to the warmth a bit longer.”

Mako chuckled brightly at Junkrat’s horrified look, but he pointed to the spot where she had been sitting with an authority Rat knew better than to refuse.

Mako scooted over on the bed and offered Mei his spot as Junkrat settled in, hugging his knees nervously into his chest, “be gentle with me!” His usual dramatics flaring up.

“Pfft,” she let out an breezy noise, “as if you’re tender headed?”

Mako turned to her, giving her a single nod, much to her surprise, “really?”

“He’s a big ole’ baby ‘bout it,” Mako snorted out.

“Am not!” He carded his hand through his damp hair, “just gotta be careful with what’s left!”

Mei clicked on the blow-dryer, and Junkrat flinched.

Soon though, he'd melted under the warmth as she gently worked her fingers through his mane without any of the hesitancy Mako had shown her earlier.
“Oh, that’s the stuff,” he let a chill run down him as her nails ghosted over his scalp, and Mako watched a bit enviously.

Mako realized she had sat up into his side as she fussed over Rat, and he made a conscious choice not to move away this time. He told himself it was because of how cold she still felt nestled there.

They sat in silence, but he saw Mei look over as he was watching Junkrat calm under her attentions, “How long have you two been together?”

It was a pretty bold question, he reckoned, but Junkrat answered before he could, “Been a good few years I’d say,” Junkrat turned over his shoulder to confirm with Mako, who shrugged.

She held a mischievous smile at the edge of her lips, “when’s the wedding then?”

“Hey, it’s not like that!” He yelped out, which earned him a hard stare from Mako.

“Well, yeah, I mean it is,” he put his hands up as if he was weighing his answer, “sorta, but ya know- it’s not some simple nonsense. We got our own thing.”

Mako nodded at the satisfactory answer, and Mei gave a soft smile at them both.

“Ah,” she said loftily, “that sounds...actually, really nice.”

Mako hummed in an agreement, and Junkrat seemed to puff up a bit proudly.

They were together, in the sense that they cared for each other in a way they’d never been able to care for anyone else. Not that they’d ever say anything like that out loud, but they had grown into it before they’d even realized, so it stuck.

Something had just changed one day, or maybe over a lot of days, from business partners, to just partners. Hell, it hadn’t even been the constant rutting they’d started out with that had done it; not that it wasn’t a bonus. It was the simple act of actually caring that made them together, and not just with each other.

That kinda intimacy was still unusual to both of them, and so when the Snowflake asked it was kinda hard to answer when they never really talked about it themselves. Junkrat put it as best he could when Mako really broke it all down. They did them.

“I guess it’s important to do what makes you happy. Especially for people like us- never knowing what’s next,” she mused, turning off the hair dryer and brushing her fingers over Junkrat’s hair one last time, styling it nicely into place. Combed back handsomely.

“Yeah, misfits and freaks, we gotta enjoy what we got I suppose, “ Junkrat ran his own fingers through his hair, tussling it a bit.

Mei turned to Mako to hand him the hairdryer, “thank you. Both. Honestly it’s been a nice day all things considered. I think I’m feeling much better. I should really go finish getting ready for tonight, though.”

She stood watching them watch her for a moment as she kept trying to start a new sentence, ask a new question.

“If you two..uh,” She floundered. “Would you like to come?”

He noted her sheepish glance at them both, he wondered if she was actually hoping for a yes.
“You askin’ us out on a date, Snowflake?” Junkrat cut in with a peel of laughter.

He noticed her cheeks pinked up at that, “I...no!”

Mako couldn’t help but laugh at Junkrat’s dumb teasing, but mostly because it seemed to get to her so much.

“What kinda thing is it?” Mako cut in before Junkrat could find something new to add.

Mei explained the plan to both of them, and he had to admit, it felt kinda nice to be asked. To be included in on what the rest of the agents were doing in their free time. Mei certainly hadn’t been the only one to avoid them, but she had definitely been the first to reach out beyond necessary contact.

“Wanna just knock on the door when you're ready then? It’s not like it’s gonna take us too long,” Mako shrugged as he looked down at himself.

“Yeah, that sounds good!” She gave them another grateful smile, and seemed to be back to her full strength as she went to leave.

“I'm…” She fluttered at the threshold, “I'm excited you're coming!”

Then the door shut behind her.

Mako stared at Junkrat, who stared at him. For what seemed an age they fell silent in shock before breaking into hysterical laughter at the whole situation.

“Did the Ice Queen just give you a bath?” Mako’s voice rolled over his laughter.

“An’ sew up your dumb critter. Then she did me hair,” he pointed up to his coiffed locks.

“Then she invited us out. Dancing. With her,” Mako finished up the list of pretty much unbelievable events.

“That girl who would barely look at us at the briefing,” he added with a glance at Rat as they both lay flat on the bed beside each other.

“The one who went to the boss to complain straight after?”

“Did she just go out wearin’ my shirt into the hallway? Right from leavin’ our room- where people can see her? That girl?”

“Ya know, Roadie, I think it is that very same girl,” Junkrat rolled over into him in the bed in his fit of mirth.

“What a day,” Mako sighed out, and Junkrat could only nod.

Not a bad one, for once.

“Hey, Rats?”

“Yeah, Mako?”

“You smell like a goddamn garden.”
Mei took two steps into her room before she made a running leap for her bed to scream into her pillows.

*What are you doing*?! 

She felt herself tremble again, and rolled up into her thick down blanket with tears in her eyes. It was all just so...much.

She’d pretty well secluded herself since she’d arrived on base, made a point to be friendly, but didn’t have many friends. She still called Lena by her call sign- Tracer. She had finally gotten an invitation out to join them, and she asks the Junkers to join her?

Worse yet, she had actually felt a little happy pressure in her chest when they had said yes.

She had let her guard down, and they’d honestly surprised her. Truly, she didn’t find them all that bad now.

“What does that mean*?!*” she scolded herself aloud as Snowball beeped inquisitively from their charging stand. She just stuffed a pillow over her head.

The way they look at each other. The way they’d looked after her. How it had been so easy to just be around them. She’d even enjoyed trading insults with Junkrat. A little.
Maybe she had overly isolated herself. Was she just so desperate for attention, or friendliness, or contact? Could she sneak out on her own, and try to make some reasonable friends tonight?

She let out a groan, miserable for even having the thought. They had looked so genuinely happy to have been asked. She had been kinda genuinely happy they’d said yes. It was too late to be reasonable.

She’d spent the last few hours of her life making choices that it was too late to take back, and then there it was! That feeling, that smile, that said, “but I think I’m ok with that.”

She sat up sharply, pulling her knees into her chest, noting the empty place on her shelf. She’d left the sewing kit in their room.

“So, I’d have to have gone back anyway,” she announced to Snowball resolutely, “Then I’d be all dressed up, and Junkrat would have made a big deal about it- so I would have told them. They’d have probably invited themselves, Snowball!”

She nodded at herself as her tiny companion beeped unsure. She pushed herself off the bed and over to the wardrobe- tearing it open.

Nothing.

“Oh yeah,” she glowered at the empty space, “too late to get the laundry.”

For a moment her brain went- Oh well, guess I’ll have to just stay in, but she’d promised Lena. She hated breaking promises.

Then she looked down at herself, thinking of the scissors in her desk drawer.

He’d kill me right?

“Yeah,” she answered herself as she retrieved the shears, holding them up like a sword, “I’m definitely going to be murdered for this.”

She pulled the shirt off and began snipping at it. Slashing big holes across the back, taking off the sleeves, and out the neckline. She spun, and braided, and tucked the hanging bits together until she was satisfied.

She slipped her work over her head, careful to exit the right holes. Spinning around in the mirror, she smoothed, and adjusted her design. She pinched off some fabric in the front, producing a safety pin from her drawer, and securing her gather on the wrong side of the shirt hiding it with a sparkly broach on the front.

“There, prefect!” She whirled around in front of the mirror letting some of the fringe bits spin around with her. Snowball let out a flurry of agreeable chirps.

She sat once more at her desk, and thought about her make-up. She rarely wore much. It wasn’t that she was bad at it- her mom had shown her, but it was something she saved for special occasions since her skin was sensitive. Mei knew she felt the closest she could come to seeing hints of her mother in herself when she did her face just so, and so she did.

Pulling out her hairpin, and musing the locks that...that one of the Junkers had blow dried for her. He had run his hands through her hair, and it had just been so so long since she’d gotten that much attention from another person, just all right there, all on her. After she’d let Junkrat CARRY her, in his arms, against his bare chest, to their bedroom. How she’d stolen some warmth at Roadhog’s side,
and returned the gentle attention they’d shown her to Junkrat. She blushed almost as hard as she was breathing.

It was so off for her. So personal, almost...intimate, and so fast. Too fast. She knew they had that with each other. That belonged to them. She felt her stomach sour at the guilt of inserting herself into that, even if just to steal a few small moments. Their affections weren’t for her.

_Breathe, you must breathe. In, out. Calm_

Breaths. She could feel Junkrat’s as he cornered her in the locker rooms. As she had rested against him. She thought about how she’d let out a breath when Junkrat had seemed so put off by her in her towel. How Roadhog had pulled back when she’d relaxed into his hand. How vulnerable it made her feel to expect, or want, or hope for them to look at her, to treat her, like that- like she was someone to want. Who was she?

_Pull it together. Why do you even care what they think about all that, what anyone thinks? Plus, you didn’t know about them being a thing- you hadn't intended anything by indulging in...ugh, your vanity. So, breathe. Breathe._

She hadn’t realized until she saw them together that they were...well, together. They’d been introduced as mercenaries, with Roadhog in Junkrat’s employ as a bodyguard. Not a couple who happened to murder people for fun, and profit. She tried not to shiver.

She had to stop pinning her self-esteem, her happiness, or worth on anyone who she spent more than a few minutes around. She’d just been so used to being self reliant that it was hard not to feel the urge to be accepted into someone else’s world when she had the chance. To get to have a moment outside herself. If not as something romantically, or physically, at least for her company. Her friendship. She had so much love to share.

So anyway, it made sense. Right? They were attached, but they didn’t seem closed off to the idea of spending time with her. She’d already let them past some barriers she’d never thought she’d let anyone cross, much less those two, certainly not so quick. Yet here she was- whining over whether or not they liked her, or thought she was pretty, or fun, or whatever else she was feeling particularly low about. Like a child with a crush.

_aaannddd...cutting that thought off right there._

So, she’d made herself her own third wheel tonight.

She threw on some accessories, rolled on some thigh highs, pulled up her boots, and took a deep breath in the doorway. On the way down the hall to the Junkers she talked herself up about how she’d answer for her crimes against Roadhog’s shirt.

“I’ll buy you a new one! Promise!” She blurted out as soon as the door opened.

Junkrat was blinking at her like she’d gone off the deep end, “Hey Hog, come’er’ an’ have a look at what she did to your shirt!”

“Damn,” Hog leaned over Junkrat to get a better look.

“Yeah,” Junkrat said with a bit of a breathiness looking back over her in a way that immediately sent all the feelings she’d been boiling over in her room rushing back up.

Roadhog shot an appreciative thumbs up, only adding to the oncoming blush.
“I’m really sorry about ruining it,” she apologized even though they had both seemed to have moved past that.

“You worry too much,” Hog cut her off, laughing deeply.

“What he means is- it looks better on you anyway!” Junkrat blurted out, and Roadhog just seemed to nod in agreement.

“Tha...anks. Thank you,” she managed to stammer out, hardly able to push her blush back down, “you both look nice as well.”

They did. They cleaned up well.

Roadhog looked sharp, like some old timey gangster, in a crisp white button up, with black pants, tie, and suspenders. His sleeves were rolled up, and she could see him wiggling his fingers into some riding gloves. To top it all off, he reached down to grab the matching Jacket so he had it hooked over his shoulder. His mask was still firmly in place, but- and maybe she was seeing things- this looked like a nicer newer one.

She would have felt underdressed next to Roadhog had it not been for Junkrat, and his black crop top splattered with neon yellow paint, all tucked under part of the leather harness he usually had his bombs strapped to. He had managed to wear some non cutoff pants, at least on the non-prosthetic side, that actually had a really nice cut to them. The most striking thing was the long black wool coat though. It was way way too nice to be something Junkrat owned, all tailored to a T, and lined handsomely.

“Did you steal that?” she couldn’t help but be blunt.

“Well, I never in me life…” he pressed his fingers into his chest in his affronted state.

“Yeah, we did,” Roadhog cut in, “figured at the time if we needed it, might as well get the best.”

“You jealous?” Junkrat smirked at her.

“You both look really nice,” she deflected, smiling at Roadhog and ignoring the smaller Junker.

“Common’! You’re gonna make ole’ Roadie blush,” Junkrat pointed his thumb over his shoulder, “the guy gets an ego over the smallest thing, ya know?”

She let out a little giggle as Hog pushed past him toward the door, “Shall we?” his voice was rough, but she gladly took the arm he offered.

It took them a while to walk out to the shuttle stop outside the base, and even then they had to call specifically for service since they were in the middle of nowhere, but when it arrived Roadhog had taken her hand to help her up onto the steep steps politely.

“I see who got all the manners between the two of you,” she cracked a smile at Junkrat who had taken the seat in front of her near the back of the aisle. He was sitting backward in it so he could chat.

“How ole’ fashion of you, Snowflake,” he droned at her, “like Roadie here. Got all those good ol’ day manners from bein’ around before the big boom.”

Roadhog snorted at his age comment, but she whipped around to look at the more stoic Junker who had taken the seat behind her.
“You remember the crisis?”

Roadhog scratched at his mask, like he was itching a freshly shaved beard, nervously.

“I was still a teenager back then.”

Mei ran some quick numbers in her head, “Well, I guess I’m definitely older than you, technically at least,” she turned sternly, “which means you can kindly shut it with the old people jokes, Junkrat!”

“Hold up there- how’s that work out?” Junkrat tried to count the years on his fingers, “what year were you even born?”

“Just trust me, ok?” She replied with a steely glare.

“Damn, Hog. Guess it’s not just you,” he leaned over the back of his bench, “all ya’ ol’ timers are grumpy.”

Mei rolled her eyes just about the same time the driver decided to test out the breaks, and the precariously balanced Junkrat toppled over his seat into her lap upside down. His dirty boot and peg in her face.

“Please remain seated while the shuttle is in operation,” the intercom mocked as a small rowdy group of early twenty somethings piled into the shuttle.

“Get off of me!” Mei protested, trying to shove him off as he wriggled awkwardly, stuck on top of her, “Junkrat! Your arm is pushing into my leg, ow! Ouch, ow, ow!”

At that moment she felt his weight lift off from her. Roadhog had picked him up by the ankle and he was now dangling in the air nearly face to face with her. He gave her an inverted wave, “How’s it going?”

She ignored him turning over her shoulder to Roadhog, “Thank you!”

He nodded in response, leaning over her seat to plunk him back down in his own, and she couldn’t help but laugh a bit as he struggled to right himself. She turned to see if Roadhog was enjoying the entertainment as well, only to see he had shifted his focus to the group at the front of the shuttle who were not so subtly taking pictures of them.

She could hear them snickering. To be fair, she knew they were an odd sight, but rude was rude. Plus it wasn’t long before she could hear them whispering some really vile things; mostly about her companions. Her fists clenched.

“Not worth it,” Roadhog warned as low as he could manage.

She saw Junkrat leaning on the bench in front of him, neurotically drumming his fingers across the top, an itchy trigger finger empty. She wondered if Hog’s warning had been directed at her or him, but she leaned back into her seat anyway.

The group at the front had been hyping up one among them, pushing him out of his seat, as he looked back hesitantly, like he’d drawn the short straw. Eventually he came down the aisle toward them. He stopped before walking past Junkrat who had his prosthetic leg out blocking the way.

The stranger seemed to contemplate kicking his shin until he saw there wasn’t one to be kicked. Instead he turned his attention to Mei, “Hey, lovely, what’s your name?”
“Not interested, thank you,” she answered flatly, not bothering to look over, though both the Junker’s had their attention trained on him.

“Aww, come on? Just tell me and I’ll leave you alone,” He tried to step over Junkrat’s leg, but he just lifted it higher, “What? She your woman- you gonna defend her then?”

Junkrat’s reaction was immediately to watch Mei’s which was already building behind her eyes with the explosive power of Junkrat’s bombs. She shook her head when Junkrat indicated his fist and then the man, “Let me. It’ll be trouble if you two get into it.”

She turned sharply back on the sleazy intruder.

“One,” she started in, “I don’t owe you my name, my time, or my attention. Second, nobody is anyone else’s- that’s not how it works.”

She took off her glasses and folded them neatly, setting them in the cup holder on her seat, “so, it’s not an affront to someone’s significant other to flirt with them. See, the issue you seem to be having is, when someone says no, that means you leave them the fuck alone.”

The intensity of her voice grew with the last words, and the whole space went quiet for a moment as she looked the stranger square in the eyes.

“Ya know, you looked so much better when you just ignored me, though the tossing the glasses is an improvement,” he moved through her words entirely, “you get all dumpy when you're angry, though. Come on, just smile?”

She forced herself to face forward again, and closed her eyes. She could hear the low rumble of Hog’s growl, and the death grip that Junkrat had on the back of his chair, but they deferred to her, waiting.

_He isn't here. He can’t do anything to hurt me. He isn't here._

She opened her eyes back up to see the guy had turned back to his friends with a shrug.

She saw Junkrat and Roadhog holding back so hard it hurt. She knew they wanted blood, but not here- she didn’t want them to get into that kind of trouble. Couldn’t have the law looking into some ass with a big mouth full of missing teeth, and a black eye.

The slimy stranger rounded back on her, “Hey, no need to be a bitch. I just wanted your name, and a smile. Don’t cost you a thing.”

She continued to ignore him, which unsurprisingly, seemed to make him more aggressive. A different strategy.

“Shit, must be something wrong with you anyway if you’d wanna be with some tweaker, and this pig fucker here,” she could hear his friends howl with laughter in front of them.

“I bet the big ones a retard!” one of the others called out from the front.

“What is wrong with you…” she was going to stand, but the abhorrent man edged in closer finally sliding around Junkrat’s leg when he had shifted. He had a his hand on her seat and Junkrat’s, leaning into her space.

“Yeah, maybe you’re all inbred hicks,” he jerked his head to the right to indicate Roadhog, “that ugly mute your uncle, and your dad? I bet the one that looks like he got hit in the face with a stick is
“Do not talk about them that way,” she stood up aggressively trying to edge him away, “and take your vile mouth, and your hideous face out from in front of mine, and back to your seat before we have a problem.”

“Hey, look. I think I’m willing to ignore that you just said that, if you can offer a discount- I’ll still take you,” his smirk was nauseating.

“From behind in the dark maybe!” One of the others yelled out to hooting and pantomime, he turned to roll his fist in the air as they egged him on before his attention returned.

“So, let's go. Gonna give you a break from whoring out for this piece of shit cuck who won’t even speak up for you, and that big fat fuck…” he had reached out as he said it. Put a hand low on her arm, grabbing.

In a single fluid motion she had seized his wrist, stood up, and flipped him onto his face in the seat where she had just been sitting, now holding his arm twisted around behind him. He hadn't gotten to finish what he was saying about Roadhog, but she'd noticed Junkrat had almost come over the seat at him before she'd handled it.

“Not another word from you about them,” her voice was dangerous and she squeezed the tendons between his wrists sharply to drive the point home as he squealed, “and don’t ever, ever touch me again.”

The group he came with had all stood at once, as if they were trying to decide if it was smart to take on this tiny woman who had just put their friend on his back, and her Junker escorts.

“Stop, you psycho bitch! That hurts!” The man called out and she dropped his arm. He scooted away from her against the window, but then realized he was cowering and stood again trying to look tough.

She held her ground and waited. Junkrat cracked his knuckles standing on his bench seat with one foot over the back ready to lunge. The interloper shook his damaged hand out, and then suddenly with his other, swung around to try and sucker punch her. She parried it easily, sending his strike flailing off with her forearm.

She hadn't expected it when he'd bounced back and manage to push her hard against the seats behind her. It knocked her breath out as Junkrat and Hog moved toward her immediately.

She put a hand up to stop them, instead quickly throwing her own punch that floated above his temple as he coward back. She pulled it back as he finally realized it hadn't made contact.

So, instead of another embarrassment of missing a punch the jerkbag bolted out of the seat, tripping squarely on his face over Junkrat’s leg. One of his friends came up to grab him with a wary eye as Junkrat popped his chest out at him when he got close, as if he was about to jump at him, causing the two to fall on their ass once more to retreat.

Junkrat was brimming now with a new more venomous laughter, “guess ya shouldn’t mess with strangers, ya fucking mongrels,” his tone was threatening, which she found odd on him, laced in something sinister, “never know who you’ll run into next time you're out and about, in the dark empty night, where their ain't no witnesses.”

Both of the men on the floor scrambled up as Junkrat moved into the aisle, edging in on them-Roadhog as his menacing shadow.
“Get out,” Mei said flatly at them as one of the others in their group frantically started hitting the button to alert the driver they wanted off.

“See you next time,” Roadhog rasped as they practically tripped over each other to get out when the doors finally opened.

Mei’s heart felt like it was going to burst. She felt like she was inside a giant ringing bell, and it made her nerves vibrate with the fear, anxiety, and pain she’d pushed back while she had to face that awful creature. She prickled at all the memories of being cornered, and pushed, and called awful things. It stung all over her as the reverberations of the moment quieted slowly.

She’d never been that aggressive in a confrontation. It was usually easiest to be polite until she could slip away. To just give a smile, and move on, no matter how awful it felt, because she was by herself. This was different though, they had been attacking her…friends. She’d never had someone she wanted to defend before, certainly not herself.

“You good, Mei?” Junkrat’s voice wasn’t very much like his voice at all. It had fallen into something that was kinda soft around the edges now, and so the simple question carried a particular weight.

It’s kinda felt like what she’d always been seeking. Not someone to want her. To need her. She wanted to have people. Her people. To defend them, and make them laugh, and leave them feeling full. She wanted to have someone’s back, and know they have hers in turn.

“Yeah,” she said softly, “I’m good, you two?”

Junkrat sighed, and nodded once, plopping back into his seat.

Roadhog settled in behind her, replying and affirming in turn, “Good.”

And it was- now.

“I don’t like it,” Junkrat broke the silence that had fallen for a few blocks after that, “just sitting back. Not doin’ nothin’.”

Roadhog sighed restlessly, seeming to watch her listening to him.

“It’s part of the deal,” he waved his fingers up at the cameras, “you know that though, huh? That we gotta be on good behaviour. Can’t go startin’ fights on public transit,” he picked at a hole in the back of the seat avoiding eye contact “I know you can handle yourself… That you wanted to handle it yourself. Not that it would stop us if the fight needed endin’.”

He seemed unsatisfied at his words, but she was strangely proud of both of them for holding back, for wanting to hold onto what they had here, even when it would’ve been easier to knock out a few teeth. She was happy they had trusted her. That they had let it end where it did.

The Junkers were crass, dirty, unorthodox friend material. Now, she knew they were the kind of people she’d always secretly wanted in her life. You had to experience them to really get it, for the things you couldn't understand by reading a dossier or watching the news- and now she realized it. Loyal, tight knit, honest to a fault, and trustworthy. In their own way. If they let you belong.

“Hey,” Junkrat’s voice still held that peculiar heaviness in it, “I know you wanted us to stay back, and we knew you had it, but ya know if you would’ve needed us we got your back, dontcha?”

The words were almost the same as the first time, but this carried something extra. Hog grunted his agreement, and they both wore heavy looks that roared at her with intent-
You get it, right? You understand?

That they had trusted her, and believed in her, but that they would be there to help if she asked. If she wanted it- even if they weren't supposed to. That they had almost wished she would have given them the go, because they hated what that man and his friends were. How he talked to her, just like how she hated what he'd said about them. They wanted her to know that she could bring their strength even when she chose to stand on her own. Knowing that someone had her back.

That she belonged- if she wanted to.

“Yeah,” she practically glowed in her seat at how bright it felt, “I know.”

Chapter End Notes

**There is no direct non-con kissing or sex, though unwelcome sexual comments are made, and unwanted aggressive non-sexual touch happens. Incest is mentioned in name calling. The word 'retarded' is used as a slur. The word 'whore' is used, and references to sex work. There are themes common to catcalling, aggressive pick up artist type behavior, bullies, and portrayed male on female violence. I try to handle this topic in a way that helps me relate to my own experiences, and gives the characters control over theirs. On request I can mark where it begins and ends, or post an edited version of the chapter.

Chapter Intent Statement (intended to be read after the chapter):

That warning may make it sound worse than what I wrote for some, but I want everyone to feel safe reading my work even if some of these things are just referenced. Usually I’d never write this much about a chapter, but because its a potentially hurtful subject I felt the need to explain my intent. I debated for a while if this scene was necessary for the story I wanted to tell, how I wanted to relay their emotions, and how that connects to my own catharsis in writing.

I find that this theme helps me explore the concept of being bullied/harassed as a child, and what that experience becomes as an adult, both personally and for the characters. Specifically here- how Mei’s experience and views on bullies in her youth shaped how she relates to and approaches bullies and harassment as an adult, and how those views
evolve. Especially in regards to the Junker's and her assumptions about them before they
got to know each other. Also, to point at how people treat the Junkers- to show what
bullying looks like directed at them, and how they relate to their own harassment, and
subsequently, to hers. I wanted to create a scenario where they didn't 'protect' her, since
shes capable, but they were still there to support her- and how this helps shape the
context of their relationship to each other and these concepts moving forward. So thanks
for understanding- I hope this was still an interesting or insightful chapter. Fluffier
scenes to come in the next chapter- I promise!
Junkrat felt a little keyed up. Okay, a lot, because the minute they all got off the shuttle it was like he needed to go running around the block a few times to shake it all off. Things like the growing urge to head back a few stops to watch one of his creations tear apart the smiles on those fuckwits from the ride.

He settled on doing a few little hops and shaking out his arms. The Snowflake had left them with plenty to think about, but he had felt like his insides were crawling around having to just sit back and watch. Especially seeing how she reacted to the whole thing.

He was surprised. Not that she could take them of course, she wouldn’t be an Overwatch agent if she couldn’t take on some drunk shitbag, but that she had- and by how he figured it, on Hog and his behalf. She’d tried her best to ignore them, but the minute they’d started in on him and Roadie she’d stood up, talked back, and took that wanker down a peg. Although, as far as he was concerned, the cockbag had left with too much of his face still in the right place after what he’d said about her.

Sure, he worried he teased the Snowflake a bit too much after having just met her, but he’d never talk to her like that. Not to anyone- not ever. What kind of filth says things like he did to her? To a stranger? It made him feel like he was coated in grime, and for Junkrat that took a lot.

As they finally started strolling along the footpath in silence he wondered what to take from all that. What she’d done, and why. He couldn’t think of much else other than that it was kinda hot. Not the situation, fuck no, but how she’d just taken control of it- to keep them out of trouble, but also getting her own justice. That she had gotten all worked up over what was happening to them.

He wasn’t used to people caring what got said about two Junkers. Two criminals, and thieves, and murders. His heart locked up at it all- thinking that someone like her would even think about standing up for people who had done the things they had. “You aren’t your past,” she’d said to them, but he kinda was. He would always be- at least some of him. It stuck in him like the radiation, it just sorta changes you. As you try and become something new it still feels like you'll always be a little less.

It was making him feel all kinds of strange. That little bit of faith that she had, even if he lacked it in himself.

He could see Roadhog ahead of him admiring the fight in her too as they walked side by side. How he hovered a bit closer to her now. Almost in the protective way that was usually reserved for him- which just made the static inside fizz up even more.

He found himself wriggling in between them, putting his arms around their backs, and pushing them forward, “Hey! Let's getta’ move on, kids! We got places to be!”

“Junkrat, can you please slow down?” He could hear the Snowflake’s voice pipe up, “I’ve got shorter legs than you two!” Her cheeks reddened with embarrassment at having said it out loud.

He let out his first real laugh since they’d gotten off the shuttle, “Then you gotta move ‘um twice as fast!”

For a bit she tried, but soon he could hear hear her voice letting out a little puff of discomfort as she seemed to loose her breath, “do you even know where we’re going?”
“Sure. I reckon toward them big lights tearin’ through the sky, am I right?” He looked down to catch her frowning, but she didn’t disagree, “so we still got a few blocks, gotta keep up!”

“Hold up,” Roadhog finally spoke up, shrugging Junkrat’s hand off him, and stopping.

“Didn’t ya hear me Roadie? The music awaits, and I need to put some fire in that disco!” Roadie rolled his eyes at that, but Junkrat kept leading Mei down the path until he was stopped short by a hand grabbing the back of his coat.

“Slow down, or go without us,” Roadhog’s voice was stern as he pointed at the girl with her puffing breaths, all tied up in the shirt dress contraption she’d made.

He watched Hog walk up and check on her, ignoring Junkrat’s petulant frown, and he swore the man almost looked like he was gonna reach out and rest a hand on her shoulder. Roadie, casually touchin’ someone, it was odd.

What's this then?!

Junkrat found himself all puffed up for no particular reason, “fine then! You stay here and walk all leisure like. Stop and smell all the flowers, yeah, but Imma’ shake it before the place closes!” He knew he sounded so extra childish, but what was he if not extra.

Before he could stop himself he picked up his pace, pulling way ahead of them in no time, not wanting to hear Hog’s ‘what the fuck?’ tone at his display. When he turned to see where they were he noticed Hog was going out of his way to keep her pace as they walked together.

It didn’t take long for her to bring back the weirdly cute little smile she’d been wearing since he’d asked if she was okay. Whatever that was about. She was just chatting away, no need for Junkrat, probably going on about some nonsense he wouldn’t even bother replying… oh, no, never mind. He’s replying, Junkrat finally turned back again when he saw her laugh at whatever he’d said.

Oh, ok. Look who's all chummy today! Mr. Hog the comedian.

He’d been jogging a few blocks before he realized he could see the place they were headed for, but not the people he was going with. He crossed the street, and went to lean against a building opposite the club to wait on the two stragglers, and observe the queue from afar.

Look at these assholes, just waitin’ outside to pay cover to dance, so maybe they can crawl around between the sheets with some stranger later. What a trip!... And where are those two?

He shuffled impatiently, kicking a can around his feet, starting to feel a bit stupid for running off. He knew it was silly, but he'd felt like they were leaving him out whenever their attention was on each other instead of him. He wasn’t used to having anyone else around.

It had been the two of them for so so long, and somehow- since this afternoon, it suddenly seemed to be three. It wasn’t something he was fighting, he had kinda realized how much he’d panicked when she’d said she was leaving after she’d groomed him in their room, like he didn’t want their time together to end. Like she’d get smart, and just start avoiding them again.

When she’d invited them out, well, he hadn't felt something like that in a while. Someone wanting him around, and not just tolerating him, or working with him. Even with Roadie and him it had been like a sunrise, the light slowly creeping in, but today had been an explosion. So much brightness all at once.

He knew Hog felt it too, and he couldn’t help but smile that they were both floating on this weird
happy happenstance while they could. Leaning into the heat of this strange new glow.

_Still, where the fuck are they?!

_He fell back into his gloom now, wishing he was back with them, instead of sulking resentfully on his own.

“Junkrat?” A somewhat familiar voice had popped up next to him suddenly.

“And so what are you doing here?!” He turned flailing erratically only to see that one cheery lady Mei was friends with.

A few others seemed to be crossing the street to join her. That Russian chick who could probably crush him, the bossy gamer one, the angel cosplayer, the younger one of the two with the prison eye tattoo, and that cowboy- what’s his face with his archer boyfriend who liked to show off his nipple, but just the one.

_Well fuck me.

“Um, I didn’t know you were a fan,” she seemed to be trying to make things less awkward, running into him here when they had obviously come as a group.

“Eh? Of,” he asked cautiously.

“Uh, why do you think we’re all here, weirdo?” the youngest quipped, popping her gum.

“I dunno why you’re here. You even old enough to go in, ya ankle biter?”

She scowled and shook her head angrily, just turning back across the street without another word, eyes glued to her phone. She still managed to navigate perfectly though, and Mercy followed her.

“Lucio’s secret set should be starting soon,” Tracer seemed to drop the fact just in case he really didn’t have any idea what was happening, “Did you happen to see Mei on your way here?”

Ah, the real question she’d come to ask, “ain’t much of a secret if everyone seems to know about it.”

She shrugged, but seemed to still be waiting on his answer. He didn’t really know what to say- if Mei actually wanted her to know they’d come together. No shit I saw her, she invited us. He just didn’t wanna pin himself on the Snowflake with as skittish as her friends seemed just saying hello.

“Yeah, yeah. I saw ‘er. She’s on her way, shouldn’t be long,” he crossed his arms over his chest. The others had politely drifted off after the mech girl.

“If you see her, can you tell her we went in,” she chirped before quickly dismissing herself from any unneeded conversation, “see ya inside!”

_If they ever fucking get here!!

He gave a tight smile, and extended his fingers into a wave with as much effort as her conversation had warranted.

It wasn’t a minute after the other group had disappeared inside that he saw Roadie turn the corner, still skippin’ along at a jolly little pace. He huffed a bit, noticing he could see his breath in the air- weird. It was winter, sure, but this place hardly got lower than chilly. For him, that meant a coat, but this seemed a bit worse than normal as he pulled it shut around him to run across the street.
He could already see Roadie being eyed up by the club douches who liked to pick fights with the big guys to prove themselves. He noticed some eyes on the Snowflake as well, a different kind of look, and he found himself trotting up to put himself between her and the hungry eyes. No one needed more of that tonight.

“Hey, I thought you’d be inside already,” she tensed as he came up.

“Nah,” he tried to sound neutral, like he hadn’t just run off earlier, “Saw your pommie friend, and her crew. Told her I saw ya headed this way if you wanna meet up with her though.”

A surprised look flashed over her face, “Why didn’t you tell her you were waiting on us?”

She seemed a little taken aback he’d hide the fact.

“I, uh,” he stumbled a bit to answer, “wasn’t sure you wanted that lot to know. Figured we might be your dirty little secret,” he laughed nervously.

“Not anymore,” she let a brilliant smile reel across her face as she flicked the edge of his coat open ever so slightly to reveal his squeaky clean-ness.

Roadie gave a good laugh at that, and he melted under the warmth they were both giving off. It didn’t take him long to shrug off the leftover bad feelings that he knew had been clinging onto him when he’d run off, “ah, well. Sorry then, I guess.”

They all kinda giggled at his response, none of his usual sass anywhere to be found. He’d dealt with a lot tonight though, so he was giving himself a pass on this one. No one was always perfect.

Still, he hardly expected her to waltz into the club to meet her not so criminal past friends, well maybe the country music album cover, with them on her arms. Arms that he noticed were very bare. He saw her rubbing at them to keep the chill off. He sighed.

As they walked up to the bouncer he stripped off his coat and laid it over Mei’s shoulders.

She turned to him with a bit of shock, “It’s pretty cold out, and you aren’t wearing much. Why are you giving it to me?”

“Look at ya, Snowflake, I know you love the climate and all, but there ain’t much between you an’ it either. You almost died from a cold shower- you can take my coat,” He ventured a look down as he said it.

He had to force himself to turn pretty fast to hide his rosy cheeks though. The way she was all wrapped up in his coat, and Roadies shirt, just smiling like it was the best thing anyone had ever done for her. She was wearin’ the clothes, fighting with strangers, and hangin with the kings- she was practically a Junker now.

*Man, who is she?*

He suddenly realized that he really really wanted to find out.

The bouncer was raising his voice at her as he tuned back into reality. She was arguing about being on the list, and that if they weren’t getting in then she wasn’t going. Even Roadie’s intimidating stance behind her didn’t seem to deter the man from his power trip.

“Ey,” Junkrat called out to get her attention, “forget this guy. I got somethin’ way more fun.”
He could see the worried look on their faces as they turned to each other, and then to the back of his retreating head. He’d swung around the corner of the building before they came jogging up to him.

“More fun, dare I ask?” Mei tried to keep a serious face, but he could see the little upward curve hiding on her lips.

“We go in VIP style- Through the back. Just gotta blend in,” he gave Roadhog a knowing smile as she looked on with a raised brow.

They both looked over at her, scrutinizing something she wasn’t sure of. Then he pointed to Roadie’s jacket with a snap, motioning for him to hand it over. After riffling through the pockets he produced a pen, and a small spiral notebook, handing it over to Mei.

He watched her turn it over in her hands, registering the various drawings and plans they had both scribbled inside as Junkrat made a hurried motion, “There’s a blank page in there somewhere.”

She looked around as if there was an answer floating in the air somewhere.

“You’re our reporter. Writing an article about life on the road for well, roadies, but not Roadhog Roadie- actual ones. Well, us, as actual ones- you get it.” He twirled his hand in circles trying to explain the thought process.

“You’re going to pretend to be roadies?” She looked over to Hog, who as usual with his plans, just shrugged agreeably.

“Don’t I need a press pass, or something?”

Junkrat narrowed his eyes and then snatched the notebook back from her, tearing off the cover, and shoving the rest back in her hand. He turned it over a few times and then looked back to give her another once over.

“Ah, yeah- your necklace- gimme!” He put a hand out.

She pulled the necklace up in her hand, it was a few long chains hanging in layers, tied together by a ribbon in a pretty little bow at her clavicle. It was perfect. She gave it a last glance, untying it and handing it over like a goodbye.

He immediately set to taking the ribbon off, pulling it straight before threading it through a hole in the notebook cover he’d made with his finger, “Perfect!” He handed it proudly over to her.

“This isn’t going to fool anyone,” she let it dangle, spinning around in her hand.

“Well yeah, sure- if you hold it up like that, but you’re gonna hang it from the inside of the coat. Flash it real fast if anyone asks,” he made the motion with his hand as if he was flashing her, “trick is, ya gotta act like you really belong. Act like they are bein’ real unreasonable if they ask to see it.”

He watched her study his face, like she was trying to see if he was playing a trick on her. “Ok, but hold on.” He tried to look over her as she pulled out her phone and started scrolling furiously through something online.

A few minutes passed, but just about when he was getting fidgety her head popped up, “alright, I can do this. Just promise me it’s at least gonna be the kind of trouble that’ll make a good story later?”

Him and Hog both looked at each other, and he could see the lopsided smile his giant companion
was making even with his mask.

“Snowflake, that's the only kinda trouble we do!”

Chapter End Notes

Sneaking into concerts, because I'm a grown up and I write grown up things. The group with Tracer is solely based on how I wanted to write Junkrat describing them, but let's pretend they make sense as just having gone on a mission, and also being people who would go to a club. Team spirit right? More fluff to come in the next chapter, and then some new developments too!
Nevermind how it got here, it just did.

The Snowball had gotten pretty into her act, done a good job too, but now they were all in for it.

“I don’t have anyone by that name on the list,” a stern woman had stopped them backstage as she flipped through papers in her clipboard. She was short, and her expression was severe, but she commanded power. Roadhog could respect that.

Junkrat stepped in front of them and lifted his hand to try and say something clever, but before it got out of his mouth the woman had pressed a button on her headset, “Security.”

“No need. I’m so sorry for the misunderstanding- Trish, was it?” Mei practically shoved Rat behind her as she feigned an aside, “I can’t believe he didn’t send that email! Robby is getting an earful when he gets back!”

She seemed to be pretending to talk to Rat and him, as if they knew who Robby was, but they nodded their heads in agreement.

This made Trish pause, brow furrowing back at her clipboard, “You sent something in right before he left?”

The Snowflake smiled sweetly, she’d done it- whatever she’d said, the woman had obviously become immediately less suspicious.

Mei’s hand went up to her cheek as if she was embarrassed, “You think I’d know better than to trust him when he promises to forward emails after all this time! Especially when he’s heading out of the country, but don’t worry- I know you’re just doing your job.”

She had turned to try and act like she was shuffling them all back toward the exit, but the whole time he could see her on her phone as if she was searching for something.

“Wait, wait,” the woman stopped them, appraising Mei, “I know Rob can be tool sometimes! Look, do you happen to have…”

Then suddenly the woman interrupted herself and held up a finger as she pressed her headset into her ear with the other hand, “Yeah, no. Not today. No, nope, no. He couldn’a’ asked…I said no. Look give me a minute and I’ll be there.”

He watched Mei finish typing something on her phone as the woman turned back on them, “Ok, I don’t have a lot of time. If you show me the email, I’ll just write you in- but next time just remember to get your credentials approved well before with Rob, please?”

“Of course,” Mei said scrolling through her phone and then holding it up, “here it is!”

She seemed to mean it, but Junkrat looked like he was about ready to run- not suspicious at all. Hog figured, if Mei was confident he had no reason he shouldn’t be. In all honesty, by this point in Junkrat’s hairbrained schemes he was usually already having to punch their way out, so all and all he wasn’t too hung up on it either way.
The big difference seemed to be that Mei actually had something going here as the woman went back to her headset, “Hey Jess, can you bring around two backstages and a press badge to the loading area please,” she scribbled something in her notes, “Yeah, Robby fucked up the list again.”

After a moment Trish turned back to Mei, “Sorry about that, Miss Lanfang, I had no idea. You know how he is though?”

“Of course, no hard feelings, you were just doing your job.”

“I’ll let Lucio know you’re here when I run into him!” Trish nodded a goodbye at the end of the statement, and fell back into the chaos in her headset, returning to the green room area.

Well, damn, he had to give it to the little Snowflake, he had no clue what mind trick she’d used there but it had worked way better then he’d have thought.

“How...How’d ya, even? I am so confused,” Junkrat stumbled over his question, scratching his head as she turned to beam triumphantly at them her arms behind her back.

He was pretty sure she was a meteorologist, or a climatologist, or some such. Not a spy. Not in the espionage business, but he was second guessing what her actual specialty might be now.

“How’d ya, even? I am so confused,” Junkrat stumbled over his question, scratching his head as she turned to beam triumphantly at them her arms behind her back.

All he could do is shrug.

“I just looked up the owner online. He is a bit of a name dropper. I saw on his blog that he just left for vacation, and he seemed like a flighty person- so I figured it wasn’t a leap to pretend to be a famous journalist who he’d approved last minute for the show.”

“Wait. You did all that while we were just standin’ here?”

“Well no, I researched him outside when you first told me the plan,” she smiled down at her feet, as if this was the most obvious thing, “I wrote the fake email while we were talking to the woman, you know- in one of those weird forging programs Winston included on our devices.”

Hog watched as Rat tried to take it all in, “how’d ya know she’d buy it just from reading up on some suit online?”

He watched Mei’s body language tighten up, “It’s just... well, it’s all just very familiar.”

He saw her stance close off, the confidence she’d been high on a moment ago fading into something else. It came as a stark contrast to the girl whose personality he’d gotten a small window into earlier while they had walked.

They’d enjoyed a little laugh about Junkrat’s, unsurprising, erratic outburst. Still, she had understood more than he’d expected, and it seemed through experience- not just empathy.

She seemed to hold her own pent up frustrations in what she thought was a slightly more graceful manner. Like she was saving up for something. An implosion? While Junkrat was an explosion, constantly releasing whatever was inside whenever he felt it, Mei- she hadn’t even found the pin yet, much less pulled it.

She had worn an open expression, one that said, ‘thank you’, and ‘please don’t leave me alone’, all in one breath. At him, and after Junkrat when he’d left- too fast to see the dejection on her face. So he’d tried to make her laugh, and for what good it was, she had. With him, and not at. Together, as
they walked, he had enjoyed it. He didn’t mind being surprised by that.

Now he was watching the two of them bicker, or at least pretend to, and he thought it suited them. He could use a good scolding, and she could benefit from letting out a little steam on him.

Hog shook his head to himself thinking about how he had seen a new face on Rat today—jealousy. That wasn’t a surprise though, the fidgety possessive man had rarely had to share anything. Sharin’ wasn’t a particularly good survival skill, or a junker trait for that matter. It certainly wasn’t something that came naturally to someone who had never really had anything to call their own.

Then the part that really got him. When they had met back up he could see how confused Rat was. That wasn’t new, but the reason for it this time seemed much more introspective than normal. Junkrat wanted the same thing Hog did, and so he couldn’t be jealous. Well, he could be, and he was, but Junkrat’s face said that it wasn’t...fair?

Unfairness wasn’t a stranger to them. It’s why they had set out to make their own world. So, why would this be any different?

“It just makes sense,” Mei had interrupted his thoughts, and for a moment he’d agreed, as if she was answering the conversation he’d been having in his head.

“Not to me!”

“Well, yeah. I grew up around the theatre,” she started fiddling with a button on the borrowed coat caped around her shoulders, “and, some things are always true. I just needed the right names.”

“It’s witchcraft, what it is! I saw it,” Junkrat tapped the back of his hand against Hog’s belly, “ya saw it too, Roadie!

He rumbled with agreement, but a little roll of laughter escaped at the end. Clever little Snowflake.

He wanted to know so much more. What it had been like for her growing up. What had shaped the reserved but snappy, quiet but witty, soft yet strong creature? What lurked inside her that kept her alive, because, though the circumstances weren’t the same, she was a survivor too. He wanted to appreciate what that meant in her.

“Well, whatever it was, I’m glad ya did it,” Junkrat’s posture finally relaxed a bit, “didn’t much feel like runnin’ for it after gettin’ so far!”

Then he saw that smile on her again, aimed at both of them. It was like they’d said something particularly flattering about her, but he couldn’t recall what, much less why, she’d be so happy about it.

“Uh, Mei?”

They all turned as an unsure voice came up behind them.

“Lucio!” Mei turned, immediately lighting up in a way that Roadhog realized put him on guard, “I’m so so sorry! I’m sure we’ve caused you trouble!”

The man seemed to get a little warm in the cheeks as she rushed over to apologize profusely, and instinctually Hog reached out to keep Junkrat from doing anything stupid.

“Well, I’m gonna owe Trish a fruit basket or something, and Rob,” the man shrugged, closing his eyes with a cocky smile, “don’t think he’ll care as long as I keep performing here.”
She held her fist up nervously to her heart looking up at the musician, “thank you, thank you, for covering for us! I’m not sure what came over me when I drug your name into all this!”

All this, huh? Seemed ok enough with it a moment ago, now it’s ‘all this’?

“No harm, this time, but I’m always happy to put you on the actual list. You don’t need to sneak in!”

Mei blushed, but Hog imagined it was mostly from her embarrassment, “Well, I mean, I can’t lie- this way is a bit more fun! That is to say...in the harmless...sneaky kind of way. Still, sorry to drag you in!”

Hog could feel himself let his angry thought sweep away with her words.

Lucio seemed to find something genuinely wonderful in the statement as well, strangely. “Don’t get enough excitement at home,” he winked at them...winked, like Overwatch was some schoolkid secret they all shared, “Well, I guess I can get the excitement of going where you aren’t supposed to be, just don’t drive the stage manager crazy ok?”

Mei seemed to light up at this, and Lucio gave her a brilliant smile with his music idol eyes all sparkly.

“Anyway, I’m on in like,” he looked down at his wrist, “five minutes, so I’ll see you guys on the other side!”

“I’m so excited to see you perform!” Mei held her hands together in front of her chest, “break a leg!”

“Thanks, I can’t wait to hear what you think,” he smiled and turned to address him and Rat, “you two enjoy yourselves, but keep Miss Lanfang here from letting the spy powers go to her head, okay?”

They stared at him silently, but he didn’t seem phased, he just gave another smile and zipped away.

“Why’d ya tell him to go break a leg,” Junkrat crinkled up his nose at where the man had disappeared, “thought ya liked him, what with the way you were fallin’ all over yourself.”

Here we go again.

“I was wishing him luck. It's a superstition in the theatre- just saying good luck will bring bad luck!”

“Well if it’s bad luck then stop sayin’ it!” Junkrat looked up at the historical architecture of the theatre as if it was about to cave in on him.

She tried to hold back a laugh at him, and instead a good natured smile settled onto her lips as she hopped up on one of the giant amps nearby to have a seat.

“So wait,” Junkrat started in, leaning against a speaker, the elbow of his mechanical arm resting in his other palm as he tried to look scholarly by pinching his lower lip under his metal thumb, “you’re sayin’ it’s like opposite day back here?”

“No, it’s not like that,” she started to explain, but he was already oblivious to what she was saying, lost in his own idea.

“So if I was to say- lookin’ pretty slim today Hog. Or, man could I use a haircut. Maybe even something like, dam Sonflake,” his face was split in a foolish toothy grin as she awaited his surely genius switch-a-roo, “You’re a wreck tonight. Too bad we have to hang with ya, otherwise you’d be
with your totally awesome friends up front.”

Hog thought he might get a neck cramp from shaking his head tonight, but it was as much a compliment as he’d ever heard Junkrat manage. Somehow it had inspired the little Snowball to go all pink in the face again.

“They aren’t lame,” she protested, “They just aren’t as awesome as us tonight!”

She smiled at the floor at the last bit.

“How polite of you,” Junkrat talked slowly, feigning offence, as Hog looked at him like the idiot he was being- realizing just how far he knew Rat would take this.

“Junkrat! It is not opposite day. Stop it! You’re driving me crazy!”

He contemplated for a moment, “I have no idea what you mean. Too bad what it’s doin’ to your mood though!” He smirked cheerily.

Mei tried to form an argument a few times, but Hog finally saw the all too familiar look of defeat in her eyes.

“You are the best, Junkrat! I just adore this game. You must be the smartest, most clever person, I have ever seen. In fact, I love this so much, I could just kiss you on the mouth!” She was fuming at him- which he knew was honestly its own reward in Rat’s mind.

She crossed her arms petulantly, and Hog caught Junkrat as he did that suggestive wiggly eyebrow thing he likes to do before something exceptionally cringeworthy happens.

“Wowie, Mei! Didn’ know ya felt that way about me,” he leaned over toward her puckered up comically like a duck as he managed the rest of the words through the expression, “just had to ask!”

She delivered. Right to the mouth, a light peck, but you could see she’d only feigned the punch. He, of course, pretended to be maimed.

“Oi! I thought it was just an expression! Or are ya tellin’ me I’m gettin’ lucky tonight?!"

Well, at least his idiocy was consistent.

“That’s not up to me, I’m sure;” her eyes traced back and forth between him and Rat.

“What? Roadie? He don’t mind, do ya Hog?” Junkrat elbowed him in the ribs, “I’t be worse if he hadn’ been flirtin’ with ya all night too, ey?”

That little fucker. I’m gonna kill him.

Her shocked face shot up to him, just as he had gone to interrupt Junkrat.

Oh, so now we’re takin’ Rat’s bullshit seriously?!

Hog knew this was Junkrat’s not so subtle revenge for not running after him earlier. For making him jealous. Worse, he knew he wasn’t really lying, it was true..truish, brat.

Now the Snowball was beet red and sputtering in Mandarin.

“What, not used to such handsome fellows bein’ so honest?” He put his thumbs under the leather straps on his harness, pushing it out in a confident stance.
“Oh, I get it,” She put her hands on her hips snapping out of her stupor as she stuck her tongue out at him, “still opposite day I see.”

“Ey, you callin’ us ugly then? Huh, ugly liars? Hear that Hog?!” He turned so that it looked as if he was deeply offended.

“I...I, no. I didn’t mean, I wouldn’t say! You just got me all worked up and,” she threw her arms up as Junkrat crossed his, “Ugh! You are insufferable! I must be a masochist.”

Junkrat twisted around with a grin, “Kinky.”

The front of the house would probably have heard her scream if it wasn’t for the emcee announcing the headliner for the evening, getting the crowd worked up.

The two huffy little children he had now suddenly become the chaperone of were pretending to ignore each other as the introduction droned on. Rat would occasionally swat at her hair when she wasn’t looking and she would poke him in his ticklish sides. He was sure they would have escalated to new heights of infantilism if Lucio’s voice hadn’t suddenly broke through the air.

“Is this thing on? Ha, ha,” you could hear the smug smile on his face, but it was somehow strangely endearing as the first few beats rumbled over Hog’s ears, “Lucio, comin’ at you!”

It only took a few seconds for them to both find their way around to the gap in the curtains where a lot of the other crewmembers had gathered to watch the show sidestage. Hog hung back a bit, too big to squeeze into the tight space, but he enjoyed watching Rat and Mei completely forget their squabble to awkwardly bob their heads.

He was sure when the beat finally dropped it was gonna be the best moment of the night, because he saw them both losing themselves to the movement as it built up. Even he was starting to tap his foot in rhythm.

He watched as Mei moved in a way he hadn’t expected- joyous and free, that shy and nervous girl that had first spoken with him this time last night, now just getting lost in the sound. Rat danced with her a bit, it was awkward, but endearing.

Now the music grew, and their was a static in the air as the crowd held their breath. He held his breath. He got the appeal a bit better now that he was so close to the reverberations of it all, the energy of the crowd and the music gnawing to be cut loose.

He found himself drifting to join Rat and Mei, as they fell back to be closer to him too. Everything felt frantic, and there was this pulling need to the hum that he could see in their faces. That he could feel in the way they were all kind of moving together now, just wanting this next moment to get here, to hurry up, because everything so desperately wanted to be released. So that they could finally swarm together, and be close, and their bodies would move together without any thought but the pure joyous friction of the moment.

Then it dropped.

Everything flooded in, the lights cycled through every color, the crowd all jumped into the air in unison. They jumped up too, giggling, laughing with abandon. He saw Mei’s closed eyes soak up the feeling, letting the sound thrum through her like a heartbeat, and the light dappled over her face like sun filtering through the leaves of a tree. It was beautiful. She was beautiful.

He watched Junkrat see it too, his eyes the same bright light they were when he was watching something blow open in front of him. He saw Junkrat, and he saw Jamison flash across his features,
just completely enveloped by this single wondrous moment; as surely fleeting as any of the things he found comfort or beauty in.

When their eyes met, he could feel Jamison’s smile, Junkrat’s spark, just roiling underneath his frame all caught up in the fray. He was sure, now more than ever, what he’d seen that had let him and Rat be them, together.

He was sure too, that there was something else there, and they both knew it because he sensed a mirror in Rat’s expression. It clung around the edges of their faces, and in the way they moved. It was written like words in the moment between them, because they read each other so well without even knowing, and it spelled out a message.

For just that second they had looked at her like they looked at each other, and they both felt fuller because of it.

As if the very fabric of the world was mimicking their realization, there was a distant rumble, and the ground shook. It was then that everything went to shit.

Chapter End Notes

Been busy, but tried to get this one out asap since it'll be next week before I can edit another chapter. Thanks so much for all the lovely feedback so far!! Also, on a silly note, Mei stole her fake name from Mei Lanfang- a Chinese opera actor from the early 1900's.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

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Content warning: blood, cannon typical violence, mental health issues, lightly described injury.

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Summertime is heat and distant thunder, but it was winter now, Mei recalled, and that wasn't thunder.

Time had gone a bit upside down, and a moment ago she would have said it was in a good way. All ruckus beats, and brilliant lights, lost in the warmth of sound as emotion. Now, it was dark, and the low hum in the room wasn't nostalgic cicadas, but frightened people.

“We need to get out,” she heard Junkrat’s voice, edgy, near her ear. It took her a moment to realize he was pressed into her back hunching over her, arms shielding her head, as he looked at the ceiling, “this place ain't meant to hold up. Too much stuff to fall on our heads!”

From directly in front of her Hog’s agreement sounded in a grunt she could feel in his belly, which he had pressed into her chest, shielding the other side of her. She found herself being ushered along quickly toward the back door between the two men as the emergency lights came back up.

She could hear Lucio’s voice over the speakers accompanied by a lulling refrain, “please stay calm, I know this is frightening, but…”

A second blast, they could see the light and feel the ground shift before they heard it. Closer this time. Screams rang out, terror, as they reached the doorway. Mei could see the sky glowing warmly as small pebbles rained down on them.

This isn't happening. All these people!

Her mind raced, and she focused her eyes on Junkrat in the light of the auxiliary powered street lamps down the alley. He was distant, staring at the sky and mumbling something. Counting?

“Nine, eight...Hog, get us outta here!!” His voice was pure urgency, and it wasn't a second after it came from his mouth that they were each under a massive arm as Roadhog hurdled down the alley toward the streets.

six, five, four, three, two...she continued his countdown in her head holding her breath.

One...nothing. Maybe he was...

Again, the blast seemed less than a few blocks away, she felt the heat of the fireball on her cheeks as Roadhog dashed, turning now he ran toward it!!

Oh! Smart. The blasts are getting closer- they were technically running away.
She could hear Junkrat spilling over with laughter from the other side, “Oi! ‘Aven’t seen somthin’ big as all this in a tic!” The wonder hid his nerves as his accent got heavier.

Roadhog made it to the end of the square as people fled in the opposite direction. He sat them down as Junkrat had gone silent again, searching the skyline, his fingers out in front of him folding down one by one as the seconds ticked by.

“Soon,” his eyes darting around, “Shit, shit Hog we’re too close.”

Hog snatched them up again without question, running at the empty fountain in the center of the plaza, and tossing them indelicately inside. Mei landed painfully on her back, and Junkrat had been on top of her in a blink, straddling her waist and folding his torso around her chest as his arms surrounded her head. Then Hog dove in on top of them. Just in time.

Just as time had gone all funny again. There was so much sound, and then what seemed like none at all. It was so so warm, pushed into something cold cold cold. Squeezed in tight, just darkness, and conflicting senses.

Everything shook like it was trying to swallow her up, and she was sure she was trembling too. Struggling against the pressure, coming down, closing in. Her chest couldn't open up. Her ribs, trapped, couldn't release the scream that she wasn't even sure she could have made.

No! No no. Not again. Please, please, please!!

She had to get out before she woke up again in someone else's timeline. Before she woke up to the carnage she was helpless to stop. She didn't want to wait. To be the sole survivor. Not again.

“I'm not worth protecting! Please!” She begged, wriggling in the closing darkness.

Junkrat’s arms squeezed her tighter, it was crushing, but she remembered herself.

Her eyes shot open, and through the point of Junkrat's shoulder she could see the night sky was on fire. Embers fell down onto the dark shape above them both, and then she could hear again. It was...raining?

Not rain- shards of glass. They rang like chimes as they bounced around the marble fountain, and her eyes slammed back shut. All the sounds had her clenching up, crunching stone and screaming metal, but the worst of them was the sound of Roadhog’s breath wheezing out as he pushed back against something that had fallen onto them. He had spared them the impact, taking it all on himself.

She felt something wet, dripping down from Junkrat's face, his shoulder- warm and thick.

“Hog, ya gotta’ get up! The next one don't have long, we need to get further out,” Junkrat strained pushing off all four limbs to put his back into moving Hog.

She could hear the effort as they moved, groaning and creaking, and the light came back in. She could see the blood dripping down Junkrat’s cheeks, leaving trails in the dust that had settled all over him.

I suppose a Junker never stays clean long.

She would have smiled at the thought if she'd been capable of such a thing now. Instead she was terrified, searching what she could see of Junkrat for some injury. She spotted the source further up, black drops spilling out of a black silhouette. Hog!
“Fuck. Fuck! Too late,” Junkrat fell back over her, but held Roadie up as much as he could. “Bear with it, mate, we been through worse- yeah?”

She heard Hog give a weak laugh, causing small chunks of debris to roll off of his back and bounce around them. Then another boom, and she felt the wind change, tossing her hair around as Junkrat clutched her safely under him.

*Please, just be over soon. Please!*

This one had been further, but still too close, throwing shrapnel all around. Her mind shuddered.

Junkrat’s faint voice whispered into the top of her head, “it’s gonna be good Snowflake. Doncha worry. Just breath.”

She realized she was gasping for air, and she used his steady hold as an anchor, focusing herself in the contact. She felt safe, but them...

*What about them- Hog?! Is he ok?!

That's what had her whimpering, “please, don't leave. Please. Please. Be alright. Please, don't leave me here alone! I don't want to lose anyone else I care about, please!”

She felt Junkrat flinch, she searched the dark for his amber eyes, but it was all inky nothing above her. Her palms flat up against his hummingbird heart, between them, she pressed her face into the hollow of his shoulder. Then he ran his thumb over her scalp back and forth soothingly, “hey, hey, I'm right here, sheila. Not goin’ anywhere. We gotcha.”

They did, and she begged in the darkness that she still had them.

“Gotta get up Hog, we should be ok here for now,” Junkrat strained again, "and ya’ ain't gettin’ any lighter!”

She heard Hog suck in a sharp breath, pushing himself up as bits of the disembodied landscape slid off his back. Junkrat eased himself up as well. She realized she felt a sting on her bare skin where it had been pressed into the ice that had formed from the puddles in the fountain where she had landed.

She could see a small spec of red in her clouded vision, and as she went to sit up, it came to her attention Junkrat still straddled her waist, “hey, um..”

“Oh! Uh,” Junkrat scrambled up, “you ok? Sorry bout that.”

“Check Hog! I'm fine, please- check him. Is he ok?” She sat straight up, but regretted it upon immediately feeling dizzy.

“Hog, you alive?” The tone implied a joke, but there was a biting fear behind it.

“Not rid of me yet,” his deep voice sounded exhausted.

Mei snatched off her glasses, trying frantically to get them clean on the corner of her ruined dress. When she slammed them back on she could see the smear of blood that she’d wiped across the lens, and the bloody mess it came from.

She thought of the kitchen. Was that just last night? Mei wasn’t sure how it had ended up like this, but here they were. Not at all where she’d imagined on so many levels. She just wished she had the same access to medical supplies.
If things couldn't get worse, and she knew it was a curse to even think the thought, the next explosion rang out. She, imagined, rather close to the club. For a moment she was on her feet ready to run to them.

*No more! Please!*

Then a new sound. Gunshots. Near where the first bomb had gone off if her hearing could still be counted on.

“Damnit!” She looked at Hog. He was beaten up pretty terribly. Like a porcupine whose quills were bits of window and metal sticking out. He was bleeding so badly.

She reached out, but her hands hovered. There was nowhere she could touch that wasn't damaged, “Hog??” Her hands went to her cheeks to wipe away the heavy tears on her face.

“I've felt worse,” he managed, trying to comfort her.

She couldn't have that. She was scared, sure, this was terrifying, but she wanted to worry about him now, “I'm sorry I panicked.”

“Hey, good a time as any for it,” Junkrat tried to lighten things up.

“I'm still sorry,” she recomposed herself, “but I'm here now. What can I do?”

“Stay alive.” Roadhog’s voice was gruff. An order. A demand.

She found a smile as she choked back another sob, “I think I can manage. You two just return the favor, ok?”

“Ha! Deal,” Hog gingerly got to his feet, obviously in a lot of pain but amused at her concern, “we gotta move.”

He limped forward a step, and Junkrat offered a shoulder for support, “take it easy Hog. I'll get us holed up somewhere good till the Cavalry arrives. Just don't bleed out first, yeah?”

“Hmmph,” Hog seemed almost offended.

Mei swung around the other side of Hog, gently guiding his free hand to her shoulder, “I'm stronger than I look.”

He eyed her skeptically and she could see the glass of one of his lenses had started to crack.

“We’ll get to safety faster if you just do what I say,” she gave a withering look at his further hesitance, “now!!”

He complied. While he spared her his full weight it still took a lot of her determination for them all to slowly limp into a nearby underground parking complex. She'd taken over this rescue operation. They’d protected her from the heavy damage, and she'd make sure they lived long enough for her to properly chew them out for their reckless self endangerment.

“Junkrat, get him stable, keep him awake- no matter what! No sleeping!!” She stood, hands on hips, as Junkrat lowered his bulky partner to the ground with a thud.

“Roger, there, Chief!” Junkrat attempted a salute, “can I fetch ya a spot of tea while I'm at it??”

Hog slumped forward, and Mei ran to his side before she could snap a comeback at Rat, “wake up!!
Wake up Roadhog.” She jostled him as much as she dared, and ducked out of the way of his swinging backhand in the nick of time.

“What, what there big guy? That's the shiny little Snowflake, yeah?”

Roadhog groaned, obviously out of it from blood loss, lashing out again to get up.

“Hey now! You're gonna hurt us. It's me, Hog, your favorite burden,” Junkrat's head snapped to look at Mei holding his fingers up and closing an eye as if he was holding her there, “it's just me, and the pretty lil’ yeti.”

Mei’s eyes barely had time to dart over before a disoriented Hog swung back around.

“Hey! Snap out of it ya bloody idiot!” Junkrat hopped out of his range.

“Hog! Roadhog- Junkrat lost the treasure!” She improvised, looking over to catch the stunned confusion in Junkrat's face.

“Oi! You tryin’ to,” he dodged a swipe, never taking his fuzzy furrowed brow off her, “make him kill me?!”

“No good,” Hog murmured, “lousy, two timing!!”

Hog almost stood up, but instead fell forward onto his face.

“Fuck, Snowflake. Leave him to me next time, would ya?”

“Uh, yes. Sorry. Well so much for keeping him up. Watch his breathing. I'm gonna go see if the emergency stations have popped up yet, and grab first aid.”

“It’s not safe to go alone,” before she could give him sass he finished, “not for me either. None of us should be goin’ at it solo.”

He giggled for a second at what he found to be a funny double meaning. Humor at least meant he was himself.

“Yeah, fine, but we can’t leave him either.”

“Can’t ya use your ice magic on him? Freeze him in a little igloo?”

“You're an idiot.” She shot imaginary icicles at him with her eyes, too bad it's the only weapon she had on her, “are you fucking with me Junkrat? Because if I did have my cryo-pack right now I'd use it to freeze you so future generations could see the last living caveman!”

“Oh, so that's what that glowy backpack does then? Huh,” he scratched his scalp causing dust to puff out, “doesn't change anything. I'm goin with you. We stay, he may bleed out, you go by yourself- get swept up in all this, I might not see ya again. Least not soon enough for ole’ nappin’ on the job over there. Got it?”

She considered her options for a moment. He was right.

Well, that's a new thought.

She finally let some of the shock spill out with a laugh. Junkrat gave her a sideways look, but he realized she was nodding in agreement.
“What's funny? You alright there Snowflake?”

“Yeah,” she let out a breathy last laugh, “just a lot of firsts tonight.”

He considered her for a moment, “first date?”

He pressed his hands together hunching forward with a grin, and laughing like a madman.

*He is, but I'm right behind him.*

“Sure,” she bounced up on her toes next to him, and pecked a kiss on his cheek before scurrying away, “keep up. It's going to be a long night!”

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Chapter End Notes

Yay, got a new one out. The tone will be a bit more action for a while, but what's Overwatch without the struggle? Feedback is the fuel which gives me words- and any is treasured dearly! Thanks for continuing to read, or getting this far if you're just tuning in! Find me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus!
It wasn’t a secret that Junkrat enjoyed a good explosion, but this ordeal was something entirely different. Plus, they weren't his explosion- so inherently they were less impressive.

Anyway, the important detail here was that he was pretty sure the little Snowflake had just kissed him. On the cheek, sure, and cheekily at that.

He found his fingers wandering over the spot and down to his chest where he held them over the last explosion he’d experienced- in his heart. It’s how he knew it had actually happened.

“Junkrat!” he heard her huff from the top of the exit ramp, “we’re in a hurry remember?”

That was more like it. He expected her scolding him. While he had easily teased her about whatever romantic nonsense, more than once at that, he wasn’t ready to admit why. It was making him too distracted, and right now was certainly not the time for that.

Still, there was a little wishful thinking at her reaction. Even if he was sure she was teasing as much as he was pretending to tease. Maybe she wasn’t, just a little, and he started to smile dumbly at the thought.

**Ugh! Not right now. Hoggie would kill me if I let him die!**

So instead he took one last look at his passed out companion, and trotted up the ramp to join an impatient Mei.

“Yeah, yeah,” he gave her a weak smile, “keep your shirt on, I’m comin’!”

She’d given a half hearted huff in return, but seemed to be too tired to add anything to their usual back and forth. She’d turned around and headed into the empty plaza before he could even get his thoughts together, and they both stiffened as the sound of gunfire seemed to be getting closer.

If he had his weapons on him it might be a good sound. The assholes blowing everything to hell could use a little taste of their own medicine. The explosions had stopped for a good while now, and he was sure the closing gunfire was the culprit’s plan to take advantage of the chaos they caused. To what end, who knows? But he wanted to end them- they’d ruined a perfectly nice night.

“We gotta make it quick Snowflake,” his attention darted to the shadows between buildings, and he could hear his own tone had taken on a more serious edge, “ain’t got a way to defend ourselves against what their bringin’ in.”

He realized he was wringing his hands together under his hunched posture, and tried to correct himself so he didn’t look so nervous. He didn’t want to spread that kinda energy at the moment.

She gave him that, ‘no shit’ kinda look, “Why do you think I was telling you to hurry!”

She was shaking her head, and he leaned over her shoulder as she took out her phone, typing something into the internet browser. No service. She tried again a few times with the same outcome. She tried to call Winston, but the same problem. No service.
He heard her hiss something in her native language, but she seemed resolute when her eyes shot back up to survey the various streets that shot out from where they were, “I think Northeast. I’m pretty sure there’s an emergency station up that way.”

Again, before he could say anything otherwise, she took off ahead of him. A small part of him bristled, could barely keep up earlier, but now we’re bookin’ it down the alley?! He also knew he was being an asshole for thinking it. He scolded himself internally. They were both running on adrenaline at this point. It reminded him it probably wouldn’t hurt to check in on her- honestly worried she might push it too hard after earlier.

“Hey, take it easy, will ya?” He had loped up to keep pace beside her, “don’t want ya to pass out on me too.”

He tried his best to manage a gentle delivery, and with honest concern, but he only earned a sharp look from her and a click of the tongue before she was moving even faster. He groaned, but ran to keep up, he was gonna have to learn how to stop accidentally challenging her.

He scanned the street with her for the blue light of the emergency services station. Usually the booths were sunk into the ground unless you summoned them up to call the police, or request medical assistance in case of an accident. They used ‘um to store supplies for EMT’s, or emergency first aid for first responders, some of them even stocked anti-riot gear for cops. That’s the one he wanted to find.

“Over here!” She called out ahead of him as he scanned around them.

It looked like the stations had popped up automatically. A pre-recorded message played louder as he caught up, “This is a state of emergency, please remain calm, and find the nearest designated emergency shelter. Follow all instructions by law enforcement. Report injury and suspicious activity at the nearest emergency service station or to a law enforcement officer. Thank you. Repeat. This is…”

“Okay, okay,” she breathed heavily, leaning into the giant canister, “there has to be something in here we can use!”

If he was being totally honest, he had no idea how these things worked, just that sometimes when he and Hog had done some of their more explody heists they had popped up in response. He waited as she pawed at various places on its smooth surface.

“Come on!” She banged a fist against it, “just go!”

“Hello, citizen. This is an automated emergency message. If you need medical assistance, or have suspicious activity to report, please use the call line on the side of the booth to contact emergency services,” the machine droned, but soon went back to repeating its original message.

Stupid peice of junk!

He slid around it, inspecting from several angles while she ran a hand over a small recessed area, “Here, it’s the call line!” She picked it up shoving it to her ear quickly, but it didn’t take long for expression to sour. She slammed the phone back on the receiver, “the lines are busy. Too many calls.”

Well, that’s not surprising. He could only imagine the amount of panic across the city. He figured the only reason the streets were empty here was the part of town being more commercial, and ya know, the shots being fired.
Speaking of which, “Snowflake! Get down, be quiet!” He ordered as he pressed his hand down on the top of her head, and they both sank to the ground in the shadow of the emergency booth.

He was kinda glad she hadn’t argued with him, but now she seemed frozen in place, so he peeked around to assess the sound that had made him go into hiding in the first place.

He saw a couple of guys moving low in the shadow, weapons tucked into their shoulders and pointed in front of them, they moved without speaking in the direction him and Mei had come from. They looked well equipped, and purposeful. Dangerous.

As the intruders moved down the street past their hiding place he slowly ushered her to move around it so they’d be on the opposite side of their current company. He kept them there a solid minute after they had both disappeared around the bend.

“Roadhog?” She whispered at him with concern, looking up with big eyes.

“Doubt they’ll search some random parking garage, he’ll be alright. Let’s just get what we need. More on the way I imagine.” He looked over his shoulder to make sure it was still clear.

“It’s all locked down though,” she frowned at the small lines that ran over the surface where drawers of the supplies they needed were trapped inside. “You have to be a police officer or medical responder.”

“Wait, wait,” he perked up pointing at her pocket excitedly, “what about the thing you used earlier on that woman backstage? Use that!”

He had to look twice to confirm her expression had started to beam, and she had yanked out her device and went to the program at once.

“Yes!” She whispered it excitedly, and he found his face sandwiched in between her hands, “Junkrat, you idiot savant!”

She shook him back and forth, squishing his face into something silly, as he joked, “glad you finally recognizin’ my smarts.”

A bark of laughter escaped her as she quickly went back to inputting something into her device, cross referencing the numbers on the top of the booth. She looked like she was close to whatever it was she needed when the shadows started to move again.

“Down,” He whispered gruffly, and they both ducked again. This time it was three guys, and they were moving slower, sweeping their surroundings. They were searching for stragglers.

He turned to her and used his hands to signal what he had seen, and he was surprised to see the Junker signs translated well enough when he saw understanding on her face. They were sheltered behind the wall for now, but he didn’t know how long. He signaled for her to hurry, and she had nodded, going back to type something on her screen. She held it up for him.

Shit.

Look- reading and writing, not a priority for a scavenger, or a mercenary. Counting, yes. Counting money, definitely. Reading more than some basic words- not so much. Now he was regretting being so impatient with Hog about those lessons. He’d given reading the message his best shot, but all he got was, “bad...guns...time...men...police...run...Hog.”

He let the back of his head thunk against the terminal, and a lungfull of air escaped. He leaned into
her and put his mouth close to her ear, “I, uh...I can’t read, Snowflake.”

He tried not to look as embarrassed as he felt when he pulled away to look at her face, and he saw her eyes were wide and her lips pursed in a way that said he was getting an earful later. Yeah, fine, he deserved that.

With obvious frustration, she made the hand signal for him to watch her back. He’d have to trust her. He did.

He watched her return to her work on the phone as the men made it directly across the street from them. He could see that, while they were scrutinizing their surroundings more, they were also more casual in the way they held themselves and their weapons. Second string kinda guys.

He ducked back down as she held the phone up to one of the indentions in the console on the terminal. It continued to drone it’s message, but scanned whatever was on the screen of her phone.

“Input accepted,” it announced, “how may I assist you, officer?”

The men turned sharply pointing their weapons at the booth, one of them harshly spitting out, “what was that?”

_Fuck. Fucking fuckity fuck. Great. Damn machines!_

He heard her cursing similarly under her breath and then sternly at the machine, “resume emergency message broadcast, and switch to text only mode for output regarding my access.”

Their was a moment of silence, and then the monotonous voice went back to it’s recording. The men seemed to ease their alert a bit, but were still coming slowly to check out their hiding spot.

He looked down at the interface that was blinking with text, “Medical...Police...something something supplies…” He tried to decipher the menu, but she was moving through it so fast he didn’t have time to sound out the letters in his head.

“There!” She exclaimed in a whisper, and the booth let out a small hiss as a drawer opened near them.

He could see the men had again gone on high alert pointing their weapons at the station. The contents of the drawer eased his mind a bit. Riot gear, and a hefty looking medkit.

_Oh, yes. Fucking jackpot, Snowflake!_

“We got a few seconds before they spot us,” he nearly mouthed at her as they both scooped up as much of the drawers contents as they could.

She had already started to push past him, and tapped him on the shoulder indicating an alleyway they could run to that would put the station between them and the line of sight of those mongrels. At least for a few moments. He hoped it wasn’t a dead end, but he could see she had a plan.

She gave him a solid nod as they heard one of the guys kick at the opposite side of the station, and they darted out toward the escape route.

“Hey,” one of them called, but Junkrat didn’t look back, “after them!”

He could hear the first shots ricochet off the walls around them. Guess they weren’t asking questions. They kept missing though, and he heard Mei’s voice call out in the sound, “Keep going, watch your
eyes!”

He looked back as she stopped a moment to lob a canister of something toward the pursuing men, it exploded in a thick white mist. The men swatted at the air as if they could waft away the fumes, but were quickly coughing harshly and covering their eyes.

Tear gas. He knew the look of it, he’d had to deal with his fair share, and he wasn’t keen on reliving the experiences. He did wait for her to start running back toward him before he picked up his pace though.

They’d barely made it around the corner in the alley before the agonized screams of one of the men came out of the cloud after them. He fired shots blindly down the street as his companions slowly caught up.

He watched as she brought the pin of another canister to her mouth and yanked it out, throwing it down the alley. Fuck, watching her throw those canisters did things to him. Spicier than pepper spray!

*No time for that. Gotta run!!*

He shook his head as a few more bullets pinged off the brick nearby, and more grunting pain came from the haze behind them. He saw ahead that the alley looped back to the main street near where it spilled out into the plaza. She was owning it tonight!

“Still with me,” she peeked over her shoulder with a bit of a triumphant smile.

“Won’t get rid o’ me that easy!” He let out a peal of laughter as he bounced up to her.

“I’ll have to try harder then,” she covered a smile, giggling a bit breathlessly.

It was interesting to see her laugh in the middle of a firefight, but it made more sense to him than any other reaction- at least on a personal level. He liked that he could relate.

She leaned in next to him and put something in his hand. He liked the weight of it.

“Riot baton,” she explained, and he pressed a button that made it crack with electricity, “don’t accidentally get yourself!”

“This’ll do nicely!” He let his teeth show in the smile that split his face as they both slowed to see if they were still being followed, “somethin’ good to keep Hog in line!”

“Be nice,” she scolded in a cute way that made him want to cause trouble just to hear it again. She fidgeted as she searched his face, “think they’ll bother with us anymore?”

“Lets not wait’n see, yeah.”

She nodded and they both turned back toward the garage.

Apparently being doused in noxious gas made people a little cranky though, and they found themselves having to stop short when the men had indeed continued after them. They immediately started firing on Mei and him again.

Really, don’t they have somethin’ better to do? Can’t get any half decent criminals these days- too easily distracted by petty revenge.

Another shot sizzled through the air near his head.
He let out a petty maniacal laugh, but shook himself out of his internal sarcasm just long to realize that just caus he wasn’t hit doesn’t mean she wasn’t, and he couldn't see her. The very idea caused his whole mind to feel like it was buzzing. A horrific image crossed behind his eyes, and he’d seen enough terrible things in his life to conjure a pretty vivid picture.

“Snowflake, where are ya?”

“Over here! Come on, get behind cover!” She called from close by where a delivery van was overturned near the curb.

They'd missed. He felt so much lighter, but the part of him who'd seen that picture, that one moment, wanted to charge in. To take away any fear that it might come to pass by removing the threat.

Another few rounds hit the van where she was hiding. They had missed again- until they hadn't.

It was a sharp pain just above his prosthetic arm.

He heard Mei scream, “Rat! Get down, please…” he heard her voice break like a sob, “Jamison, please. You're hit!”

It made him boil over. How they had caused her to sound like that. Over him.

He scowled at the darkness where the gunmen were obscured in the rubble at the other side of the plaza. He growled in his throat. He hunched forward like a bull about to charge.

“Please! What are you doing?!?”

He swiveled his eyes to her, back pressed against her cover, leaning around the edge to wave him frantically toward her. She was perched on her toes, shifting her balance, as if she was holding herself from running to him.

She still had his coat on her shoulders somehow. She looked disheveled and dirty, and powerful, and a right perfect mess. Utilizing what she had. Clutching a weapon, and a medkit. Ready to fight, but protective, smart.

She had kissed him- on the cheek, but still. He admired her. He thought she was beautiful. He wanted to kiss her back.

Never gonna happen with these assholes ruining the mood!

An animal grin split across his face. He turned his eyes forward once more, and charged in.

Chapter End Notes

Yay, more action! Gonna be next week before I can post another I imagine. Find out what fool thing Junkrat has planned, how Hog is doing, what the rest of OW is up to, and more! Let me know what you think- your words are the winds that sail this ship for me!!
Look Me In The Eye

Chapter Notes

chapter warning: blood, injury, and medical treatments including needles are described, but in light detail.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Of all the imprudent, impudent...that IDIOT!

Mei was furious, and frantic, and frustrated. She had no idea what to do, and no time to think.

Junkrat’s feral smile flashed in her mind, and she ran without thinking to the opposite side of the plaza hoping to flank the men while he distracted them. There was no plan on what to do when she got there, but she had to react. Doing nothing would get them nowhere, and at this point if they were going to die she wanted to go out fighting and not planning.

Her ears were still ringing from the bombs, and her heart hadn’t stopped beating like the hooves of wild horses against her ribs, and she wanted to see him but everything was covered in a clouds of dust and darkness. She picked up her pace, and was grateful for the sound of gunfire, because at least she knew there was still something left for them to shoot.

It all made her gut clench.

She looked down in her arms, too much stuff. Still no sight of Junkrat. Still gunshots. She stopped suddenly, hastily spilling the excess of her burden onto the ground in an entryway to what looked like a lovely quiet cafe under normal circumstances. She assessed the pile as much as she could in only a moment, and took a few things off the top before turning back to run into the fray.

“Fire in the hole!!”

Junkrat’s voice made her feel less like she was about to jitter apart inside, but his words made her stop cold. She knew what was about to happen.

“Junkrat,” she screamed out, now running directly to where she heard his voice, “you’re too close!”

She was too close, but it didn’t matter.

She burst through the opaque dust cloud and nearly ran right into him. Right into the look of surprise, and then dread at seeing her so close. A dark look that felt like regret and suffering, and it frightened her.

His hand reached out. Bullets tore through the air with a muted hiss as they failed to find their targets. Then a sound that she only felt, a bright shockwave from the explosion, before things went dark. His hand never made it to her.

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Mei hated being left out. She was always left out.
She knew better than to complain in this case though, and instead she took to looking dejectedly at the wall from the ornately uncomfortable bench outside the room where her mother was being fitted for yet another costume.

They were between seasons, and the theater company was being prepared during the off time for the run of a new production that everyone had been whispering about. Something contemporary, a non-traditional piece, and no one was sure what to make of that yet.

She had heard her parents speaking of it late at night as her father worked on one of his projects. They both dismissed the whole affair as an affront to historical Chinese opera, but then again- if it sold seats. Mei would need money for schooling one day.

It made her feel guilty, which turned her expression even more dour as she continued to stare at nothing.

“Sit up straight, child,” a harsh voice barked. It was an older woman, Xuo Jian one of the producers. Strict, sharp, and well put together- just like she ran her theater.

The woman had a stifling presence, and Mei was meek, so she corrected her posture and bowed her head wordlessly in apology.

Through her bangs she saw the elder woman peering down at her, working her jaw back and forth, “you are Zhou Jingnan and Zhou Xun’s daughter?”

“Yes, auntie,” she tried her best to meet the woman's eyes.

“Hmm,” She pulled Mei’s chin up assessing her, “you don't have your mother's features.”

Her observation was biting, but Mei was used to hearing she didn't measure up to her mother’s delicate looks. She could see the woman’s cold curiosity as she continued to look Mei over.

“Do you have your father’s talents, perhaps?” She dropped Mei’s chin.

“He taught me. I made this,” she ran her fingers over the front of her blouse, “but I’m not very good.”

The elder woman didn't answer for a bit, “I imagine you should focus on your education then.”

Mei felt the woman's distaste for her in the words, or maybe it was for her mother. Jian had always been more withholding in her interactions with Mei’s family.

“This is no place for children,” Xuo Jian clicked her tongue, “you should wait outside in the gardens. I'll inform your mother.”

The woman turned curtly toward the door, and Mei lingered for a moment to steal a peek as it opened. She’d rarely gotten to see her father’s work. The costume was as otherworldly as they had always been in her glimpse, and especially on her mother who could make anything enchanting. It reminded her why everyone looked at her with pity. That she'd never live up to the talent or beauty of her parents.

Outside was no different. Her peers were bent on the same rejection of her nature. Some of the other children of the company had also been banished to the garden. Now she'd quickly become the newest game of the day.

She watched as a group of them saw her enter, obviously groaning to each other, “aww, man, Mei is here!”
Then they'd asked her to play hide and seek with sly faces. One of them offered to be ‘it’, and the countdown began. It wasn't long before she'd seen one of the others motion to follow. She'd called after them, “wait for me!”

The girl had led her to a huge wardrobe in the storage area, “here, Mei! You can have my best spot. I'll go nearby, okay?”

Mei nodded and smiled, happy to be included. Happy to have been shown this favorable spot. She saw the other girl dash out of the room giggling, going to her own place to hide. She'd watched the shadows outside her vantage through a small open crack in the door. Her heart hammered, her breath slow and quiet, she waited. A few minutes, a few more, then fifteen, then thirty. Nothing, and she knew there wouldn't be. She had finally realized what had happened. What she felt foolish she hadn't seen from the start.

She let herself cry for a bit in the dark before she curled up in the musty old wooden wardrobe. She must have drifted off because the muted sound of someone calling her name had woken her up, disoriented.

“Mei?! Mei...where are you Mei…”

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“Mei?! Answer me!”

The voice was getting closer now, “in here.” She tried to sit up, knowing what was coming next. Her mother had scolded her harshly, but those weren't her mother's hands.

“Snowflake?! Can ya hear me?” Junkrat's face was standing over her, blood running down his forehead, his voice raspy and labored. He had his hand gently on her shoulder.

Her chest felt heavy, like someone had dropped a pile of bricks on her. She couldn't catch her breath, it just hurt, and each time she tried to inhale it just added to the pressure.

“You...alright? Hurt?” Junkrat's questions came in choppy sentences.

“Are...we clear?” Her head turned stiffly to where she imagined the enemy had been, returning his question with a breathless one of her own.

“Not much left…” he managed a crackling breath before he finished, “… I imagine.” He wasn't able to laugh, but she saw it on his eyes as he collapsed to his knee next to her.

Junkrat lowered himself slowly and laid on his back as the new dust settled. His breathing croaked. She could hear a sound she didn't much care for, a gurgle then a sputter repeating. She sat up on her elbows and she saw what she'd expected, but hoped against hope was just her imagination.

A froth of blood gurgled from a hole in his chest. It was an irregular shape, shrapnel probably. His lung was collapsed and she needed to close the the hole if he was going to survive.

As she worked herself to kneel next to him the pain in her chest flared. A sharp ugly ache on her right side. A broken rib maybe? She felt her breaths suck in hollow, but she had to fight through the pain.

“Junkrat,” she wheezed, “hold your palm… hold here.” She guided his hand over the wound and pushed down as he groaned low in his throat. “I'll be… I'm going to be...right back.”
She forced herself up. She found the cafe front where the supplies were. She managed to retrieve them and return. She searched for and took out what she needed. Everything was so mechanical. She had to tune out of herself, and the pain, and the panic of not finding enough air in each breath.

Junkrat looked resigned to his fate- distant, melancholy, and some fading hysterical joy in his eyes that were much too dull now. An ember instead of a sunrise, she couldn't stand it, she wanted to breathe the fire back into him.

He was gasping for air now. His fingers and lips going pale. She fumbled open a package, “going to close it. Breathe out. Hold it.” She was as commanding as she could be.

He closed his eyes and did as she said. She discarded the flimsy gauze and used the plastic packaging instead, covering the wound and then using medical tape to seal it in place. “Ok, breathe now!”

He gulped in air greedily, but it stuck now. Still after a few breaths she could see it was still uneven. She'd have to release the pressure in his chest cavity so the lungs could inflate. A hole next to a bigger hole.

“It's going to...hurt. Sorr..” she saw him watching pitifully as she pulled out a long needle, “sorry.” He gave a whimper, was he afraid of needles?

The flinch he made as she wiped a cold iodine swab over his upper chest confirmed. She did feel a bit bad, but it had to be done. The pain in her right side seized through her as she tapped her knuckle over the hollow drum of his chest, palpating the appropriate rib juncture.

“If ya wanted.. to feel me up…,” he tried to make the joke but couldn't get it out.

She attempted to smile in return, as she slid the needle in, and his face screwed up in pain.

A hiss poured out of the empty syringe. Good news- there wasn't fluid, she hadn't gone too far, his chest wasn't full of blood. Almost instantly Junkrat started breathing more normally, his color creeping back in.

He took needy breaths as she realized he had a hand around her forearm, holding on for dear life, she slid her own over his pressing gently. Reassuring.

Her chest felt tight, and the edges of everything looked bright. She felt herself getting woozy, “we need to...get to the...to Hog.” She stood on wobbly legs, “come on we can support each other.”

She had taped the syringe, still in his chest, in place. He'd need the pressure relief for a while. He'd need real medical care soon, not battlefield medicine, and a hopeful part of her searched the street as he got to his feet.

“Okay, lets hit the road,” Junkrat seemed to be perking up despite the pretty serious injury. She was slightly surprised he thought she's the one who needed it, “nearly there. Hogs gonna be happy to see us.”

He seemed to be checking on her with an increasing frequency as they entered the garage. She could see Hog. He'd sat up, but looked pretty out of it.
“Hey pig face, miss us?” Junkrat teased.

Roadhog seemed to come back around, “that you, what woke me from me nap with all that racket?”

“You know I gotta make a scene,” Junkrat groaned as he helped Mei sit, and then sunk himself beside her.

She was clutching the med kit, and gave a glassy look up at Hog, “think I...got something...in here to fix,” she lifted up her heavy arm and swirled a finger around pointing at Hog, “this whole...situation.”

She could hear his grateful grunt as she opened it, and found a syringe of pain meds, some disinfection spray, and a small pair of forceps perfect for shrapnel removal.

“Snowflake, you look a little colder than usual.” Junkrat put a hand softly on her shoulder to stop her work.

“I'll be..okay,” she wheezed.


Her eyelids felt heavy, “Just a painful...broken rib...just hurts to…”

“To breath, and move, and talk?” Hog finished, and she looked down in thought, but hummed her agreement shortly after.

“There an extra needle in there?” Hog pointed at the kit, “I can do what ya did for him. Bein’ round Rat means learnin’ a few things about blast injury treatment.”

She couldn't argue with that. So she scrounged another syringe and needle out. She felt so guilty, he was obviously still in a lot of pain himself, and she felt her heart go all erratic when he motioned for her to sit close. She wasn't sure if it was a symptom or something else entirely.

“I uh, gotta get you to…” Hog scratched at his head. “Uhrg, the shirt, uh,” he growled, seemingly frustrated to not be able to get the thought out.

She looked down. Oh. He'd need access under her neckline. If she wasn't about to pass out she'd probably feel heat in her cheeks. He was asking, but unsure. It made her feel warm inside that a grown man would be be so flustered, and respectful.

It was too cold to take it off entirely, she pulled off the shoulders and then pushed it down over her bra to rest bunched up on her waist.

“Hooley dooley,” Junkrat let out, and she swore this time her cheeks actually flushed.

When she looked over he had his metal hand over his eyes.

Are all Junkers bashful?

“Shuddup Rat,” Hog scolded, but he looked like he wished he could look away too.

“It's ok...not like it's anything...to be worked up about,” she gasped in a breath.

“Ay- you look down lately Snowflake? There's plenty to get worked up over,” he held both hands out in front of his chest, eyes tightly shut, and squeezed at his imaginary ample bosom, “if ya get my meaning?”
Before her eyes widened in shock, Hog tossed a chunk of concrete at him. He finally opened his eyes to fuss, looking immediately at where he'd been avoiding. He went completely red.

“Oi! Ain't I injured enough? What's that for?!”

“You Fuckin’ right well know what,” Hog’s voice was nearly indignant, “mind your idiot mouth before I turn her loose, and let her beat a few manners into ya.”

“It's...ok,” she smiled in a way that said she'd be laughing if she could, “really. Let's just...get it over.”

They both went silent, and Hog grunted an agreement. He indicated she should lay in his lap. He situated her comfortably, if not a bit awkwardly, where he could reach what he needed.

She felt him breathing gently as she leaned into him, and Junkrat moved himself over to the wall beside them.

“I'm gonna find the spot,” Hog sounded as clinical as he could manage, she imagined, and she indicated her permission.

His fingers were huge, how he could distinguish one rib from the next was beyond her, but as his black nails danced above her right breast it was gentle, almost nimble. He gave a soft thump over the spot, and she could hear the hollow sound she dreaded.

“Rat, get me the iodine,” he ordered.

She could hear Junkrat scramble and suck air in when he hurt himself moving, then the sound of the sterile swab opening, and Hog accepting it. He glided it over her skin, shocking cold, and it dripped down her torso.

*Aww, that will never come out! I liked this bra.*

“Alright, here we,” he pressed the needle to the spot, “go!”

Oh, that did not feel nice. Whatever the opposite of nice was- that's how that felt. Like the shocking pain you get when you close a finger in a door, but pinched over her heart.

She felt something flit over her hand, before seizing it. Junkrat was letting her squeeze his hand through the pain.

“You got this, Mei,” he heard a whisper near the back of her head, and a rumble of agreement from Hog’s chest.

Then the sound, like choked wet air, from below. She looked down as blood bubbled up into the syringe. He hadn't gone too far though. She could tell.

“Goddammit!” Hog pulled back a bit, but still gurgling and blood.

Junkrat's fingers squeezed hers, “she's so cold, Hog, she's gettin’ real cold!”

She felt herself fading a bit, the light edges around everything dulling out, and after a moment she stopped pushing it away. She couldn't feel the rise and fall of Hog’s chest or Junkrat's fingers wound hopefully into hers.

“Mei?!”
“Mei?”

Her father’s voice came soft from outside her bedroom door with a knock. She sighed into her pillow, pushing her journal underneath.

“Come in!”

He stood awkwardly in the doorway, and seemed to be trying to find a way to start a conversation. He’d always had trouble, but it had been worse since her mother had passed away just after her last year of school.

She sat on the edge of her bed and pointed toward a chair nearby. He’d eased himself in, looking mostly at the floor, fidgeting with his worn hands.

“She’d be so proud,” he started, and it shocked her, he wasn’t one to speak openly about any of his feelings. Certainly not about her mother.

“Do you really think so?” The response was polite, but earnest.

“You graduated highest in your class. We never expected you to follow in our footsteps, and now you are assured whatever path you choose.”

“How do I know what’s right though? How do I honor her, and you?” She felt herself suddenly sucked into a conversation she hadn’t expected. Had never seen coming.

“Growing up, I saw how you were treated. How, despite your achievements, you are still treated now. Your mother always knew what to say. How to make you smile,” he looked down at his hands again.

“I thought, when she was gone, you’d forget your smile. How I’ve forgotten mine, unless I think if you. Then I started to notice something. Do you know what?”

“No” was all she could manage, hearing her stoic father speaking more words than he had in the last year combined, “what?”

“You never stopped. You’ve always smiled. She knew how to brighten it back up, your mother, but it never really left. No matter the tears, or the isolation, or the burden of being responsible for yourself when we worked. You’ve always had a smile.”

She could see a glint in his eyes, he hadn’t looked up at her, it was as if he couldn't face it. She wasn't sure how to respond. She wasn't certain if he was done, and she hung on every syllable wanting more.

“It's powerful, a tool, a weapon, an armor. You carry it well. You turn your sorrows to hope, and your desires into determination. You are a fighter, Mei-Ling Zhou. So show the people who have caused you pain what makes something worth fighting for. Choose with your smile.”

He got up abruptly and she stood with him. He made eye contact, and the corners of his mouth teased up as much as they could. He motioned for her to wait.

He spun around the chair and out of the room. She stood struck completely numb. He'd never done anything like that. Never said anything like that. He was kind and he cared. He did his best, but he wasn't strong at communicating his feelings. He returned to the room.
He stood at her bedside. In his hands was the most beautiful coat she'd ever seen. Huge, lined with fur, piped with skillful detail, and in the most beautiful blue. His favorite color- in the opera it was worn by the steadfast and loyal.

He laid it out on the bed. She marveled at the details. It was like nothing she'd ever seen. He'd only ever made one other thing for her. A traditional Hanfu to wear to an award ceremony for her mother. Mei had been twelve.

"Take the job," it was a demand, but a gentle one, complete with a bribe, "it is what brings her light back to your smile."

She sat her fingertips on the front of the coat, soft and cool silk, backed by a thick layer of warming down. He'd made her an arctic coat. He'd made it so she couldn't turn down the opportunity she desperately wanted, but couldn't take. Couldn't leave her father behind, alone.

"It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, but I can't!" She begged, almost argued, at the coat.

"You have always done what you believed in. It would honor this family for you to take that position. Nothing would make me happier, or more proud."

He gave her no room to refuse. He gave her permission to leave, across the globe, to the far reaches. To escape everything that had hurt her, and find out what was beyond this small community she'd grown up in.

"Then I will do my very best to live up to the legacy of my name," tears streaked down her cheek, and she bowed forward in supplication. In appreciation, and awe, and love.

"I know you will exceed it," he wrapped his arms around her, and she let herself smile again.

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She felt the warmth of her father's embrace dissipate, and she whined in her throat, begging to return to the moment. The memory. The last time she'd seen him.

Now she was in pain, her heart felt like it was pushing out its seams, and she couldn't see right.

"Mei, stay with us! You hear me, Snowflake?!” Junkrat tapped at her shoulder.

“She's not breathin' right,” Hog cradled her, and she could see the bottom of his mask, “get me that little canister from the kit!”

Junkrat tossed it up to his hand, and Hog snatched it nimbly from the air. Hog tore off the cap and screwed it into the mask. He fished out one of the worn yellow canisters from his jacket pocket nearby and screwed it into the other side.

“You gotta breath in real hard, Snowflake,” he put his hand up unlatching the top harness of the mask, “no matter how shitty it feels or smells, and it smells like crap!”

He pulled the mask from his face. He took it off. He was taking off the mask! Her mind rushed around the thought as he lowered the giant thing on her face.

She took a breath. It was vile, noxious, and it stung all while tasting horrid. Her instinct kicked in. Her mind told her she was being poisoned, and she struggled against him despite the wrenching pain. She pushed his wrists away.
He was stronger than her. By a lot.

“Ain't gonna make this easy, huh?”

He pushed it down over her face and held her steady. She could feel Junkrat's hand soothing over her arm again, and it calmed her.

“Easy now, just do what he says. Promise you it'll be okay if you can get it down. It's the good stuff!” Junkrat patted her and she eased her struggle.

“Better to just breath it all in at once. Give it a good go! Come on!” Junkrat cheered her on, and she obliged.

Her throat felt thick and it burned like peppers burn, and it filled her chest with a sensation like fizzy soda up your nose. It was terrible, worse than just suffocating, but she trusted them.

Then it opened up. She felt herself fill up with breath, and she pushed the mask into her own face now. Greedily taking in the air, and afraid to look through the little eyeholes. Unsure she was allowed. Was it proper?

They'd both looked away. So she closed her eyes as he finally pulled it back.

“No, no! Open your eyes!” Hog demanded, and she obeyed in startled haste.

She felt light headed, and everything looked far away, but she saw it. She saw his real face. Deep searching eyes, well maintained brows knitted, and heavy lips drawn into a frown. He had...tusks? Tusks?! It made him look formidable, his features fit together so well into something intimidating, but soft and hard all at once.

“It's kicking in,” he put the mask back on her face, “pupils like owls!”

Hearing his voice, and seeing his expression at the same time sent shivers over her. She gasped, taking in another breath of the foul cocktail. She pushed him off again, to breath real air, now that she could.

“Feelin’ good? Seeing anything yet?” He laughed in his belly, jostling her a bit.

She saw her hand reach out and skim along Hog’s scruffy jaw, but everything was fading away now. His face fit, he and Junkrat- they fit, he was just, “so handsome, too.”

She swore she heard the last thought aloud before her mind went blank.

Chapter End Notes

This was a long one! Sorry, not sorry? I dunno. Didn't get to the other agents in this chapter, but they are still around. A little late, I'm sure if these three had anything to say about it, but around indeed. Next time though. On a side note, I'm no expert on Chinese names, so if mine don't make sense or are improper let me know and I can fix them to sound like something more accurate. I tried my best to research. Also not a medical expert, so pardon if those aspects don't make sense- I did my best to research there too, but just suspend your disbelief if you would.
Your kind words of feedback are the notes that keep my song playing- so I appreciate each and every one, and all the kudos, and bookmarks as well! You can find me on tumblr @iceyvreadus.
Lucio flitted between the rows of people laid out in Angela’s makeshift triage center doing his best to keep spirits up. She’d been training him since he joined, mostly in battlefield medicine, but he’d never expected his show to become one.

Thankfully they had evacuated everyone to a safe distance before the club took any damage from the blasts. In fact, most of the immediate injuries had been fairly minor. It was the people who kept pouring in afterward who had seen the worst of it. The city’s emergency services were struggling to keep up, and he was hearing more and more of the same stories pertaining to how certain wealthier parts of town were getting priority.

Vishkar operated parts of town.

He suppressed the scowl he felt building up. No negativity right now. He checked the time, the internet was out and communications were down, but at least he could still worry helplessly that Fareeha and Hana were nearly twenty minutes late to check back in with them at this temporary base. He sighed, exhausted, but not discouraged.

They were running things the old fashioned way tonight. Intel was word of mouth and scouting agents until someone from the watchpoint came to retrieve them. Mercy had taken over, leading the operation to move far enough from the blasts to be safe, and help retrieve survivors who couldn’t wait for emergency services. Most importantly, she had emphasized, they had to keep an eye out for those responsible for this.

Now, Lucio was wary of the news drones that zipped by overhead; getting all the carnage out to the people. Overwatch couldn’t be part of this news cycle.

“Heads down, guards up,” was how Mercy had ended their impromptu mission briefing.

He had felt her suspicion that whoever had done this was trying to pin it on Overwatch somehow. Or, at least, shine a negative light on what having them nearby meant. Everyone had fallen into a somber silence at the implications, but no one disagreed on what still had to be done in the aftermath.

“Lucio, over here, please,” Mercy had called him to where she kneeled next to the new patent.

She was directly behind the older man who had been carried into their camp by his daughter when Hana made her last check in. He seemed to be having some serious respiratory issues now, breaths rattling out, but it wasn’t surprising considering his injuries. Before Hana even escorted them under the main pavilion Mercy had whispered to Lucio gravely, “Black 4.”
His daughter was becoming distraught enough now to disrupt Mercy’s care of her patient. Lucio dipped down on his knee nearby Angela, and in her tired voice she had asked him to do what he could to comfort the daughter, and to ease the father’s suffering, even though they both knew there was nothing to be done. Nothing left to be given. Black 4.

Lucio twisted up inside, this wasn’t what medicine should be, yet he understood. He was grateful he didn’t have to make the call. He could be the comfort, and ease, and assistance to everyone equally. He didn’t have to decide who got priority for the limited supplies, or the immediate attention of the only surgeon capable of treating the serious wounds, or decide who would be evacuated first when the emergency service finally made their way to them.

“Hey,” he eased himself next to the daughter, cautiously asking permission with his outstretched arm to comfort her, “What’s your name?”

The young woman looked up at him, she reminded him of Hana, small features, tough as nails. Someone who didn’t know how to cry. He saw her wanting to give in to the feeling, but she couldn’t, because she needed to fight. For her father, who could no longer fight for himself. For herself, to keep it together, for him.

Standing next to her Lucio could see there was nothing left to keep it together for. Her father was gone, to what place was not for them to know, but no longer in the body that lay next to the glass doorway; with its neatly printed, “Ander P. & Asociados Oficina de Leyes” in gold script, and an image of the scales in balance above, but Lucio couldn’t see the justice in it.

“I’m Nadia,” her voice was distant, and as soon as she said it she had folded into Lucio’s arms. Leaning into his chest, needing to look anywhere, and be anywhere but right here.

“I’m so sorry Nadia,” he couldn’t offer more. Inspirational words didn’t belong in this moment. This moment belonged to grief, and pain, and loss. Something Lucio knew was being felt all over the city tonight. Too soon for so many.

She cried, and he gave her a place to feel like it was ok to let go. He rubbed circles into her back, and occasionally reminded her to breath, or let her know it was okay- not the situation, but how she wanted to deal with it. However she needed to express her grief, as long as she stayed safe, was okay right now.

It seemed like a while had passed, before he heard a familiar voice over the noise of the patients and refugees who had gathered, “Heads up! Got an agent down over here!”

It was Fareeha, and when he heard what she had said, he felt his skin prickle all over.

He soothed a few kind words into the top of Nadia’s head. He begged her forgiveness that he had to go. She nodded, and settled in next to the body of her father. She was alone, and Lucio felt the guilt of another pain he could not ease tonight, even if he would have had his Crossfade System. It made him feel violently ill, and ragingly violent all at once.

He turned to where Mercy had gone to asses the damage, and he knew immediately who Fareeha had brought back to them. The Junkers, he could see the big one, and the tall one, and no sign of Mei. Where was Mei?

“You must set her down” Mercy pleaded with the larger Junker.

Lucio could see Mei was in Roadhog’s arms as he rounded the pillar near where they were standing. Roadhog was protectively keeping Mercy from removing Mei from her current position there. The
tall squirly one called Junkrat hovered close, holding her limp hand. He looked even more unhinged than usual.

“Mr. Fawkes, please explain to your associate that he is man handling my patient!” She turned to Junkrat with frustration when Roadhog seemed to ignore her request one too many times.

“Hey,” Lucio finally chimed in, “what happened? Is that a gunshot wound?”

He could see the slender Junker had a myriad of pretty serious looking injuries, but a few had already been dressed. He had a syringe taped into his chest, and way too much blood running down his prosthetic from a hole in his arm just above it. A bullet hole.

“Wot, this?” The Junker glanced down as he shrugged his shoulder up for a better look, wincing, “its nothin’. You just worry bout her.”

“I am worried about her,” Lucio raised his voice more than he had intended, “but I’m also worried about how you got shot, and if there are more people shooting other people coming this way!”

Junkrat gave him a bit of an incredulous glare, “you don’t think that’s the first thing this one asked?”

He jerked a thumb out to indicate Fareeha, who was hovering close just in case she needed to assist Mercy with the big guy, “and she can tell ya all about it when you’ve gotten the little Snowflake all patched up, yeah mate?”

“Enough,” Mercy’s voice held no warning, it was clear- they either all shut up or got out. “What is that?” She pointed at the large box Junkrat held in his free hand.

“Med kit,” he answered pointedly, “me and her dug it up. Got some good stuff in there. Stuff you can use to help her.” He lowered his head, his eyes dangerous, “Now.”

Lucio could see the threat implied beneath the Junker’s expression, protective of the supplies, of Mei, and wary of Mercy. Wary of all of them. He meant it, and he meant right now. It was a demand.

Something Lucio had discovered about Mercy early on was that she didn’t take kindly to demands on her turf. She knew her job, and she was damn good at it, and the last thing she needed was someone in her way.

“You will give me that medkit, and I will evaluate her condition the same way that I have for every other person here, the same as I will for you. This is a critical situation Jamison Fawkes, and your threats and personal feelings do not have a place here. Get out if you can’t accept that.” She put her hand out as she stared him down waiting for him to hand it over, “Now.”

Lucio could see Junkrat’s lip twitch as he released the box, and a low chesty sound rumbled from Roadhog.

“Fine, you do what you gotta’, but me and Hog- we refuse treatment til’ you help her,” Junkrat nodded his head over to Mei, and Roadhog made a noise to confirm his agreement as he finally started to lay her on the ground.

“That’s your choice,” she snipped out and handed the box over to him, “Lucio, please inventory what’s in the kit. I will assess her, and see if there is anything I can do.”

“No if,” Roadhog roared at Mercy, stooping down to be face to face with her, bracing himself against the pillar with a hand above her head, “you will. You will do something. You will help her.”

Mercy didn’t flinch, but Lucio could see her hand tremble, there was nothing she could do but call
his bluff. She had to be alive and well to help Mei. It didn’t keep his voice from being terrifying, or his anger from feeling as crushing as his bulk would be, but it held him back.

Lucio laid a hand on Roadhog’s massive upper arm, unable to reach his shoulder, “Hey, man. She’s our friend too. We’re kinda under a lot of stress right now, so maybe let Mercy do her job? We are gonna give it everything we got, okay?”

He could hear the man slowly release a breath through his nose, hissing out through his strange mask, as his eyes swiveled behind the glass frames to meet Lucio’s. Roadhog slowly pushed up off the wall and righted himself, backing away from Mercy, but still looming nearby with his arms crossed.

Lucio’s attention turned back to Junkrat now, who had made no move to stop his massive bodyguard from nearly pinning Mercy against the wall. He had squatted down next to Mei, elbows resting on his knees, hands hanging down between his legs. His casual pose felt more like a snake coiled to strike.

“Just have a look would ya?” Junkrat's words were terse, but his tone carried the same unsure feeling of everyone arriving here with someone they cared about. His eyes begged, ‘you don't understand, nothing else matters.’

Angela brushed off, gathering herself back up, and moving to examine her new patient.

“Low breath sounds on the right. She's got pneumothorax, probably a fractured rib since I see no sign of an external wound,” she pressed and prodded at Mei a bit who groaned weakly in her sleep, “hmmm, except this. Did you try and treat her? Like him?” She pointed to Junkrat's chest.

“Yes, but there wasn't any air, just blood,” Junkrat answered with eyes searching for reassurance in Mercy’s expression, “what's that mean?”

“Hemopneumothorax. Blood from the fracture, most likely. A blast injury?” Mercy moved her fingers to take Mei’s pulse.

“Too close when I took um down. She was too close,” Junkrat seemed a bit choked up, and it caught Lucio off guard. “I did it so she’d be okay. So she'd get away- ya know, get to Hog and get out ahead of me. I knew I could take it.”

He watched as Junkrat turned back to look over her, gently petting the top of her fingers and picking up her hand, Lucio could see him carefully measuring her breaths. He whispered to her, “why, huh? I knew I could take it. Why'd you have to run in after me?”

“She's having issues breathing. Pain. Neither of which I have the tools to deal with,” Mercy stood up sharply at the end of the statement.

Junkrat gingerly placed Mei’s hand back beside her before leaping up toward Mercy, “you, you're the big deal doctor lady, right? What do you mean ‘ain't got the tools!’ THEN GET UM. Help her, for fuck’s sake, that's what you do!!”

Lucio got between them, but despite the volume of his voice and the anger in his words, Lucio didn't sense any actual hostility. Just frustration. Helplessness.

Lucio had been feeling it all night. He got it. “We can liberate supplies from the emergency care clinic, it's only a few clicks away,” he blurted it out without thinking. He knew it was just a few blocks northwest, closed at night, but it would have what they needed.
It didn’t hurt that it was also the last direction Hana had left to scout. He could try and see what was holding her up.

“What? Don't be ridiculous. You can clearly see it's not safe. We have no intel, no communication with Winston at the Watchpoint, no idea who we're up against, or what else might be coming…” Mercy bowed her head pinching her brow as she trailed off, “and I guess that's exactly why you're right.”

“We can go with him,” Junkrat volunteered immediately, his companion in agreement. “If it'll help her.”

Mercy crossed her arms over her chest in a way that made Lucio feel knots in his. Mei didn't look well. She needed oxygen, she needed a chest tube to drain the fluid, hell, she needed a hospital. Junkrat did too, and Roadhog’s external injuries were probably just the tip of the internal bleeding iceberg.

“No,” Mercy was stern, “I haven't had a chance to evaluate you.”

She headed over to Junkrat who put his arms up as she started to prod him. She'd press on one thing and hum, and another and click her tongue, “you're going to be in the same shape as her if you don't rest.”

Lucio watched Junkrat start to argue, but she'd already moved her attention to Roadhog who was having none of it, dodging out of her inspections, “hold still” she grabbed his wrist firmly. “Lots of lacerations. Lots of bleeding. How does this feel?” She pressed a hand into his side rather sharply.

Lucio could feel the pained tenseness in the sound Roadhog made, and his restraint now in not retaliating against the deliverer of the sensation.

“Hmm. That's troubling,” she furrowed her brow, “but I think if you're up for escorting Lucio to the clinic it's not going to make what's already been done worse.”

“I ain't letting him go without me!” Junkrat had finally demanded, almost crossing his arms over his chest before remembering his injury.

“Rats, stay,” Roadhog’s tone was absolute, but it carried something Lucio hadn't expected, a tender kind of concern. These Junkers we're messing with all his expectations, and it was starting to make him feel guilty having them.

“Be here for her if she wakes up. Besides, ya did it for me. Let me do this for you two,” Roadhog was intense, and Junkrat even seemed to stop vibrating for a moment to take it in. “Besides, I ain't gonna come back worse off then who I'm goin out to help.”

Roadhog let out a heavy belly laugh, and for a second Lucio thought Junkrat would be more upset, but the dark humor almost seemed to soothe the man. Junkrat was processing and accepting his fate.

“You should see the other guys,” Junkrat let out a roll of laughter, “what's left!”

“You always say that,” Roadhog tapped teasingly on Junkrat's shoulder, “watch after her, and take care of yourself.”

Mercy seemed as taken back as Lucio when Junkrat caught Roadhog's massive hand in his and brought it to his cheek, leaning in, “don't go messing up that pretty face, ya hear?”

Roadhog stroked his thumb over Junkrat’s cheek and then pulled out of his grip to ruffle his hair,
much to Junkrat's irritation. Then the stoic, intimidatingly massive, man leaned over and pulled up his mask just enough to plant a peck on Junkrat's lips.

Lucio made eye contact with Mercy who he was sure mirrored his own expression. Eyebrow quirked in shock.

*Okay. That makes a lot of stuff make way more sense, I guess.*

Lucio was sure Mercy was also having the same though. How had no one realized partner didn't just mean, ‘in crime’, who had missed that detail? Though he figured- why not both, I guess. Not that anyone knew much of anything about them that wasn't on the news, or in the briefing- which was mostly just the details the news hadn't had access to. Only recent history though. Nothing about them personally.

“What? You two shy?” Junkrat had noticed them pretend to ignore the scene. “We ain't gonna get all gross. Well, least not in public.”

Both Junkers gave an entertained laugh. Lucio and Mercy couldn't help but crack a smile of their own.

“Mei?!” A high voice interrupted their moment as a flash of brown hair came into their midst. “What happened?”

“Lena!” Lucio was happy to see her checking in right on time, “hey, she's gonna be okay. We're heading out for supplies right now.”

Mercy filled Tracer in with a succinct explanation. Lucio whispered what he'd found out about the Junkers, causing the same look to flash over her face.

“I wanna go. We can check in on Hana too, not like her to let the clock beat her without a good reason,” Lena rocked on her heels.

Pharah had come back over from where she'd gone to write her report into their shared notepad logbook, but was obviously listening in, “I will stay to intercept any incidents we may experience. I agree with agent Tracer, I am concerned about agent D.Va’s whereabouts as well.”

“Well,” Junkrat’s voice broke in mockingly, “what are ya waitin’ around for, permission? Get goin’, the quicker you get gone, quicker ya come back. Hop to, before you yickity-yack us injured people to death!”

Lucio grinned. Maybe, the Junkers might just be growing on him.

*A little.*

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked the little detour of this chapter. I wanted to give a bit of build up to what's happened, and how cut off they are right now. How serious it is for all of them. How little anyone knows about the Junkers, and Mei's relation to them. Next up we're back to our regularly scheduled Roadhog POV chapter, as they set out for supplies! This chapter's name diverts from the lyric naming convention of the others since it has a different point of view from the main characters, so it's named after the song- "Lean
On", by Major Lazer.

Anyhow, your words are the honey in my tea- the sweet stuff that keeps me going! I appreciate every bit of it, and thank you to everyone who has left any feedback! You can find me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus!
Hog ached as he worked to keep up with the younger man, and the Brit. He was used to Junkrat and his never ending well of energy, but these kids gave him a run for his money. He didn’t even want to think about Tracer, zippin’ around like it was nothing.

“Come on, it’s less than a click away now,” Lucio chirped out at him over his shoulder while Hog fell behind, “man, wish I could play some tunes!”

Lucio covered the eerie quiet of the dark streets with sounds he made in his throat, beatboxing out in layers Hog didn’t even know a human could produce. So much for hearing an ambush before it hit. He figured, between the two of his traveling companions, they’d fill the silence for the whole trip.

“So, you and Junkrat, huh?” Tracer let out a playful wolf whistle, “didn’ see that one, if I’m being honest.”

He wasn’t surprised. Mei had expressed a similar sentiment. Hog was trying not to let it bug him, but something about everyone’s ignorance nagged at him. He only acknowledged Tracer’s comment with a noncommittal grunt.

“Well, I didn’t know you guys were tight with Mei, either,” Lucio turned to glide backward and face Hog as he shrugged, “I guess it's that she just never talked about it?”

He watched Lucio direct the question at Tracer, who was closest to Mei as far as he knew.

“Oh, yeah,” the woman lit up slowing down to keep pace with Hog, pointing up, “there was that thing she told me, this morning was it? Feels like an age ago, anyway, was about seeing you for the first time in the kitchen last night. Guess it's a new thing then?”

Hog just stared down at her. What had Mei said? He imagined not much or they’d probably already have started in about his Pachimari. A grown man with a cherished stuffed animal, yeah, they’d say something.

“Oh yeah?” Lucio’s tone pried.

“Yeah, she came in for tea this mornin’. Invited her to come to your show then, caus she never gets out, figured it would do her some good since she’s been feeling so out of sorts lately,” she zipped around them a few times trying to recall what happened, “she brought it up all funny, like she wasn’t telling the whole story.”

They both turned to Hog with their expressions asking him to fill in the blanks.

“That so,” he offered, much to their joint disappointment, but he was afraid his aloofness had initiated a game for them now.
“Well, now that I think of it,” Lucio tucked his chin into the crook of his thumb and forefinger thoughtfully, “she did bring you guys up, but just to complain about all the noise, ha!”

Lucio pulled his hand away shooting a finger gun, and a wink Hog’s way.

_This is going to be a long trip._

“Whaddya mean, noise?” Tracer gave Hog a sly look, but the question was directed at Lucio, knowing Hog wouldn’t answer.

“You know!” Lucio suddenly seemed uncharacteristically bashful, “the, uh, late night kinda noises.” He made a motion where he hit his fists together a few times rhythmically, as Tracer smiled feigning ignorance, “you really gonna make me say it?!”


Now Lucio seemed to loosen up a bit, adding a few of his own, “doin the do? Bumpin’ uglies? Stuffin’ the muffin? Hidin’ the salami?”

Tracer gave a rolling giggle, and Lucio had completely abandoned his innocent act joining her laughter. Hog was ok with them moving on to a new game, giving them a moment to settle before dropping, “Makin’ bacon” on them, nonchalantly.

He passed them up as they froze, staring at each other in silence, but he wasn’t two steps past them when they both split into hysterics. Maybe this didn’t have to be an entirely painful experience.

They both caught back up with him in short measure though, and Tracer gave him a friendly slap on the arm, “you’re a riot, luv!”

“Roadhog, the quiet riot,” Lucio followed up in a sing song voice.

“Not so quiet, if she heard that, I recon,” Hog replied noticing they were keeping a better pace with him now, including him in the conversation.

Lucio tilted his chin down to give him a look, “how could she not?”

“Could’a said somethin’,” he gave a single grunting laugh. He knew Junkrat would probably be mortified; he was surprisingly shy about that kinda thing.

“Thought that’s how you met. Figured she went busting down your door to finally give you an earful about it,” Lucio scratched at his jaw with a half smile, “but, knowing her she just ended up making new friends instead.”

For some reason something about the comment stung at Hog. The idea that she easily made friends with anyone, and Rat and him were just two more among many. That the openness and warmth she’d shared with them was just how she was. That it felt special to them because they so rarely received that kind of straightforward easy kindness.

If that even changed anything.

“How’d you meet her?” Hog ventured to either of them to take the attention off himself.

“Overwatch, you too, right Lucio?” Tracer answered for them both, and he nodded. “We hit it off pretty quick, ya know, lovely girl- good taste in tea. Then we found out we had lots more in
“Yeah, and you know, her and I were casual lovers for a bit,” Lucio didn’t turn around right away, but when he did he could see Tracer’s mouth agape, and the uncomfortable aura around Hog, “geeze, guys, joking! A bad one, I see- sorry. Just felt left out of the whole surprise thing.”

“I haven’t dropped any bombs!” Tracer argued.

Lucio shrugged, “ha, well I mean all the cool kids are doing it!”

Tracer hit the back of her hand against his chest shaking her head, but she still wore a smile. Hog finally felt his shock wear off, letting out a single humourless laugh. He wasn’t sure why the statement had made him feel like his insides were grinding up. Her love life was none of his business. He still couldn’t stop his demeanor from becoming serious now though.

Lucio curved in an arc gracefully toward him, “let me tell you, I didn’t think it would throw you like that, or I wouldn't have made the joke! Sorry, brother.”

Hog nodded, working up a noise of agreement that didn’t sound like his guts were rolling around, after all the guy seemed earnestly sorry.

Lucio continued upon acknowledgement, “For real though, I just chatted her up a bit when she first moved in, like we said- easy to get along with. She started hanging with Hana, and me on game nights.”

Hog sighed out heavily, Maybe today and tonight was just her being easy to get along with. She made friends without trying. Hog didn’t want to buy it though, something felt different.

“I had her pegged for standoffish,” Hog mused aloud, “til’ she came around. Like ya said, easy to get on with.”

“Yeah? Can’t say I’ve gotten that particular vibe from her, but she’s full of surprises. Showing up with you two tonight, for starters!” Tracer hummed, strolling with her hands held behind her back, “I guess I get shy, but for someone so unassuming she sure seems to live it up when no one’s looking! Guess she showed us what we know.”

Hog considered the idea for a moment, how he’d felt like he’d been on an adventure since this morning. “Got any good stories?” He asked before he could stop himself.

Tracer and Lucio smiled at each other, but were quickly distracted by something ahead, “Yeah, but looks like we finally made it! On the way back, okay?”

Hog looked up at the building Lucio had indicated, with the words, “Cuidados Urgentes” across a large unlit sign. They walked up to the front which wasn’t particularly well secured.

With the blessing of Overwatch, it felt nice to hurl a fist through the glass in the door, and simply unlock it from the inside. Not that the he needed any more broken glass this evening; his back checked in to remind him of all his injuries.

Hog opened the door, seeing the other two hanging back, he stepped out of their way, “after you,” he rasped.

Once inside they were met with the real security. Well, he figured if the electricity had been on there’d probably be an alarm right now, but as things stood their only serious obstacles were going to be these metal gates blocking off the loot. He put his hands together, and twisted his arms around
until his palms were facing away, popping all his stiff knuckles.

“Alright, time to do your thing!” Lucio cheered at him, giving a little hop and punching his fist into the air.

He didn’t have to be told twice to break something, grabbing a metal chair from the waiting room. It felt sturdy enough to him as he hurled the legs through the slats in the gate, and then started twisting. The barrier rattled, then wretched, squealing angry metal noises as it gave way and the crossbars started to snap. Hog pulled the chair out and tossed it easily aside, returning his attention to the metal bars and bending them to open a passage.

An alarm had actually started to beep this time, must be the emergency power, but at least it meant this was where they were keeping the primo stuff. Plus, he knew the city wasn’t sparing forces for looting tonight.

“I ain’t gonna fit, go on,” he pointed at the hole looking at the other two, “I’ll keep watch.”

Tracer breathed out a, “Woah” as she took in the damage, but neither of them said much more as he helped them through the awkward gap so they wouldn't get caught on the sharp broken edges.

“Won’t be long if they got what we came for!” Lucio spun around at full speed down the hallway, “just give us a signal if you see something!”

Hog stood guard boredly. He could hear them knocking over some metal containers, and at one point prying open some storage, but it was the sound of footsteps over broken glass that got his attention.

In front of him, around the hall, where they had come in. Someone was sneaking into the waiting room. Of course they hadn’t come up with what the signal would be now that he needed it.

Roadhog improvised with a spot on pigeon noise, probably louder than a real pigeon, but damn good. Then he picked up one of the magazines nearby shaking it to make it sound like clumsy wing flapping, adding the noise pigeons make when they’re frightened off. It was a hobby when he was a kid. Made his friends laugh.

The footsteps ahead of him stopped, and he heard a faint voice from behind him down the hall, “was that Hog?” Followed by a hissing shush.

Then the footsteps started getting closer again. If they were armed, he knew he was pretty screwed, but at least he could keep them from getting at the other two. He silently moved into a dark corner out of sight of anyone coming straight in.

“Someone in here,” it was a guy's voice, young and shaky, “I’m armed, so don’t try anything!”

Hog could see him now, in the faint light from the door he walked through. He had something held out in his hands, but Hog didn’t take it for a weapon. When telling the difference between a bluff and a real gun in the wastes was life and death, you learned real fast which was which, and this happened to be a stick that looked a bit like a gun if you squinted.

The kid walked right past him, turning nervously at every shadow accept the one that could kill him. Hog took a step behind the jumpy invader, building up a rumbling growl in his chest.

“I..I warned you,” the kid mustered up some courage flinging himself to face Hog. “I...I got...a...oh..shit, shit, shit!” The kid’s voice had fallen into a tremble by the time his face reached Hog’s.
He saw the kid’s face too, falling, scuttling backwards along the ground away from him, stuttering something incoherent at first, then Hog caught it, “it’s you. You. You! It’s you!”

The boy pointed at him, pushing himself into the nurse’s station behind him, unable to articulate further. He looked like he was trying to slither out of his skin, eyes bulging, just as Hog finally realized where he knew his face.

“You,” he boomed, a scowl in his voice, “that fuckwit from the shuttle! The one I promised to see again.”

He took a few steps to loom over the cowering shitbag, a slow deep laugh building.

The kid pissed himself, whimpering. He didn’t even try and hide his utter terror. Hog recognized the look on his face, the look of someone who knew they were going to die, but he was too much of a coward to even beg his way out.

“Are you alone?” Hog took a step toward him, rolling his shoulders.

“Yea...yeah. Yes,” he jittered out, as Hog started using his thumb to pop his knuckles again one by one, slowly, “yes, sir. Please, yes! I promise.”

He knew it was the truth, the pissboy was gonna beg afterall, and instinct had told him lying wouldn’t do any good. Even if there were more, he knew those other scumbags would be cowering just the same.

Hog called over his shoulder keeping his eyes on the boy, “he’s alone. We’re clear. Keep goin’, I got this,”

“Roger that,” Tracer’s voice came from in the hallway, she’d been watching in case Hog needed backup, “we’re wrapping it up!”

Then Hog popped his neck turning back to the groveling mess.

“Your name, and why you're here,” He demanded.

“Uh, um, it’s Kyle,” he clutched at a nearby office plant for comfort, adding, “sir. Kyle, sir.”

“Your name is Fuckwit,” Hog’s tone was final, and the kid nodded.

“Ok. Yeah, I’m Fuckwit, yes sir,” he groveled as Hog tilted his head slowly to look at him in the eyes, silently reminding him that he hadn't answered the question completely.

“Uh, uh. I’m here to get…I need. My friend, he’s, his brother…” he started to hyperventilate.

Hog could see where the blood had been running down the mongrel’s face, dried now, some superficial scrape that bled a lot. He was guarded with his left hand, maybe a broken finger; possibly the whole arm. He was in pain, and frightened, probably in shock, but Hog had no sympathy for assholes or cowards.

“Spit it out,” he leaned into the fuckwit’s face.

“My friend’s lil’ bro got hurt real bad. He needs something. No one’s coming, man. No one’s coming to help, and everything just started to blow up, and he’s dead. I was standing with him, and then he was dead, my friend-his whole arm was gone. His whole left side. Just like that,” he started to sob, making his words nearly incoherent as he grabbed at his hair, putting his head in his knees, “I
gotta help him. I have to do something, for him, he was my best friend, man. I gotta help his brother.”

/Goddamnit. An asshole, but maybe not an absolute coward- just mostly. What a fucking waste./

Hog stood back up, and relaxed his posture, the kid was already terrified. He was no threat, nothing to worry over. Just a coward doing a brave thing for a reason more noble than he could ever be. Doesn’t mean Hog felt bad about scaring the piss outta him.

“I know…” the idiot stammered out, “I know I fucked up. I’m fucked up. I know. I know. I know. Please, please, just, please. Let me get some stuff to help him, I swear to you- I will never ever be that kid from the shuttle again. I will never ever be that person again, if you let me help him. Please. I’ll do right. Just please, for him, man- not me.”

The kid had thrown himself forward, hugging his arms around his chest, and rocking. He was barely holding it together, but the fact he was trying in order to achieve this goal Hog found ever so slightly redeemable enough to not snuff him out of existence.

“Get up, stop yer snivelin’,” Hog didn’t offer a hand, “Where is the kid?”

The fuckwit was still a fuckwit, but he couldn’t punish a stranger for that. The kid looked up at him with pinprick pupils and glassed over eyes with just the smallest bit of hope as he shuffled to his feet.

“Not far, a block or two that way,” he pointed in the direction they had come from, “I hid him behind some plants, in an office block. There was no one coming to help. We’re all alone, man. No one’s coming. No help is coming,” He sniffled back another incoming sob.

“Help is here now,” Lucio’s voice came from the other side of the grate, “we got enough supplies here to help a lot of people! We’re headed back to our camp now, there’s a doctor there, and I have a bit of medical training myself. We’ll grab him on the way back, okay?”

The kid started wiping off his face with the back of his arm, mumbling thank you’s and sorrys over and over. Hog helped the two agents back through the grate, medical supplies first. Enough bags to insure he’d end up a pack mule.

“Hey, if you can carry something that would be brilliant!” Tracer chimed in at the kid, and he nodded taking one of them from her, settling it on his good arm.

“Alright, let’s move it people!” Lucio’s voice remained ever optimistic, even though Hog had noticed his increasingly worried looks when he thought no one was watching.

The way back was different, much more quiet, sober. They all knew if this friend’s brother had been hurt badly, he may have passed while they were on the way. It took joking around out of the equation. They’d exchanged basic pleasantries, a little background. Hog had hinted about what had happened earlier.

“You two got history?” Lucio wanted to understand what he was seeing, and hearing.

“He’s a shitbag,” Hog growled at the kid, “kind that harasses people on the bus, picking fights he can't finish. Does some vulgar shit to pick up women. That kind of shitbag.”

Tracer made a face at the fuckwit like she’d suddenly smelled an open sewer, and Lucio had raised his upper lip into a scowl.

“Look, I'm sorry,” the kid started with a defensive tone that quickly corrected into something more
submissive at seeing Hog’s posture grow threatening. “I am. Really. I'm a shitbag- but it's hard not to get a lil’ perspective when you watch your best friend get chopped in half, okay! So yeah, sorry. Really, really. I'm gonna work on it. I mean it.”

By the end his tone seemed earnest, he'd hung his head, and reached across his chest to steady the upper arm of his injured side. He still trembled. His pants were still wet.

“That's why you're still alive,” Hog huffed at him, “caus you're doin’ something for someone else. Remember that, Fuckwit.”

The kid made the smallest of acknowledging gestures, looking at his feet, and keeping his mouth shut.

Smart.

Now instead of the friendly banter they’d shared on the way, things had fallen into a silent rhythm he hadn’t even realized existed until he was looking for it. How he’d barely ever said three words to these people, but they already worked as a team.

It made his thoughts drift to Mei. How this girl, who he’d essentially just met, fell into place. She fit in with Rat and him in a way no one should have, because he hadn’t ever thought there was any space left that needed filling.

Hog had himself, and he had Rats. It was enough, he was happy, and fulfilled, in his way. Yet here was this girl who would leave a hole now if she left, because she had already settled into his mind. His heart.

It hurt. He had no idea what to do with the thought. Burry it down deep enough? So far it won’t pull at him so much. Could he even tell Rat? It could destroy him, what they have, as tenuous as it already is.

Hey, Rats, I’d really like to complicate our lives by telling you I'm having all these weird feelings about a girl we just met. Oh, I know we can’t even say ‘love’ about each other out loud, but, yeah, I wanted to make sure I was clear on how I feel about this person that isn't you. Oh, by the way, I can tell you have feelings for her too, you can't hide your emotions for shit.

Oh, there is that kick in the gut again.

He thought of holding her, the softness of her, as he was sure she’d slip away any second- and how he wouldn’t have known what to do with that. How he had been in so much pain, and Junkrat had been in so much pain, but Junkrat had kept up by their side. Holding her hand delicately in his, connecting so he knew she was still there. Comforting her and himself, as her words ran through their heads.

“So handsome, too.”

A gentle prickle passed over his jaw where her hand had. He wished he knew what she meant. Had she been seeing some other face, had she been reaching for someone who fit those words from lips as lovely as hers? Could he hope she saw him, that she meant him, and Rat, too?

Don’t be a child and a fool, old man.

He scolded himself for entertaining the indulgent notion. How could he ache for something he didn’t even understand why he felt? Or shouldn’t feel. How was it that he hurt for Rat too, wondering if he was having the same fight with himself? He didn’t want to share this confusing pain, the inevitable
heartache of the feelings he couldn’t shake. Worse, what if he’d read it all wrong, and Rat didn’t feel the same. Could Hog risk hurting him like that, by admitting it? Could he lie, and not tell him?

This is so fucked. I am so fucked.

He felt his fist clench up. He held back the growl in his throat. He steadied himself as he noticed the eyes of the two agents on him.

“Everything ok, Big Guy?” Lucio tried the nickname cautiously, and Hog let it pass- just this once.

“Hmm,” Hog made the sound affirmingly, “just a lot on my mind is all.”

_I’m gonna talk to him. When we get back to base. When we have a minute. I gotta. I will. We ain’t ever gotten anything done by keepin’ our noses clean. I’m gonna tell him how I feel. About her... About him._

Hog’s focus returned to the group, noticing the kid had started to become more and more withdrawn, not even looking at them when Lucio had broken the silence. He was acting plain weird, in fact. To himself, falling back, cowed.

_He’s frightened. More than in the emergency office. Why? What did I miss when I wasn’t looking...oh...OH, fuck no!

Hog was suddenly hyper aware of his surroundings. His head whipped around to the kid, his hand itching for the chain of his hook. The kid made eye contact to mumble something, maybe. 'sorry', and in that instant Hog could see what was coming from the look in that little fuckwits coward eyes.

“AMBUSH!”

Chapter End Notes

_Whew, back to Hog, and how things are feeling more and more like good ol' home here in Gibraltar, chaos, looting, violence, betrayal, and teamwork. Now with feelings he's not used to dealing with. Next up, a Junkrat chapter, and we see how Mei is doing, as well as how Pharah and Mercy are holding down the fort._

_As always your kind words of feedback are the flame in my candle, they keep me burning away the midnight oil on this 'ere tale! I appreciate every one immensely as well as the kudos, and bookmarks, and views. Thank you, and you can find me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus !_
Junkrat would not be talked out of staying at Mei’s side. If they needed something from him they could damn well come over here to get it. If he had to stay behind, he was gonna do what he wanted, and that was to watch over the little Snowflake, and sulk about being left behind.

Not that anyone had asked him to do anything. In fact, they'd given him a wide berth after Mercy had bandaged his arm, and checked on the pressure relief syringe. So, now he felt a little useless, especially when he could see how tired the doc was. People callin’ out to her from every side, as she had to figure out which one to go to first. That couldn’t be an easy thing on someone whose job it was to keep people well.

He felt guilty for yelling at Mercy. She’d probably been dealing with it all night. She was doin’ her best. He’d have to apologize later, Mei would scold him if she knew he’d done it, so maybe before she woke up and got wind of the misdeed.

His eyes slipped down to her at the thought, as her chest rose and fell with shallow breaths, and he could see her expression carrying the pain she was still feeling even in her sleep. Hoggie’s stuff must be wearin’ off by now. He wondered if her dreams were filling in the details behind the pain, but he hoped not, especially if they were anything like his. People with painful pasts had painful dreams.

His fingers teased at the hem of his coat, which he’d laid over her as a blanket, unsure if it was okay to reach out to her, as he hovered close. Then she moaned in pain, and now his hand found its own way to her brow, speckled with cold sweat, as he gently petted his thumb up and down where her little forehead met her pretty nose.

He felt all funny inside when his gesture settled her fever dreams, and she relaxed into his touch. Junkrat was used to playing with fire, but this feeling was sure to blow up in his face.

He couldn't avoid it. How he felt when he looked at her, or when she teased him, or touched him— even on accident, when she worried about him, stood up for him, protected him, and Hog. How he wanted to protect her in turn.

*How I feel about Mei...*

Shit, even just saying her actual name in his mind made the wheels in his head get all gummed up. Like his thoughts couldn’t move forward, just stuck on whatever it was she was doing to him. That's how he knew this was gonna crash hard, caus something as simple as just remembering her hand in his made his heart speed up.

He couldn’t feel something, say something, do something like this. Something that could be disastrous to the one steady thing in his life. To Hog who took up his whole heart.
So, how was there any room left inside to feel this other thing, but here it was, knotting up in his throat like the burn of holding back bitter tears.

*What the hell is wrong with you? You traitor! You scum! How could ya?*

He scolded his heart, but he knew there was no reasoning with it.

She challenged them, Hog and him. He could see it, plain as day, just shook em’ right up. It was making Junkrat look at his relationship with Mako, look at what they meant to each other. To define what it was they were, where that left them, and give it all real words. So, just maybe, this other thing could have context.

Words had evaded them, certainly outloud, but even in his head. Things he didn’t want to categorize or question, things he wanted just to be- forever. But that’s not how it works to love someone, and he loved Roadhog, he was in love with Mako Rutledge. Every bit of the man, and fuck convention, and titles, and words, because what they had made everything fall into place; even if he didn’t know how. It fit just right.

So, how in the hell was there still room for something else? How had these feelings about her found their way in? Was it because he’d never talked to Hog about what they have, because they’d left well enough alone, that now it wasn’t well?

Fuck, maybe that space he was feeling was Hog pulling away? Had he sabotaged himself with comfortable silence? Chasing the emptiness he didn’t know was being left behind in the gaps between fucking, and falling asleep. The word left out of every breath that had followed hungry kisses. Was he filling that void with something less dangerous than admitting his fault? His side of the silence. His guilty conscious.

No, no! That's not right either. Not entirely right? Right?

He put his forehead into his palms, leaning his elbows on his knees, as he sat against the pillar next to Mei. Little frustrated sounds rumbled out over his throat as he worked his mind around it.

She made him think about this last vestige of the undefined in his life, an instability, because Junkrat knew who he was and what he wanted, but not this. He felt it, but he never defined it. Never said it out loud, because fuck words, but now he wanted one. Something clear. Something to measure his feelings against. Love.

She had done that. She had made him use the word ‘love’ in his head. He loved Hog. It was her who had made that word form in his thoughts, about Mako, but she had put it there. It made this other emotion that much more confusing. Now she lived in his head, in his heart, without a word. Undefined, and infatuating.

*Snap out of it. You will talk with Hog when he gets back. Focus on something else. Something else. Hog isn't back yet. Something else. Mei looks so pale. Something else!! Something!!*

His chest felt like it was bursting for all sorts of reasons. His breaths started to wheeze again as his heart rate picked up.

He felt a sudden awful dread, that this would all come crashing into heartache when they returned. That she’d...that something would happen to her, and it would be his fault. Or that Hog wouldn't accept his feelings how they were now. How he wanted to say them. Or that she'd be frightened away by the idea that he cared, that they cared, so fast- in that way. Then he’d be all alone again. He could hardly bare it. He begged his mind to shut down, to turn to some better thought.
“Are you in pain?” The rocket woman, Pharah, had come to prod him, “should I call the doctor over?”

He shook off the heavy thoughts, settling his mind into a different sort of fog, “nah, don't bug her. I just got a lot rattlin’ around up here is all.” He knocked his fist on his head like a superstition.

“If you are sure,” she eyed him skeptically, and he nodded, but she didn't leave.

In fact, she hovered nearby in silence for a long while. Looking deep in thought, or nostalgic, maybe sad, or confused. He was about as sure of which it was as her changing expression.

“Tonight, it reminds me of my childhood,” the woman spoke at him, as he eyed the ground.

“Had a rough one too, I take it?” He ventured, trying to be conversational, but frankly unsure what she was getting at.

“Mmmm,” she agreed, “still, it's not the chaos that reminds me, but the worry. Knowing it is possible people won't come home. People you care about.”

She stood straight backed, proud and well trained, looking into the eastward sky like she was waiting for the sun to rise. Junkrat thought she looked almost regal, but her manner was all so stuffily militant. He wondered if she was trying to reach out to him, to comfort or calm him in her own particular way, he couldn’t read her.

“Yeah, it’s why I don’t like bein’ left behind. Rather die with my people, ya know? Waitin’ wasn’t part of survival where I come from,” he fiddled with some pebbles on the ground, “you act, or ya die. You knew who wasn’t coming back, caus you held them in your arms while they bled out. You found the shitbag that put a hole in ‘em, and return the favor- with interest.”

He made a motion with his hand to indicate activating his remote trigger, and then the sound effect of an explosion; a short lived split of laughter cut short by the startled looks of fellow refugees.

“I see. Is it why you are restless? To be in battle, and not on the sidelines?” She looked at him only moving her eyes.

“That, yeah. And I dunno...” He sighed longer than he'd intended, she was right, he was anxious to be left behind, but she didn't seem the type to patronize somethin’ like that. “I guess, a bit worried too.”

She watched him patiently, and he knew she could tell there was more.

“Like ya said. I don’t like it, but here I am, waitin’ all the same. You know, If one doesn't come back,” he stared out to the spot where he’d lost sight of Hog, then back down at Mei, pointedly, “I might lose the other too. Hell, I could still lose um both, and there isn't shit all I can do about it.”

He felt a sharp pang of guilt knowing that earlier, in the parking garage, Hog had woken up before him and Mei had come back. He wondered what worst case scenarios he'd imagined.

“We are helpless, then?” She crossed her arms behind her back, further stiffening her rigid posture.

“Pshh,” he tossed the pebble he’d been rolling around, not really answering.

“If we are helpless, imagine how they feel,” her head dipped to indicate the people gathered under the pavilion, “frightened, no training, no experience, or understanding. No help, not for them- nothing besides us. No choice. Yet here they are, doing their best to save themselves. To keep their
loved ones safe. Worried for the ones they cannot reach.”

He looked at her face, what he’d taken as expressionless on first glance, he realized was just contained. It sat heavy in her eyes that carried a pain you only get from knowing ceaseless conflict. From living on this side of reality as your everyday existence. This side of the violence and destruction; the world where this was your normal. The look these people would carry until they could feel safe again. If they ever felt safe again.

“They are doing something just by living. To defy those who want us dead. They fight by surviving,” she turned her torso toward him, her tone rising, “I thought you, among the agents, would understand this idea. That you are engaged in battle at this very second, and for every moment after, as long as you stay with Overwatch.”

She turned fully to him, a step closer, and then another. He felt a swell of something coming from her. A need to communicate to him the gravity of her conviction in the words she was saying.

“That is the hope we have, and give,” she peered at him with the intensity of someone looking into you and not at you, “If there is hope, even against all odds, a chance remains to be victorious against this chaos. Even if the victory is only in passing that strength to others. That is how you fight now. It is the only weapon we have.”

He melted a bit to hear those words, and how she meant them. He gave her a weak smile, “yeah, you're right, I get ya. I guess I was busy feelin’ sorry for myself.”

She kept a lasting eye contact, “you must not think about the, ‘what ifs’ tonight. It numbs the reality of what is. Thinking about what might happen demeans the suffering of those already fighting for the, ‘I must’ that keeps them going. Underplays true danger. Undermines hope.”

“Well one thing I know- you sure seem full of it,” he snipped at her, and her ‘holier than’ counter to him.

Pharah’s face started to scrunched up, but relaxed just as quickly as she closed her eyes and let out a sigh.

“Blame my mother. She was full of that kind of irritating wisdom too,” she kicked at the ground finally looking away, shrugging her shoulders, “Not that she was wrong.”

He felt the mood get heavy at both of their words.

Shit, gotta stop gettin’ all bitey with the locals.

“Damn I'm gonna end up sayin’ sorry more times tonight than me whole life put together,” he scratched at his forehead awkwardly, “a lot on my mind, ya know?”

“Oh? There are those who disagree,” she quipped as her lips tucked into her teeth to hold a smile.

He got all puffed up, despite his own internal advice, until he actually looked at her; realizing she’d made a joke.

“Guess that's the kinda rubbish ya pick up when you listen to the trash,” he shrugged in return, shooting a toothy grin, “ slander and jealousy, what that is.”

“Oh? I'm sure she'd be rather offended if she knew you thought so little of her,” Pharah swooped a hand out to indicate Mei, “speaking ill while she can’t even fight fair.”
“Fair? She's out cold, not much fight there…” he caught up to her meaning. “Waaaaiittt a minute- you implying I'm about as witty as a passed out Snowflake?”

“A mind as sharp as a blade of sandstone,” she finished, letting her serious demeanor fall.

“Ya know, if ya felt that way, you don’t gotta go blaming it on Mei,” he ran the top of his hand under his nose to scratch an itchy spot. “ gotta be honest though, didn’t think I’d ever be talked down to by someone who thought a face tattoo was a good life choice.”

“Are we taking personal shots now?” She quirked an eyebrow at him, but didn’t seem to take actual offence.

“Ya no, I dunno, hard to shame someone with a rap sheet longer than one of those sleazy cheesy romance novels I saw you reading down in the maintenance bay. Just so happens, I’m fresh outta shame, in fact- that list was the resume what got me this job, I figure. Hell, with that reasonin’ it's something to be proud for.”

Pharah looked a bit surprised, warm cheeks, and an indignant scowl, “Rat man, you will speak to no one about this, or I shall tell them what you say to your bombs when you think no one is in the shop,” she leaned in teasingly, “or should I say sing? Those horrid, out of date, abominations someone once called songs.”

“You wouldn’t,” he pretended to be scandalized, but he broke into a earnest giggle at her smile.

“Yes, I would.” She tapped a finger below her eye with the tattoo, “and by the way, this is a family thing, it has a lot of meaning to me. So you are a jerk for making fun. I will tell Mei, when she wakes up, the type of riff raff she’s fallen in with.”

“Can’t blame you, I guess,” he feigned a deep contemplative sigh, “you’re gonna break the poor Sheila’s heart, to know she’s fallen’ for such a total jerk, really it’s just insultin’ her.”

“Pshh. If she has fallen for you then it was because she tripped,” Phara tapped her finger on her chin looking up, “guess I’ll have to tell Roadhog also, that his boyfriend is a jerk, and a lair.”

“Don’t think he knows already?” His hands drew up into his chest as he wiggled to hold back the laugh in his throat, “it’s one of me best features.”

The stoic woman let herself laugh at that.

“Oh, so you have a good side?” She leaned in, pretending to look at him from all angles, “suppose I just missed it.”

“Oi, now that just hurts me feelings!” His brows knit up, but he couldn’t keep the half smile from reaching up his cheek.

“It...hurts,” Mei’s voice broke into their exchange, barely audible, “Rat..Rats? Are... you there?”

He shivered, only Hog ever shortened his name in that way. From the side of his vision he could tell Pharah had switched straight back into the hard-line serious look he was familiar with.

“I will get the doctor,” she was out of sight before the words were finished.

Strange girl. He was grateful. Misfits- those were his people, and Overwatch seemed to recruit the champions among them. It was starting to feel less stifling to be part of it.
He turned to see if she’d found the doc yet, but Mei’s hand reached up, like it had to Hog’s face when she’d called them handsome out loud. Hog could deny it all he wanted, chalk it up to delirium, but Junkrat knew what he’d heard.

“I'm right here Snowflake. I gotcha!” He guided her hand to his cheek so she could confirm, realizing in his panic he’d never answered.

“I know...you do,” she smiled blearily at him, and then her expression twisted in pain, and she started to shiver. It wrenched his heart.

“Hold tight,” he squeezed her hand and returned it, “gonna grab the doc!”

He got up spinning wildly to spot the blonde flash among the mostly dark haired locals. She was shoulders deep in someone's blood a few yards away, as Pharah gesticulated at her.

*Shit. I gotta help her, now. Shit! What do I do?*

His legs carried him to Mercy, but he was out of breath before he got to her. Pharah tried to indicate quietly for him to wait a moment, and he saw Mercy was in the middle of delicate work, but his mind couldn't stop his mouth, “Doc, Mei is comin’ round, she's hurting real bad, got anything I can give her?”

Mercy was obviously irritated with the interruption, barking an answer without stopping her work, “Pharah, please remove Mr. Fawkes. Now!”

“But…” he begged as Pharah held a hand out to keep him from getting closer, giving him a hard look and shaking her head.

Mercy’s eyes burned with frustration, but she pulled a bloody hand up to point toward the med kit, “blue bottle in the kit, 25mg- in the muscle. No more! Now, if you’ll excuse me.”

“I gotcha, thanks a ton, um,” he hobbled a few steps back, motioning for Pharah to follow, and then pointing awkwardly at Mercy’s patient, “good luck with, uh, that.”

“Go away!” She roared as he nodded, retreating to the kit to find the blue bottle, 25mg, no more!

When he got back to her, Mei seemed out again, but when he squatted down next to her something was off. He leaned close, no sound. He put his arm over her so he could put his ear next to her mouth. No sound.

“What’s wrong?” Pharah stood close by preparing the dose Mercy had explained to her before Junkrat came barging in.

“It’s all quiet,” a panic rose in him, “she’s not breathing. Mei! Mei, hey, you talk to me right NOW!” He tapped his metal hand against her cheek, “if you don't give me a sign I'm gonna…”

He jostled her again, not able to think of a threat he could carry out that might wake her. He felt some strange urge to just pick up the little Snowflake and run until he'd made it to a hospital, but it wasn't possible. Hell, one of the greatest, if not the best, surgeons in the world was losing people left and right tonight, and it couldn't be helped. No supplies, no tools, no weapons, no communications-no support.

“Mercy!? Mercy!!” He stood, spinning again to get his bearings, bleating out, “She isn't breathin’ doc! I could use a hand!”
Pharah pulled on his shoulder, as he spotted the doctor standing over the patient she’d been treating, arms covered in their blood, their body still now. Mercy’s shoulders sloped down ever so slightly.

“Pharah,” she called over her shoulder, “I need the water basin please, if you haven’t administered the medicine yet, please wait. I’m coming.”

He leaned back down to Mei, but still nothing.

_Come on! One breath for us, please Mei! Please!!_

“Junkrat,” Mercy’s voice quavered from the other side of Mei now, and he turned sharply to meet her gaze realizing she was already at work here, “get me the kit. Now.”

He didn't think. Just did. He'd returned to Mei's side, med kit in hand, fast as a whip.

“Look inside. Is there any plastic tubing, also another sterile needle.” Mercy’s attention turned to Mei, whose symptoms seemed to be worsening.

He dug through the kit, tearing everything apart hopelessly, no new needles.

_Fuck! This isn't happening!!_

“No fresh needles, doc! Whatcha want me to do?!”

They both looked down at his chest with the same thought. He caught eye contact again, and nodded.

“I need something to sterilize it, a lighter. I need an old fashioned lighter. We can't wait for them to get back. She’s not getting enough oxygen.”

He looked down as Pharah returned with the water for Mercy to sterilize her hands in, washing, and then drenching them in something from a flask. Mercy tilted Mei’s head back, exposing her neck, where something looked strangely out of place. It was as if her throat was leaning to the left under her pale neck.

_Fire. Gotta get fire._

He took a few steps and jumped up on a decorative planter bed to get a better view of the refugees gathered around.

“Ey! Listen up, the doc needs a light. One of them old fashioned pocket lighters! If ya got it, get it to me, pronto!” Junkrat eyed up the crowd who looked back at him with fearful hesitation, “I said NOW, ya drongos!”

An older man passed something to a small child who was now running toward Junkrat. The tiny kid handed him up an equally small silver flip lighter engraved with words he didn’t have time to read, “Pappy hopes it helps the pretty lady.”

He picked up the small object like something precious, as the kid ran back to their grandfather, and hid behind where the old man sat with his wooden cane.

“Thanks, oldtimer!” He flung back around to Mercy so she could remove his syringe.

“So...uh,” he braced himself as she put a hand against his chest undoing the tape, ‘Didn’ we already do this whole thing on her?”.
“Different, new symptoms,” Mercy’s words clipped out while she started to pull up gently as he squirmed, “Junkrat, please, sit still.”

“Well, fuck me with a cactus!” He cursed the pain as she eased it out.

“Please, use the alcohol to sterilize your wound, and bandage it up,” she directed at him as she held the lighter to the needle, then started to search for the spot on Mei like Hog had earlier, “if you feel pressure in your chest- sit still, and breath shallow. Now, it would be best if you gave us some room, Junkrat. Please.”

He didn’t want to leave, but he didn’t want to argue. Hell, she’d even used his wasteland name. What Mercy wanted right now, she got. He slinked back a few feet, but stood on his tiptoes to watch. The doctor worked with Pharah to set Mei up a bit, and the syringe hissed with air this time. He was relieved to see her color coming back slightly as he took a few steps to come back, but Pharah pointed him away sternly.

From beside him, he felt a pull at his metal hand, “Hey mister, cool hand” it was the kid from earlier, looking up at him with the calm only a child could posses on a night like this, “anyway, the doctor helped my Pappy, and so I think your lady will be better too. Wanna come sit with us?”

The kid dragged him by the hand a few feet away before he could answer either way. Practically pulling him down to sit next to the elderly man he’d borrowed the lighter from. Junkrat looked over in a bit of shock, sitting hunched forward, all gangly limbs and bloodstained clothes, to see the older man still looking ahead contently.

“I’m Dani, and this is my grandpa Pappy” the kid smiled up in introduction, then turned to say something to the old guy in Spanish, that Junkrat couldn’t quite keep up with, but Pappy nodded.

“He agrees,” the kid wiped their nose with their hand, reminding Junkrat a bit of himself, with wild hair and warm eyes, “you know, about that the pretty lady is gonna be ok.”

The old man turned and smiled a gentle, patient, wise old man kinda smile, putting out a hand, and asking with his eyes if it was ok to touch Junkrat. He nodded, and while he didn’t know why, he felt himself breath again as the comforting hand gently patted his shoulder.

“It is okay. Granddaughter, tell him” the old man said in slow broken english, followed by something longer in Spanish as he turned to the kid.

“Pappy said the pretty doctor lady is smart, and nice, and that he can tell she cares about helping your also pretty girlfriend.”

Junkrat turned red, “She’s, uh, she’s not me girlfriend. It’s not like that…uh, I got a, ya know… a boyfriend, I guess.” He covered the back of his neck with his metal hand to cool himself off. Taken completely off guard.

The kid tilted her head, and relayed the information back to Pappy, who scrunched up his lips and raised his brows while nodding animatedly. Another shoulder pat, and more words he didn’t understand.

The kid didn’t translate right away, and Junkrat looked down at her, “what’d he say?”

“Something about the way you watched her, or looked after her I guess. Said, it reminded him of when he first met his wife during the big war way back. Said your boyfriend would be jealous, especially if you only guess ya have one, but I think he was joking.” The kid took a long swig from the water bottle she was holding onto greedily.
Junkrat narrowed his eyes a bit at the old man, who just laughed in return, tapping one hand on the other, which gripped the top of his cane, “kid, you tell him: I’m so greedy- maybe I’ll just have both!”

The kid looked as if she was trying to figure out how to put it, and then mumbled a few things out before the old guy was roaring with laughter, and motioning for the kid to translate as he said something.

“If you can hold onto it,” the kid looked back to the old man who gave her more, “than, a rich man you would be to have everything you want!”

Junkrat smiled as the old guy waggled a finger at him with a knowing look, and then reached out to cover his granddaughter’s ears, “Good fucking luck!” Then he turned back to the kid to add one last part to be relayed, “you’re gonna need it to juggle all that at once!”

The old codger patted his belly, and then put a hand on each side of his chest winking at Junkrat, and then laughing again before settling back in. The grayed old geezer let the smile stay on his face, and gave Junkrat a gentle encouraging squeeze on the shoulder. Pappy seemed to know just how to tease him to make his cheeks turn red, but he was grateful for the distraction.

“But, seriously, have fun, while you're still young! The world is dangerous, and I’m too old to live the dream. Do it for us old fellows,” the kid smiled up at him relaying Pappy’s words, adding, “he says me too, and I’ll understand when I’m older. Whatever that means.” She kicked the bottle back again for another sip.

“Thanks, pup,” he put his metal hand out in a fist, and the kid returned his bump as they both made an explosion sound when they drew back.

After a second though, the kid looked distracted, popping up to stand on the little dividing wall where they sat. Junkrat turned sharply to stand and look behind them, hearing the kid’s excited words as his ears started to ring, and his head spun, “Hey, I think your boyfriend is back!”

Chapter End Notes

Gotta be careful when you stand up fast, Junkrat! Next chapter should cover what's been going on with Hog and the others, and some new developments on what's actually going on with all this chaos.

Anyhow, as before, your words are the sun in my garden, they color my world bright and cheery! I appreciate them so so much, along with the kudos, and bookmarks, so thank you all so much for the continued support! <3
“Hog!? Hog!”

Junkrat’s screeching was the first thing Hog could hear as they turned the corner back into camp, followed by a wheezing cough from straining himself. Hog lifted up a hand, waving across the way, unable to see him, but steadily heading to the last place he remembered leaving Rat and the Snowflake- his current party in tow.

He spotted Mercy and Pharah before Junkrat, and Lucio had already swerved ahead to greet the two women.

“How is she?” Hog didn’t waste time asking as soon as he caught up, seeing her still passed out on the ground.

“She is stable, for now,” Mercy tried to avoid eye contact with him, turning back to Lucio, “I will need you to assist me with the insertion of an intercostal drain, I’ve already aspirated her with a needle thoracostomy after she became hypoxic, but I fear there are still complications due to the fluid in the pleural space, and I don’t want to risk more tension build up again.”

Hog blinked at them both.

“You got it!” Lucio spun around in a wide circle, ending at Hog, and giving him a warm, if not somewhat tired, smile, “she means that they got out some air causing pressure on her lungs with the needle in the chest thing. Now, she wants me to help put in a tube to drain the fluid so there isn’t pressure build up again. So, we’ll have her up and going in no time!”

The others caught up about the same time as Junkrat had flung himself onto Hog’s arm, startling him thoroughly, and leaving Lucio laughing brightly.

“Hey, take it easy,” Hog growled, quickly dragging the man into a proper embrace, noticing how surprisingly fragile he felt right now. “Don’t need ya hackin’ up a lung.”

Junkrat pulled back a bit, and ran his hands around the fresh wounds that Hog had picked up on the mission, “What happened to commin’ back in better shape than me?” He poked the nose on Hog’s mask to chastise him.

“Speak for yourself,” he took Rat by the waist and held him away to asses him, “from where I’m standin’ you still look wrecked. Plus, you should see the other guys!”

Hog squeezed Junkrat back into him, well- as much as he could with their collective injuries. They
both let out an edgy sort of laugh, bordering around all the painful fears they’d both been carrying, and the relief that now they didn’t need to dwell on the dark possibilities, for a while at least. Junkrat pressed a few happy kisses into his mask.

“Oh, man! Lucio wasn’t kidding,” Hana broke in as she helped Lena limp toward them, both giggling, “you guys are totally all over each other, and everything!”

She fished her phone from somewhere inside the top of her shirt with her free hand, and snapped a picture. Hog couldn’t help but give a deep laugh at Junkrat’s shocked look.

“So, ya found the bubblegum gamer kid, and she's been gossipin’ bout us with ol’ roller skates?” Junkrat beamed at him, toothy smile.

“Figure, now, the whole base will be talkin’,” Hog pointed a thumb at the young woman as she queued up the picture to post on social media as soon as communications resumed.

“Ya, brat!!” Rat stuck his tongue out at her as Hog sat him back on the ground.

“ Weirdo!” She pulled down her bottom eyelid in retaliation.

Both of them sounded almost affectionate, though.

“So, what’d we miss!? How's Mei?” Lena’s voice chirped out at them all.

“The, uh, Snowflake—she's in pretty bad shape,” Junkrat’s voice fell back, sounding far away, “stopped breathin’ for a bit. You guys are right on time with the new stuff.”

Hog’s chest felt a bit tight to hear that Mercy’s, ‘stable’ really meant actually breathing again.

Lucio turned around from his medical jargon heavy conversation with the doc to quipp, “seems like good timing is going around tonight, ‘ey agent D.Va?”

Hana looked up from her phone to give him a thumbs up, and a smile that curled at the corners deviously, “bet you’re glad to have me around, huh?”

They shared a little laugh, as Hog saw Junkrat finally notice the new faces behind Hana and Tracer, but he didn’t bring it up right away. Turning back to him, Rat snatched up Hog’s hand and put his cheek against it. “Glad you made it back, old man,” Junkrat whispered into his knuckles.

“Thank the team,” he grunted, hardly believing he’d uttered the words. Even Rat quirked a brow at the unfamiliarity of sharing the credit.

Still, Rat made a show of turning to them, “Thanks. Really. For bringin’ him back. For helpin’ Mei.” He pulled a hand through his dusty hair.

The two women stood a bit shocked to hear Jamison’s even tone, still intense, but wholly earnest.

“ Course, luv!” Lena piped in first, a big smile as she stood with her injured leg cocked up, balancing on Hana, “that's what friends are for, yeah?”

Hog knew she’d meant that word, about Rat and him. His heart swelled a bit to hear it used so easily. It was Rat’s turn to be taken aback, just nodding once firmly in turn. Lena limped over to give Rat a small pat on the shoulder as Hana helped her sit down on the retaining wall nearby.

Hog found himself drifting toward them too, as he motioned for the three others to stay close, Junkrat eyeing them suspiciously.
“So who’re these assholes,” Junkrat finally shrugged his shoulder at the two guys and the little kiddo.

“What? Don’t recognize those two half grown donkeys?” Hog groaned as he lowered himself to sit against the wall.

Junkrat twisted around to get a better look at them, “wait a fucking tic, is that the shitstain from the shuttle?!"

“Ding, ding,” Lena chimed in, arms crossed, eyes trained angrily at them, “and they’re the reason we’re coming back licking our wounds. Cept, we didn’t give them the same opportunity, so I guess that’s a win.”

“Can’t say I mind the improvements ya made to his face,” Junkrat snickered low, looking at the black and blue, “but why’d you bring them here? Hog, why the fuck are they in my face, and not a stain on the road where ya found ‘um?’ Junkrat lifted his chin to talk over his shoulder without taking his eyes off the two idiots, and the kiddo.

“I will take it from here Mr. Fawkes,” Pharah’s voice came in a smooth dark tone behind him, “Mercy has asked me to take charge of gathering information from the prisoners.”

“Oh, no! Nope, no! Fuck-the-hell right outta that,” Junkrat marched up to the one Hog unaffectionately called fuckwit, sticking a finger into his chest, “You are on borrowed time unless you can explain to me any good reason not to extinguish your sorry carcass.”

“Junkrat, please,” Pharah put a hand lightly on his shoulder, which, to Hog’s surprise, he didn’t shrug off. Must have gotten some time to get to know some fellow agents too, “whatever your issue, this will not solve it. They must be brought to justice.”

“Oh, no? Caus as I see it- that right there,” Junkrat poked at him again, “is the start of everything that went wrong with my night, and I can’t say I’d see the injustice in finding out how much blood a human shaped piece of shit holds.”

Hog let out a grunting laugh at Rat’s zealous attack, and the renewed terror in that stupid fuckwit’s eyes. Despite the fact that a light breeze could probably take Rat down at this point, he could still be explosive, even when he lacked the proper tools.

“We can probably answer that,” Hana’s sing songy voice was unusually heavy, “wracked up a pretty high kill count, so we got a good sample size. Well, had, but you get the idea.”

Hana held up her newly acquired pistol, old style like McCree’s, that she’d pillfered from them. Had turned against them.

Hog found himself struggling back to his feet, despite their screaming protest, to face the two cowards and the kiddo that had convinced the team to spare their lives. “This one,” Hog pointed at the little kiddo, “is why those two aren’t part of the data set. Yet.”

Junkrat and Pharah’s eyes both focused on the child, who Hog had been told was about six years old. His arm was freshly patched up, Lucio had given him some strong meds apparently, for the pain. Said he’d be in shock for a while, but he’d be stable until they could get him to the proper facilities to treat something of that scale.

“What’s his deal then?” Junkrat crossed his arms over his chest, nodding his chin at the kid.

“Can’t tell?” Hog tilted his head back to signal him to come closer, “it’s okay, kiddo.”
Junkrat had a better view now, “Oh, shit!” Hog put an arm behind Rat to steady his swaying as a wave of bad memories had obviously overwhelmed him.

The kiddo ducked his head down at the reaction, shy, and self conscious as he looked at the arm, or at least the bandage covering what was left. Hog recognized the fear, and pain that was settling into his tiny eyes, the desire to be small, and hide. He watched Junkrat see it too.

“Hey, pup,” Junkrat seemed almost frantic to correct the sentiment, kneeling down to eye level holding up his prosthetic arm as he attempted a friendly smile, “look! Same arm!”

The kiddo’s eyes came back into focus, and studied the metal arm with open interest. After a nervous few steps he’d reached out to touch it, “woah! Cool!”

The connection had burst the dam of silent shyness in the kid, and suddenly he turned to the other guy who’d been dragged along, one of the curs from the front of the shuttle, “big bro, look! Like me!” The kid pointed proudly at Rat, whose eyes were sparkling with tears Hog knew he wouldn’t shed right now.

Pharah cleared her throat, wiping a wet trail from her cheek, “I need to settle them in, and ask some questions.”

“Not the lil’ guy,” Junkrat stood and flailed himself around at her.

“Well, no of course not, but do you have a suitable guardian until we can figure out what to do with these two?” Pharah sighed, the same exhaustion on her face that was starting to claim everyone.

“Yeah, I do, actually,” He pointed to another kid and an old man a few yards away who weren’t hiding the fact they were listening in, “kids about his age, and her grandpa. Nice folks, and I can help too… and don’t you dare give me any sorta guff about responsibility. I’m perfectly okay at lookin’ after someone.”

“Well,” Hog added, “if it makes it any easier, I’m watching after him, so I’ll be there too. Go get your piece from them.”

“Are you gonna hurt my brother?” The kiddo looked up wide eyed at Pharah and Rat, running around to hide behind Hog’s leg to eye Junkrat with fear.

He could see it was breaking his little heart, and the kid’s too.

“Course not! We’re the good guys! Right, Pharah?” Rat turned to her with two thumbs up, which she seemed to just go along with, smiling at the kiddo, “just got boring adult stuff to talk about.”

The kiddo nodded sagely, and seemed satisfied to trust them.

“You got them, then?” Hog turned to the Egyptian woman, who hummed affirmatively in return, a fierce look focused on her two prisoners.

“Keep the child secure. I will report back with information. Also, Mercy gave me this to return to its owner,” she held out a small silver object which Rat snatched up, “Lucio asked me to tell you he would come and inform you how the surgery went, and when you can visit Miss Zhou.”

Hog grunted, and Junkrat filled in the rest, “we gotcha. Don’t ya worry. It’s under control!”

Hog watched the woman nod, but it seemed more to convince herself this was a responsible, and wise decision before she turned and escorted the other two away.
Suddenly Hog noticed the other kid had come zipping up to Rat, as she latched onto his leg in a giant hug, looking up at him and pouring out questions, “Is that your boyfriend? Can I ride on his shoulders, and why does he have a mask on? Oh yeah, is the pretty lady okay now?”

Junkrat lifted his arms to make way as the little girl started to run circles around him, giving her a little laugh, “Hey, slow down there!”

The injured kiddo had taken to hiding behind Hog again until the little girl had noticed him, and stopped sharply, putting her arms behind her and bending her torso sideways with a smile. “Hello!”

The kiddo withdrew even more, peeking out from behind Hog, but just barely. Junkrat went back to kneeling closeby, “Hey kiddo, this is my friend, you should come out and introduce yourself!”

The little girl waited patiently as the kiddo inched out toward Junkrat. She caught sight of the kid’s arm and gasped excitedly looking from him to Junkrat, “oh, woah! You too! Does it hurt? Are you gonna get a cool metal arm too?! Oh, hey- what’s your name?”

“I, uh, I’m Arturo. I like the name Art better,” the kiddo introduced himself shyly, lifting up the stump of his arm and looking at it with trepidation, “and, I dunno, I don’t feel it at all, but I hope I get to have a new metal arm. That would be so cool!”

Hog felt Art’s shyness melt away a bit, and he came to stand in front of Hog, studying the young girl across from him just as she was studying him.

“My momma named me Daniel, but I like the name Dani better. I also love rocks, and turtles and my favorite color is purple! Since your arm doesn’t hurt, do you wanna play?” The girl held out her hand to Art who took it, letting himself be pulled over to where the older man was sitting.

Junkrat let out a little cheer running to follow them, and they all kinda giggled as Dani went to wake up the old man, “Pappy look, I have another friend now! And the man’s boyfriend came back!” First in english and then repeating it in spanish.

“Oh,” the older man rubbed his eyes, startled from his few minutes of napping, “I see he has!”

Hog smiled a bit as he understood what they were saying to each other, conversing in spanish, one of a handful of languages he’d picked up during his first life.

“Let’s go play!” She announced taking Junkrat’s hand now too and dragging them both into the open part of the courtyard in front of them, leaving Hog and Pappy staring at eachother.

“Hello, sir. I’m RoadHog,” he greeted the elder politely in his native language, “Thank you for letting your granddaughter keep Rat out of trouble while I was away.”

The old guy lit up at hearing his fluency, clapping his hands together with delight, “Oh, you speak so well, just like a native! I’m glad to meet you, Roadhog, I am Daniel Sr., but I guess it’s just Pappy these days, ha!” He leaned on his cane to stand, and shake Hog’s hand, but he indicated for the man to stay, joining him in sitting instead.

Hog noticed Junkrat was now standing frozen, jaw agape, staring at them as the kids ran around him, “Hog? Hogs, Hoggie? What the…” he looked down at the children, whose eyes were laser focused on his every word, “heck? What the hecking heck, Hoggers?”

He felt the laugh building up before it burst out in a deep belly sound, then turned to Pappy to translate so he could join in the revelry.
“How does he not know?! Shame on him,” the old man chastised, as Junkrat raised a brow at him.

“How could I possibly?!...Hoooogggg?!” Junkrat’s voice was at a shrill whine now.

The old man patted Hog’s arm, “you seem like a fine gentleman, and yet your boyfriend doesn’t know what languages you speak? He makes goo-goo eyes at a pretty girl while you're away! He’s trouble, son!” He turned to Junkrat to wiggle an admonishing finger at the bewildered man.

Hog gave a little grunting laugh, “did he really tell you I was his boyfriend?”

“He said, ‘boyfriend, sort of’ right, Dani? Was that it?” The kid looked over for a moment at her name and nodded, but quickly went back to her play, “see, trouble, I say!”

Hog couldn’t help but give the puzzled Rat a long look. Seeing his face, hearing that he’d said those words, it made Hog feel kinda light inside after all the thoughts he’d had on the way back before everything had gone down.

“Well, with the way ya look at him, he must be the good kind of trouble!” The old man gave a wheezy laugh.

“When I can keep up,” Hog answered, and shrugged his shoulders as they both fell back into a fit of laughter.

“What the hell Hog?!” Junkrat stamped a foot on the ground, like a kid might.

“He said you called me your boyfriend,” Hog smiled at Rat behind his mask as Rat’s whole upper torso went scarlet red.

“I, well, I did, but….” Junkrat stuttered out, seeming like he was about to pop from the pressure.

“Only sorta?” Hog filled in, Junkrat’s eyes getting even bigger- if it was possible.

Rat marched up to him, with a stomp clack of his legs, whining at the pitch of a teapot, “Hog that isn’t faaaaarrrr, come on!”

Hog just patted him on the head, and laughed even more, “Go play Rat!”

Junkrat scowled at the old man, and then Hog, “fine! I can see when I’m not wanted!”

“Just have fun for now. I’ll tell you about it some other time,” Hog pulled him close, and moved his mask just enough to kiss him on the forehead as the kids made a grossed out noise.

Rat blushed again, all pink over his chest, and kinda nodded, running back into the fray as Hog warned, “be careful, you two are still healin’.”

He smiled at them ignoring him, continuing to push themselves. The old man wore a content look too, and it helped Hog settle his nerves.

“You okay with that weirdo playin’ with the kids?” Hog turned back to address Pappy.

He shrugged with a little smile on his worn face, “no worse then I’d be watching them while I slept. Besides, your Junkrat, he seems good with kids.”
“Yeah, guess he always has been,” Hog answered with a bit of a twist in his chest, feeling sick at the thought of last time he got the chance to see that side of Rat, and how it had ended. He pushed it back. The past was gone.

“What’s wrong with this world. Why can’t we all just be that happy?” Hog looked out at the kids, and Rat playing gleefully despite everything. He thought about how freeing it was to be speaking with this man, in another language. Not having to worry about who heard him, or what they thought of his sudden lack of stoic quiet.

“People always find a reason to hate each other, right? I think we are just good at it. Finding differences, exploiting each other for money, taking advantage of kindness.” The old man sighed with a heavy exhaustion weighing under his eyes.

Hog felt tired too, he was tired of thinking about hating people, about hating anything. Wiping his past away, what had happened to his country away, wasn’t going to happen, but it had started to wear him down.

“Tolerance. I wonder if I could handle it? Could I make do, and put aside my personal feelings? Maybe, if we avert another crisis, another reason to hate each other, then the next generation could move beyond tolerance. Maybe, when all us tolerant bastards die off, that generation of peace can hate each other more civilly.” Man, Hog felt heavy.

“Hmm, seems like a good goal. I hope you Overwatch fellas can sort out that kinda future,” Pappy pointed a finger from the hand on his cane toward the ruckus of children, “for them.”

Hog let out a little laugh, “so ya figured us out?”

“That you people are Overwatch? Sure, not too tough when you were at the top of your military career the first time around.” He gave Hog a sly sideways smile, “I doubt anyone else sees it though. I mean no one is a fool, you got those two famous kids, and the doc, and some soldiers of fortune from the omnium warzone in Australia, all here next to an old Watchpoint. Gonna raise a few eyebrows, but I doubt anyone sees the big picture yet.”

Hog nodded, wondering how long it would be before the media got wind, and more trouble blew down their way.

“You think it's a good thing?” Hog wondered aloud.

“Who knows? You just keep up with that young boyfriend, take care of that pretty girl you both worry after, think about those kids when you go to make a hard choice,” he nodded toward Rat who was currently ‘it’ in a game of tag, “If you put that first, you’ll do the right thing, caus you do it for them, and not you.”

Both men startled out of the serious conversation when maniacal laughter was followed by the shriek of Hana’s voice, “JUNKRAT! I will hunt you down. I will find you! Give it BACK!”

Hog jumped to his feet as the old man gave low chuckle, “Duty calls?”

“More like daycare,” Hog sighed, but still smiled, “keeps me young I guess.”

Chapter End Notes
Well, it seems I have an interesting issue. Originally this was gonna be one super long chapter, but I've decided to split it into parts. All the next chapters need is a little dusting up for formatting. So do ya'll want it sooner than later? The tone of the next two chapters should switch back to something a bit more serious, and we'll have part of the next chapter with a new POV character! Then back to some Mei! :D

As always your kind words of feedback are the jewels in my crown, they make my heart sparkle! Thank you so much for all the kind feedback, kudos, and bookmarks. You can also find me @IceyVoreadus on tumblr!
Pharah offered the two boys a bit of water. They were quiet, frightened, and pretty badly beaten. Still, after Hana and Lena had filled her in on some of the details of the ambush, Pharah had little sympathy for them or their pain.

“Names,” she demanded at them.

“Fuc...Kyle,” the slightly worse for wear boy stuttered out, “and that’s Leo, he doesn’t speak much english.”

The other boy nodded, “no english,” he attempted.

“My agents tell me there was an ambush?” Pharah dove right in.

“I’m...I’m sorry, look…”

“No excuses,” she cut him off sharply, “I need the facts. Information. Tell me from your point of view. What happened?”

“Ok. Yeah,” He shrugged, looking around the crumbled hollow room of the blown out building she’d led them into, “so, we’ve been running with these guys, ya know. For a while, I guess, but we never did anything big. We have our territory, and so we got into a street fight here and there, and sold some of those new designer pills to rich kids, and ya know- we had a few girls, workin’ girls who operated in our territory, who gave us a cut to keep their johns from roughing ‘em up. Protection, get it? Small time stuff, till tonight.”

Pharah scowled at that, and the boy looked at the floor distantly.

“Then he got killed, cut right the hell in half. Died right there holding his little brother’s hand. That kid out there, holding his severed arm, man!” He sat forward, and spat onto the floor, “so yeah, I wasn’t lying to them about that, I needed the meds, but they wanted them too- the rest of the guys. We could help lil’ bro, and sell the rest.”

“You were stealing medicine from the agents to sell it? Why wait, why not go in before they came?”

“Man,” he held up his small arms to show her, “you think I could break that place open?”

She shot him a scathing look, and he sat back hard into his chair with a huff crossing his arms.
Pharah could see him deciding which details were relevant, or which would cause him the least trouble.

“One of our boys, he was here spying in your camp, heard you were going out for the stuff. If I had known you guys had that pig fucker with you, or any them other kung fu, military assholes, I probably wouldn’t have volunteered.”

She mirrored his crossed arm stance, staring at him shaking her head, he was good at feeding half truths. She was good at seeing them.

“So, why are you here?” Pharah’s words built up to a sharp point.

He shrugged, and it rubbed her in all the wrong directions. She was done with this sarcastic piece of shit, and his condescension, “maybe I should rephrase it. Why didn’t they end you, and why shouldn’t I?”

“Damn, lady, chill out,” he leaned back as he said it, wary she may take a swing, and, with his attitude, he was getting close to being correct, “it’s the kid. His name is Arturo, he’s my best friend’s lil’ bro... Was. Leo’s too- well, half brother.”

His face hung a bit to talk about it, but Pharah was out of patience for any consideration, “my best friend, Alex, he was high up in the group, got me into the inner circle, the big time. Arturo was like his kid. Hell, I think I was Alex’s kid in his mind too. Their dad ran out, and their mom’s a junkie, and Alex became the father no one had. That I never had. So Arturo was like my little brother too, and we all looked out for him. Then shit hit the fan, if you hadn’t noticed. Told him it would.”

“Told who, that what would?” Pharah was starting to understand he knew more than she first guessed. Why he must be here.

“Leo, he made a contact with some guys, I dunno. Wanted to get our boys in on the, ‘big stuff about to go down’, but man- I’m not into that, like, drug lord, weapon trafficking shit, ok?” He wrinkled up his nose, and sent a scowl over his friend who was completely lost in the conversation.

“What contact, who? Ask him!” Pharah barked it out.

“You think he’s gonna snitch? After all that's gone down? Do you think he wants to die, lady? Don’t be stupi...”

He was cut off by an arrow thunking into the chair beside his shoulder, and the thick drawl of an accent familiar to Pharah, “now that ain’t a very nice thing to say about someone, bucko.”

“McCree, you and agent Shimada are back? Any news?” She swung around to where she could hear the clank of his spurs.

“Gotta real problem on our hands out there, but Mercy caught me up on what’s goin’ on here. So it’s nothin’ that can’t wait til’ we hear what this horse apple’s gotta say for himself. Answer the lady, kid. What contact?”
“Look, I sold that idiot Leo out to the pig when I saw shit going south after the ambush, okay? To protect Arturo.”

“I’m sure coverin’ your own hide had nothing to do with it,” McCree walked right up to him, pulling the chair next to the kid around in front to sit backward on, face to face with the slightly shivering boy.

“Yeah, whatever. Fine. What point was there for me to die for a bunch of hopped up idiots trying to take over the space Alex left behind? I don’t need that shit now that he’s gone. It was an easy way out, and I got what I needed.”

“Does he know?” Pharah uncrossed her arms and indicated Leo with her chin.

“Nah, thinks we got lucky, caus you all wanted to interrogate us” he looked over at the other boy continuing in english, “caus he’s a stupid piece of shit prick who doesn’t know his balls from his brains, and now I guess he probably thinks he's right. Working out for you guys, innit you cowboy lookin’ mother fucker?”

“Hey kid, you’re lookin’ at the good guys. Don’t go and ruin that for yourself now by running your trap off.” McCree pulled at the brim of his hat.

“You ain’t gonna do shit,” he laughed, “not unless I make the first move. Saw your idiot friends fall for some dumb shit already, and if you think you're the good guys, I don’t see ya…”

Another arrow whizzed by as McCree held his hand up, “yeah, that's fair, but my partner doesn’t mind getting a little practice in while we wait. So you think your friend remembers anything now?”

“Fuck, fuck, man! Why you gotta be so scary? You sure you the good guys?”

“Ain’t blowin’ up civilians, and gettin’ little kid’s arms taken off. Runin’ with assholes who would steal medicine from dying people to profit,” McCree’s voice was dark as he put a cigarillo between his lips and lit it, “but you still ain’t gonna wanna see what it looks like when we stop playin’ nice.”

“Christ, layin’ it on a bit think, pardner?” The boy attempted to affect an accent, badly.

Pharah heard a laugh snort from the dark where the arrows had been coming from.

“Really? Is that how ya think I sound?” McCree twisted in his chair toward the sound, “c’mon Darlin’, you know I’m more charming’ than that!”

McCree stood up with a huff, and grabbed the back of his chair, scraping it obnoxiously across the laminate floor to where Leo had come off his seat, and cowered in the corner after the last arrow had nearly hit him. McCree loomed over him in the dark, and then sat back into the chair, rattling something out in spanish with a scathing tone.

“You’re using some weird dialect,” Kyle broke in when Leo wouldn’t answer, “he don’t understand you.”

“Well then, translate, ‘hopped up piece of shit, child murderer protecting, terrorist sympathising, worthless asshole motherfucker’, would ya?” McCree kept his eyes on Leo, “caus if he won’t tell me what we need to know, he’s as good as those assholes with guns coming this way, that blew your city to shreds tonight.”

Kyle seemed tense again, all bunched up in his chair at what McCree had said. They all hung in silence until McCree stood up again.
“Do you not get me, friend?” McCree stood and turned back on Kyle, grabbing the back of the kid’s chair, yanking it until he was about to fall before catching him, “cause by good as them, I mean good as dead, and I’ve seen enough shit tonight that I wouldn’t lose a lick of sleep over snuffing out two idiots who decided this is the fire they wanna throw themselves on.”

Pharah shot him a scolding glance, wondering if he meant it. Wondering if she would actually stop him. Suddenly two more arrows came from the dark, and landed in the wall behind Kyle who tilted his head back to see they had narrowly missed his head. He immediately started to rattle off some worried questions at his friend, and translated his answer.

“They were gun runners or something, didn’t give a name. Needed people to move their stuff, and only to specific people, with some code. They offered some ridiculous money, but what did I tell him?!” He turned and started speaking for himself again, “They always want more. Hell, it's not like we've ever even seen that kinda heavy shit coming through our neighborhood. Something was about to boil, and I wanted out of the pot. You get it? That's why I’m here, and if you want more, I want a guarantee that I can get out minus an arrow in my face.”

Pharah watched McCree stare expressionless at the boy, for just a little too long. A little over civil comfort. Intense and empty. Everyone startled as he dropped the legs of the kids chair harshly back on the ground with a crooked smile.

“Hey, darlin’, try not to get any blood on my clothes okay,” McCree let the kids squirm as he walked back toward Pharah, “laundry day was today, and I ain’t got anything else clean.”

An arrow whizzed by Pharah, and tore through the sleeve of Kyle’s shirt, fixing him into the chair.

“Shit, why’d ya miss?” McCree flipped the brim of his hat up a bit as he looked over his shoulder and shrugged, “guess, it’s you who’s lucky then?”

“Shit, shit. Fine,”

McCree turned back at the kid, who flinched, “as ya were saying?”

“Anyway,” he gave McCree a scathing look, “Alex, my best friend, he and Leo had a fight a few nights ago. Tell um,” he directed at Leo who Kyle continued to translate for.

“Alex was furious, I wanted to join up with those people. They were paying super well for anyone who was gonna join their cause, for whatever they were setting up. It promised to be the biggest shit this city has ever seen. Guess they weren’t fucking around.”

Pharah watched as he pulled his palms over his eyes, the fatigue catching up, “any details on why they were recruiting?”

“Nah, Alex never let it get that far. Leo wouldn’t go against him, but when those guys in black showed up to get the stash of weapons we had been running for ‘um he offered us another big incentive to join,” he wiped his forehead nervously with a knuckle, “Hell, Alex was even tempted I think, but something was off. They started in on how they would be delivering some explosives, and some experts would join us to help set them up on the targets. Like, big shit.”

Everyone was intent on his words now, and Pharah’s heart beat harder in her chest as the implications settled in.

“Even he,” Kyle nodded to Leo, “knew it was fishy then. They left in a big hurry, packing up their stuff after we said no. They were all, ‘you’re with us or against us’, kinda stuff. ‘Made a bad choice for your families’, and to make a point they shot Alex in the leg, man. Then the guy who went to
tackle that asshole got one right in the head, and after that no one tried to stop ‘um, so they left. We laid low ‘til the big boom, alright? That's it.”

“That's it?” Pharah deadpanned.

“Well it's all either of us got. Some of the guys got spooked and went to join up, and we hadn’t seen them since,” his eyes darted back to McCree, “so what did ya mean by guys with guns coming this way?”

The kid’s knee bounced with fearful energy.

“Just what I said.” McCree adjusted his serape back over his shoulders, “people with guns, dressed all in black, are murdering everyone they come across. Clearin’ out the streets, and they are headed this way now.”

Pharah watched him let the kid squirm again for a bit before he added, “guess it's a good thing we got a head start.”

McCree smiled a wicked smile, and Pharah braced herself for bad news.

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Junkrat was out of breath long before the deadly game of keep away the angry Korean lady, and decorated war hero’s phone had ended, but he was almost able to keep up with the children. At least his heart raced from this distraction, and not its constant state of worry.

Hog was right over there, okay enough. The little Snowflake was in good hands, he knew- the best.

*Any minute now. Shes gonna come round, and smile like she does, and it’ll be ok. Maybe, if I'm lucky, she'll forgive me.*

“Mr. Rat, I think we should take a break,” Dani whispered at him, “I think Art’s arm is bugging him.”

“Course’,” Rat answer came out automatically, but he felt a sudden phantom pain he’d gone years without.

It crackled through his metal arm, a ghost yearning to feel, frozen in the memory of the mangled nerves in his stump. He looked at it, flexing the fingers painfully until a small hand wrapped around them.

“Does it hurt?” Art looked up at him, brows knit.

“Sometimes,” Junkrat needed to be honest. He knew what it was like to be told, ‘it won’t be so bad, you’ll get used to it, the pain will go in time.’ Lots of lies from people who had no experience, and were well meaning, but devoid of understanding. He didn’t want to lie, the kid needed straight answers.

Answers that wouldn't make him feel guilty for hurting, or less for missing, or broken or whole. His pain, how he saw himself, was his choice, and Rat could offer only truth, because truth is comfort in the mindscape of uncertainty that comes with chronic issues.
“Not as much anymore, though, but it did for a while. When it comes I just try and think of something relaxin’.” Junkrat rolled his shoulders around, and Art copied him.

“Let’s go check on the old folks, huh? Race, ya!” Junkrat goaded and the kids took off before they even answered him as he followed a bit slower behind.

Pappy had greeted them in spanish and Hog translated, “asked if ya stayed out of trouble?”

“Oh, yeah…” Junkrat started, but Hog and Pappy were already laughing their asses off.

“No,” Hog corrected, “he was askin’ the kids if they kept YOU outta trouble.”

“Oi! That old codger is the troubled one!” Junkrat gave a cheeky smile and popped off the latches of his prosthetic taking it off to wave about, “callin’ out a guy with only one arm?! Seems kinda… underhanded if ya ask me!”

Hog shook his head before translating dryly to Pappy who gave a bit of a snorting laugh, and joined in on Hog’s admonishing headshakes.

“Can we see it!?!” Dani reached up to his arm.

“Knock yourselves out,” he placed it down in the little girl’s hands, and she had to take a step back to keep from falling under the weight, “heavier’ than it looks, eh?”

Art sat next to her as she lowered herself to the ground, “it’s super heavy! So cool!”

Junkrat admired how delicately Dani passed the arm into Art’s lap so he could see, knowing he couldn’t heft it easily by himself with his injury.

“Woah, so neat!” Art moved it with his hand as much as he could, still in pain, and still adjusting to manipulating things with only one hand. “Will mine be this heavy?”

The way the kid looked at him put an arrow straight through Junkrat’s heart. The happy sweet eyes of innocence, just accepting, and moving forward. No understanding of any of the pain he’d face over the next few days as he went through the neurosurgeries to prepare him for a prosthetic. The pain when the shock, and the meds wear off. When the reality sets in. Junkrat’s stomach turned.

“Nah, they make really good ones now. Loads lighter. I made that one outta junk, and now I just keep it caus it suits me, I guess.” He smiled nostalgically at the arm as Art cradled it carefully in his lap.

“You made it?!” Dani raised both arms in excitement.

“Make mine too! Please, please!” Art begged.

“Look, you go get yourself one of those fancy new ones,” he laughed, “but if ya still wanna make yourself a trash one after all that, I’ll show ya how to build your own, alright?”

“What?! Really?!” Art and Dani were both back on their feet holding hands, and jumping excitedly. Hog and Pappy were having a good laugh at the whole scene.

“Teach me too okay?” Dani handed him back his arm, asking earnestly, “That way I can help if Art ever breaks his!”

“Two students for the price of one,” Junkrat gave a toothy grin, “I’ll see what I can do.”
“But for now Pappy says it's bedtime,” Hog interjected.

“Wahhhoo!!” They both shouted, but then realized the last bit Hog had snuck in, and it was followed with a groaning, “awwww” from both kids and Rat.

Dani went and sat by her Pappy, trying to give him puppy eyes to get out of having to try and sleep here. Junkrat felt a huge yawn stretch over his face, all teeth, before he noticed Dani’s attention had gone back across the street like it had when Hog arrived.

“Hey Pappy! Is that a cowboy!?” she tapped excitedly at his shoulder, “and a samurai, like the movies Pappy!” She quickly repeated it in spanish.

Junkrat felt himself suddenly wake up a bit more, and he saw Hog standing too.

“We gotta go,” Hog’s voice sounded a bit somber.

Junkrat didn’t wanna leave the little makeshift tribe he’d started to set up here with them, but he knew Hog was right. “Hang tight, okay? I’ll be back to check on you in a bit?” Junkrat whispered to the kids who were trying to fight off sleep.

“Okay,” they agreed, “see you later, promise?”

“Cross me heart!” Junkrat had dragged his detached arm over his chest in an x before fixing it back in place.

“You okay watching Art oldtimer?” Junkrat nodded at Hog to translate.

“He says he’s good,” Hog answered, and motioned for Junkrat to follow.

As they crossed the street Junkrat felt like he was leaving a warm safe fireside to return into the primal dark of an empty night. He rubbed at his arms to shake it off.

“You gonna be okay?” Hog looked over at him.

“Yeah, just a lot on my mind,” his voice came flatly.

“Yeah,” Hog sighed as they nearly caught up with the agents who had emerged from their interrogation with the new arrivals.

“So?” Junkrat pressed at Pharah as soon as they’d acknowledged them.

Hana had helped Lena over as well, joining the discussion.

Pharah had taken in a deep breath, and explained what they knew as quickly as she could, “Agent Shimada and McCree said they’d fill me in on the rest now.”

She had turned to them with an expectant look, and McCree had plucked his cigar out of his mouth and onto the ground, stomping it out.

“We went south, back toward the club, got lots of guys creepin’ around with guns. Big guns. Some more experienced than others. This one,” he tilted his head to indicate Hanzo, “managed to sniff out some sports gear place that had a damn bow, and arrows. We got some information, and sent some injured people your way. Seems like they are cleaning out the streets behind the explosions, but we still got no idea what this is all about.”

Junkrat shifted his posture watching the stoic Japanese man quietly take in what McCree explained.
Pharah seemed thoughtful, but edgy, and Hog had let out a grunt.

“We ran into ‘em too,” Junkrat indicated Hog, “blew a few of them sky high myself, but it was just a couple of the second stringers. Still had guns though. Didn’t get anything out of them, just what you said. They, weren’t askin any questions.”

“Blew ‘em up? Don’t tell me ya found a explosives depot?” McCree wrinkled his nose at him, “where’s my damn six shooter corner store?”

“Nah, the lil’ Snowflake got us into one of those emergency police booths, and it had an electric riot stick,” he shrugged, “didn’t take much to overload it, and make a nice boom!”

Junkrat let out a high laugh, and Hanzo’s eyebrow quirked up a bit at the display.

“Snowflake?” McCree’s eyes looked to Pharah to puzzle it out.

“Agent Mei-Ling Zhou,” she filled in. “She was injured in the explosion, along with Agent Fawkes, but her damages were worse.” Pharah caught Junkrat's distant look at hearing it all so bluntly, adding, “Mercy and Lucio are treating her now, and expect a full recovery.”

McCree took a step at Junkrat, “what were ya thinking? That could’a gotten ya’ll killed!”

Hog rumbled in his belly, and the archer took a step defensively toward the cowboy. Junkrat, however, had hung his head. He knew the man was right, and he hated it.

What if she'd been a little closer. A little sooner. I could have killed her!

“He did not intend to hurt anyone. He made a difficult choice McCree.” Pharah broke in, defending him.

Just as McCree was about to shoot something back at her they were interrupted by a much more cheerful voice, “hey, listen up!”

It was Lucio, as he skated his way to them at top speed, putting on the brakes just in time to make a dramatic entrance, “Glad to see you two back!” He gave a big smile to the returning agents.

“Mei, how is she!?” Junkrat cut off his greetings.

“She’s doin’ much better now thanks to the stuff we got from that clinic. You guys wanna go see her? She’s probably not awake yet, but I think it’d be good to hear some familiar voices!”

He had already started to head back toward their makeshift surgical center as Lucio finished saying it, and he heard the man laugh, “guess Junkrat is leading the way!”

He had let his feet carry him quickly past the kids and the old man, and to the opening into a lobby which still had a bright enough emergency light for Mercy to operate under. She must have already flitted off to continue her work elsewhere, and he had a good headstart on everyone else. He pushed through a curtain they had closed over the broken window, and saw her there, lying faceup on a table they’d dragged under the light.

He was alone in the unsettling hollow of the room, with it's high ceilings like a church, and its bloodied floor all dusted with the debris from the explosions. He was alone with Mei, and he could hear her breathing.

Oh, Snowflake, I'm so, so sorry. I'm so sorry. What have I done? I'm...
His guilt had hit him all at once. The cowboy’s words, and the thoughts he’d pushed back, and the blame he’d set aside for worry. Now, there she was, taking steady deep breaths over dry pink lips, her pale white hands resting palms up beside her, as she slept like a saint on the altar. All his sins came rushing back to him.

He found himself tripping over his feet to get to her side, kneeling into the broken glass and bits of concrete, slowly placing his fingers over hers. A sudden frantic mess off thoughts tangling through him. Sticking to the back of his eyes, seeing visions of the, ‘what ifs’ Phara had warned him against.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. Please, please,” the words felt abstract as his lips moved around them in the shape of prayers. He felt the first tear fall over his eye as his heart pleaded for consecration. So that the manifestation of his grief, and anxiety, and sorrow, and shortcomings could be something sacred.

*If my tears could chase away what ails ya, least I could be a divine fuckup.*

He desperately held back an onslaught of emotions, holding his breath to make sure he could still hear hers.

He pressed a grateful kiss onto her palm at the sound.

He wanted to say something, or thank someone, but his mind was empty of anything but the rapturous joy at every rise and fall in her belly, and the returning warmth in her fingers, and the color in her face. Then the torment that pulled at him with every pained sigh that escaped her throat, and every shiver thatCorsed through her, and the stillness in her before a new breath drew in. He shuddered at the foreign feeling of tears falling from his face, and pooling into her hand, rushing over him like appeals for absolution.

Finally, he heard Hog with the others outside the entryway, but for some reason it was only Hog who joined him at her side. He could hear his heavy breaths too. He swore the giant heart that beat in his chest was audible too. Speeding up as he got closer.

“I could have killed her,” he whispered into the room as Hog stood silent, nearly losing it to a sob this time, “I almost did, Hog.”

He felt Hog’s huge hand rest on the back of his neck as he leaned forward to lay his head on the side of the table, and look up at the man who he’d promised to confess his heart to. To whom he would tell his sins; an anathema.

“You didn’t, you wouldn't have,” Hog’s voice was breaking behind his mask, the same way as Rat’s, spilling out his benediction, “she’d never think so. We’ve all saved each other tonight.”

He felt his heart clench up in the dark, grasping at his chest with his free hand, he had so much he wanted to lay bare. He stared at Mako with eyes beseeching, supplicating, in hopes they might deliver his intent where he was mute. He tried a million million times in his mind for the right way to start, but he couldn’t stop what rolled over his tongue instead, “I love you.”

Hog froze for a moment, and then pulled his mask up so Junkrat could see the glint in his eyes, and the wet trails of tears down his face, and the gentle smile that curled around his tusks. His look was adoration, and faith, and his words were psalms, “I love you too.”

And there it was.

They settled into how the sound of it played around their eyes like candles, flickering across an age of quiet darkness, before they were both drawn back into the girl on the altar with a feeling in their hearts they didn’t know the word for. Not yet.
Junkrat felt himself standing. Fixed on her. Leaning over without thinking, just to know he could actually feel the breaths easing out from her. So close he could see her lashes, and they quivered as her eyes moved behind their lids, and he could feel the soft moans that made her lips part, and he could almost touch the warmth there. So close, that if he wanted, if she wanted, he could just...

Chapter End Notes

So, I got the message- sooner is better, and so here it is, and it's a long one! The beginnings of some answers, and the start of plenty more questions (don't worry, I have a plan!). Things are ramping up now! Buckle in for the next few chapters I think. Choo-choo, the train is leaving the fluff station. I almost want to spoil the first line of the next chapter, but I will abstain, as I should have a final edit on it in the next few days *fingers crossed*! (it's a Mei chapter for those of you missing our Snowflake!)

Thank you all for the super awesome kind things you continue to say, seriously- it really makes my day!! I'm too tired for a clever metaphor...oh wait...your words are like the cool side of my pillow? Refreshing and wonderful! Yup, that works! Hope ya'll like this one, and you can find me @IceyVoreadus on tumblr! :D
Mei felt the hot pressure of lips pressing into hers.

Her mind swam at the heat, and the want, her whole self pushing into the sensation. Mind and body. Mei felt time bending through her need.

_Just another minute! Please._

There was a hand on each side of her, gripping her ribs, holding down the moment as Mei floated through. She felt so disoriented, but in the best way.

A face pulled away and came nearly into focus. Then just as she was about to see them, the close quarters of the supply closet she found herself in went dark again, as the hands at her side pulled her shirt over her head. She held her breath to hear the hissing of hands rubbing together to warm themselves before being placed back over her bare sides for just a moment.

There was the smell of something delightfully soaked in the grease of heavy machinery, and a distant hint of sweat from manual work, all wrapped in leather behind the artificial scent of clean linens.

Time, and Mei's eyes, came back into focus. She saw the roughneck, a woman she'd met here on her mission at the Arctic Watchpoint, who was with them to oversee the operation of equipment that drilled for their ice core samples, and Mei had promised herself she wouldn’t get attached. They'd never see each other again after this mission. Different worlds.

She felt cold air rush over her chest, and then slowly as her shirt crept up her face, on her lips. It stopped there leaving her blind, and a warm body pressed her into the shelving from the table she'd been hoisted onto, adding another kiss as Mei’s arms were held hostage in her shirt above her head. She smiled against Niko’s lips.

“In here, really?” Mei let out a breathy huff, and her companion pulled the shirt all the way off. For a moment she saw a flash of blonde, or white, but Mei remembered her hair was dark.

“Only if you want,” she pressed her face into Mei’s neck, sucking at it roughly, eliciting a startled squeal from the scientist.

Ummhp! How could she not want it right now? She had promised herself, but it was hard not to just give in when they were so close to probably never seeing each other again. What was one trist in a broom closet? Even if it was her first.

An alarm started to go off on her discarded comm device, “ignore it!” the woman growled into her neck, kissing the part she’d made tender softly.

Then her alarm started in chorus. They both groaned, and Mei reached out to grab hers on the nearby shelf. A red screen flashed, “Emergency storm beacon activated. Please advise, severe weather conditions are building in the area.”

“Another error?” The woman's accent became more prominent, was it Australian...no, Niko was Russian, Mei’s brain fogged a bit as she continued, “no storms on the radar earlier.”
Niko went back to running her hands across Mei’s stomach, and soothing another kiss over her neck, but she was fixated on the warning flashing across the screen over the woman’s strong shoulder. She pushed up her glasses with her free hand, “I dunno, the reading is pretty strong.”

At that an overhead siren began to blare. The whole base was being summoned to their emergency posts. Guess it’s no error.

“Damn,” she whispered into Mei’s clavicle, and Mei ran her hand through the woman’s short hair.

“Tonight, okay? Somewhere proper?” She teased her nails across Niko’s scalp causing her to shiver.

“Yeah, sounds good,” she pulled back and smiled, grabbing Mei’s waist and helping her off the table she’d sat her onto as they both got redressed.

“So strong,” she giggled.

“You should see my cousin! She’s the strongest in the world. Runs in the family,” she flexed at Mei and they both laughed.

Making sure the hall was clear, they each sneaked out a few minutes after one another, Mei going second. She found herself in the darkened hallway with the red lights flashing as emergency procedures were starting. She looked down at her phone again, making a note of how high, and how fast the readings had gone up.

It has to be an error.

When she finally made it to the Watchpoint control room she found herself drifting to try and stand next to Niko without it seeming too obvious why her and the roughneck both had mussed hair. Her colleague, one of the lead meteorological scientists on the project, was addressing the group as she stole in.

“The readings we are getting from the beacon have been confirmed by the satellite, and I’m afraid it's as bad as it looks,” Mei was startled by how grim his expression was as he continued, “I activated the emergency sequence, because the storm has already taken out our periphery long range communications dish, and I predict it will be stronger by the time it reaches us.”

Niko leaned over, arms crossed in front of her chest, and worry in her eyes, still managing a joke, “gonna need to keep real warm tonight.”

Mei elbowed her in the ribs, but they both smiled a bit at the teasing.

“The scientist in me is thrilled at the readings, records are being broken here people!” He tried to smile, and the nervous laughter of various scholars who appreciated the humor rang out, “that being said, I prefer not to be in the middle of those kinds of numbers.”

The room grew hushed as he pulled up the satellite images on the screen, as scientists, Watchpoint crew, and the other drilling rig operators all looked up at the glowing warnings. You didn’t need a doctorate in meteorology to know what the angry red swath coming their way meant.

“I have discussed our situation with the lead Watchpoint engineer over the comm before we lost long range twenty minutes ago. He believes we could face a full power outage. This is the strongest storm we have ever recorded on the continent. It was his recommendation that we prepare the stasis pods, and begin to reserve emergency power, and I agree.”

Claire’s eyes were sunken as she stood up, she was an expert on the arctic climate through the eons,
and Mei looked up to her. Now, she looked frightened. Mei, couldn’t interpret the look any other way, “As the project lead, I agree with this assessment. Miss Zhou, and Mr. Anderus, as the other team leads, if you agree then we will initiate the pods to begin their preparation.”

Mei felt her chest tighten up, and the red flashing all around glared off her glasses as the other man answered affirmatively, and all eyes were on her, “yes, I agree. This is the best course of action.”

Everything had been sucked into the vortex of preparations before she could process it all. The monster storm was bearing down on them without mercy, and it would reach them before nightfall. Everyone had gone back to their quarters to change into their cryo gear, and lock down their belongings, before returning to their part of the preparations.

The walls inside of the Watchpoint iced over in less than thirty minutes after the environmental controls started to shut down in all the non essential parts of the base. It would be hours before the bulk of the storm hit, but the front had already been sending readings of gusts up to 40 knots, and visibility was getting sketchy outside.

The med team were taking the vitals of staff members who had already completed their checklists, and making sure they received the first injections they would be given to prepare their bodies for the stasis. The whole mood was dark, and everyone moved mechanically.

Mei hadn’t had time to talk to Niko, but she saw the rigging crew adorned in the heaviest clothing of anyone, about to head out of the control room when she had finished her own duties in the outer parts of the base.

“We gotta go break down equipment,” Niko leaned into her to tell her over the roar of everything going on.

“Outside?” Her eyes had gone out of focus at the thought.

“Yeah, but it ain’t too bad yet.” She kissed Mei on the cheek, and neither of them cared who saw, not that anyone had time to notice.

“Be careful, please,” Mei put a hand on Niko’s cheek before she’d pulled a mask over it and nodded, heading down the hall to the outer hatch with her team.

Mei drifted over to the station that monitored the outside, listening to the operator instruct them, a picture of her two kids taped to the edge of the screen. Her name was Prisha, and Mei had become fast friends with her during the mission, so she didn’t mind her lingering. Mei guessed she must know about Niko, or at least suspect, but with the strict fraternization rules Mei was glad she’d kept it to herself.

The storm continued to pick up sustained wind speed. Mei was glued to the screen.

Every once in awhile through the day, one of Mei’s team would show up, and she’d make sure they’d run their assignments before sending them to the med team who had come over and personally delivered her injection while she was transfixed by the monitor.

“Hey, hey!” Prisha’s strong voice came frantically startling Mei out of her hypnosis at the screen to actually absorb what was happening, “watch it! WATCH OUT!”

Mei stood as a giant boom arm came down, crashing onto one of the workers in their heavy coats, who she knew was gone instantly.

*It’s not her. It’s not her. It’s not her.*
“Status, give me your status,” Prisha reined in her voice, but was obviously hurting to see one of her crew just...gone, “are you there? Niko, do you copy?”

Mei held her breath to hear if a voice returned her request, “I copy. It was Carroll. She’s gone. The boom fell onto some equipment too, but I’m not familiar. May want to tell the other stations to run diagnostics. We’ll, uh...we will recover the body after the storm, the equipment to move the rigging won't run in this weather,” her voice cracked out over the intercom through the interference, “hey, Mei there?”

Her heart sped up as the woman affirmed, looking at her with heavy eyes, “tell her I said it’ll be alright.”

Mei smiled at the screen as Niko held her hand out toward the camera in the flurry, and Mei put her hand against the monitor, “she copies, mam.”

“We need to get them back in, now!” A man from the radar station held his hand over his mic to yell to Prisha as he tapped at his screen with the other.

“We are calling you back in, Niko. Do you copy?” Prisha rushed to inform her, and it was only a few minutes before the squeal of the hatch came through the frozen outer hallway.

The four remaining men, and two women came into the control room wearing their frozen coats, and heavy expressions. The wind outside had taken its most violent turn yet, sending flurries of snow airborne as visibility became nearly nothing through the cameras. The room had grown quiet to hear the edges of the storm torment their walls.

It was the sounds that affected Mei the most, as ice scraped along the metal hull of the Watchpoint like vicious claws. She shivered, not from the cold, but the wail of it. Knowing that while it threw itself along their shelter the storm wasn't an animal stalking prey, but rather just a harsh and immovable force. A force of nature, exacerbated by the hubris of mankind's disregard for the consequences of their gluttony toward it, slowly cleansing itself of them with indifference.

Everyone flinched as the outer walls buckled and groaned under the change in pressure, but a panicked operator interrupted the flighty vigil.

“We have an error in the initiation sequence of the pods in banks A, and B. The C tanks are fully offline. A coolant chamber was damaged in the boom accident,” her voice was shaking, “we can’t use any of the pods unless we can activate a manual bypass in the Hydra section bank of coolant tanks to take up slack in A and B. The emergency power for the generators is running low. I doubt the power will make it through the storm if we can't. It's imperative.”

“What does that mean? If we can’t get in the pods?” Claire’s voice cut through.

“The storm is predicted to last for at least 72 hours. We have, at maximum, twelve hours of support left before we have to shut down entirely to power the pods through the storm, and long enough for rescue efforts to arrive,” she turned to her screen pulling up more numbers, “if we aren’t able to get in the pods, we have maybe 48 hours of backup power to keep this room temperature at a stable level for survival, but with the environmental seal in place, only enough oxygen for 28 or 30 hours before we’d have to vent to the outside which would destabilize the temperature. Chances of us freezing to death in that case are nearly 85% before rescue efforts arrive.”

The room had gotten quiet to hear the news, but one voice gave a husky reply, “where’s the bypass? Can it be overridden by a single person?”
Nearly every head in the room had turned Mei’s direction, where the voice had come from, to look at Niko standing next to her.

“The Hydra banks are on the edge of the Watchpoint, nearly all the way to the outer north side, but with the wind shear at the speed and temperatures we’re reading now you’d freeze to death before you made it there and back.”

“That ain’t what I asked,” Niko’s tone was resolute. Mei reached out and put a hand on her wrist, gripping tighter than she intended.

“It’s suicide,” Mei whispered, but she ignored her.

“She’s right,” the operator said gravely, “but, yes. You could do it in theory.”

“Mei,” she leaned down to be face to face grabbing Mei’s cheeks in her freezing gloves, and kissing her while the whole base watched, “walk me through it on the comms. I’ll make it back, I’m used to the cold, yeah?”

She smiled at Mei whose tears streamed down her face. Mei knew she couldn't talk Niko out of it, and so she nodded weakly.

Niko had slipped out of her grip, and it had taken three of the strongest people on base to turn the frozen hatch back open. They promised to wait in the cold hall, by the door, for her return. The pods that were still online began to be assigned, and the med team had gotten busy plugging people’s suits into the complicated structures that Mei herself had been a part of designing.

“Hey, Snowbunny, you there?” Niko’s voice, despite using her affectionate call sign for Mei, had come through the comm with what felt like crackling distance.

“Right here, Captain-Crush, tell me when you’ve made it to the tanks,” Mei smiled at the memory of how Niko earned the call sign as she cradled the receiver of the headset in her fingers.

Most of the leftover personnel that weren’t needed elsewhere had gathered around Prisha’s console, and Mei, to watch what little they could see. To cheer them on. To hope.

They had made small talk as Niko trudged against the elements toward the Hydra block of coolant tanks. They’d laughed as her voice had gotten more, and more strained, as her words started to shiver against the comm.

When she arrived at the tanks Mei walked her through the overrides as Niko made little jokes only Mei would understand, because of the time they'd spent together. Because of the late night conversations, and shared meals, and movie nights, and card games, and secret stolen kisses. Because she'd gotten attached.

“Allright, now move the knob left until the indicator hand is back in the green of the dial,” Mei gave her the final instruction once she’d reached the control panel on the system.

Niko had done a great job, Mei had encouraged her over and over. Now, Mei could barely see her on the screen as the white of the snow poured past the surveillance camera. Most of the personnel had settled into their pods by this point, waiting for the last few members who were needed to start the coolant sequences, and the team leads, to join them. Mei, waiting for Niko.

“Heya, Snowbunny?” Niko called out to Mei in violent shivers, Mei could see the spot that was her through what looked like static on the screen, as she sat next to the console.
“Niko? What are you doing. Come back now. The systems are online. You did it! You and I, we get the pods you fixed! Since we're the last ones in when you get back, the tanks you bypassed will be the one’s solely running our pods in the C bank, all while supporting the damaged ones too. So, it’ll be you who saved the two of us. Isn’t that great!?"

“I'm glad! You should get settled in, I’ll meet you in a bit, okay?” Her voice was bright, even though they both knew what she was doing.

Their was dead air for a few choked breaths.

“Promise?” Niko strained the question out, heavy with all the things she wouldn't say, how they'd both known how this would end.

Niko didn't want her to have to feel what was coming, to validate the reality with words, to push that pain on Mei. It didn't stop it from coming anyway.

Mei felt her hands shaking as she blocked the receiver and let out a hard sob, Claire and Prisha’s hands on her shoulders comfortingly.

“Promise me you’ll sleep well, okay?” Niko’s voice had a smile.

Mei took her hand away from the receiver, and as quick as she could to avoid the sound of her tears, she whispered, “I will.”

“Gonna have a good dream about what should've happened tonight? Hmm, to keep ya warm?” Her tone smirked into the mic at Mei’s sobbing laugh.

“I will,” she let out the words in a sharp breath.

“Good, me too. I, uh I’m…” Mei could hear her teeth had stopped clacking into each other, and knew she'd be blacking out soon, “glad we got to spend some time together.”

Mie felt the unsaid words. The heavy syllable that sat in their throats in the distance between them. Niko wasn’t selfish enough to put it on her, but Mei panicked as she could hear a rustling over the speakers. Niko was tearing her headset away.

“I love you,” Mei spat out with a sob, and the jostling stopped. Mei heard a hard lonely laugh, she felt Niko’s lips against the mic, like they were on hers.

“I’m sorry,” Niko let the sound of her own tears leak into the hurt of her desperate apology, “Mei, go save the world for us okay? I… I love you too.”

The words came slow, and then silence. Radio silence. Dead air. Niko had turned off the comm.

Mei had screamed into the mic for a few minutes before she felt herself be dragged into the motherly arms of Prisha’s embrace heaving out sobs. Claire closed the gap, hugging her on the other side. Her family away from home soothed her as she caught her breath, no longer her colleagues. The mission was over. Now they were the friends they always had been in their off hours.

“We need to get into the pods, Mei,” Claire whispered, planting a soothing kiss into the crown of her head, “you promised her.”

Mei felt time float up around her. Everything was elevated, every sense, and it was cold and raw like her eyes, and her nose. Like the scraping sounds outside that almost reminded her of the hatch opening, that almost gave her hope, only to tear her open all over.
She went through the motions as the last of the med team secured her and the others into the pods. She watched them scurry to their own after initiating the final lockdown sequences. The final reality that Niko wouldn't be joining her. It all looked as if she was seeing the world from the bottom of a well.

Her skin prickled as the suit filled with coolant, but it felt paradoxically warm. She’d designed it that way. She felt the intravenous attachments on the inside of the suit pump into her arm with a sting, and then another new and longer warmth that drifted around her, and yet she was numb.

She wasn’t sure why, but she felt like she couldn’t breath. Her right side burned distantly with a pressure, a harsh sharp pain that she couldn’t place, as her consciousness drifted in and out while the pod began to fill with the suspension fluid.

A distant pitch hummed in her head, a dark voice that spoke into her fading thoughts.

They’ll all be gone when you wake up. You’ll never see any of them again. Niko was the first, but they are all gone now. She saved you, remember. You and her, and the pods powered only by the Hydra bypass. How all the others had failed. When you woke up, you saw it has all gone wrong, that Niko died for nothing.

Just you. An error. The tanks had failed. The tanks you designed. The coolant you designed. It failed. You failed all of them, and now you are alive, and they are gone.

The horror of the scenario echoed into her as she tried to make sense of it now. Why it felt like a memory when it hadn’t even happened yet. She wanted to bang on the glass, to stop the process, or to at least find her end in the snow next to Niko, and not here. Not in this small space where the paranoid hissing in her mind could be true.

However, the fluids that kept her motionless for safekeeping had already been injected. Paralyzed. It was only her, blurring through time, and the voice in her head that whispered dark futures. Or pasts.

She wasn’t sure now.

You’ll wake up, and no one will have come for any of you. Forgotten. They will all be gone, and you will slowly start to freeze as the last of the power goes down while you are all by yourself in the cold. In the dark.

The pain you feel, that’s your guilt, squeezing around your heart. Taking your breath away.

Remember, how you wished the beacon had failed, and you’d never woken up wrapped in the thermal blankets of the rescue vessel who’d answered your last desperate signal. You’d wished you never fallen like a wet newborn from your stasis into the frozen empty lab. Seen all their faces behind the frosted glass, hollow and long gone. The faces that you once called friend, mentor, family.

The pain was a fire now, and it screamed through her as she tried to grab hold of some true feeling. Something besides empty, and cold, and alone- beyond the blurry frozen faces behind glass, a memory. A future, and a past coalescing.

The people she’d tried to free. Desperately releasing the safety on each pod in hopes of rescue. To hold. To bring back. To cry for. How long they’d been gone, and how she'd been gone, and how she'd slept through her own death.

Alone for so long. Then alone when she came back from what should have been her tomb of ice. Everything had gone, or changed, or left, and she returned to a new isolation.
She begged to be gone with everything else she'd known, but then she felt a spark in the emptiness. She tried to reach out to the heat pressing into her palm. She begged her eyes to open, to see the face that she felt exhale quietly over her, to see something familiar. Or something long gone. Hoping to be back in another time, past or present, in the place where she had just started to find something worthwhile inside of herself. Something that waited in the warmth just beyond this nightmare.

Then, as the black closed in, the unsettling voice in her mind pitched up, like the squeal of a microphone, whispering over the harsh feedback.

_Sweet dreams._

Chapter End Notes

Phew, this one was a tough one to write. Feelings about things, about the past, and how it will effect Mei, and the Junker's when she comes back to the present. Things are heavy, but soon there will be relief! Everyone just needs cuddles I think. ;p

Real life made this take longer to get out then I thought so sorry! Anyway, as always your words are like a fresh from the dryer blanket on a winter's day- they make me feel warm and fuzzy~ something we probably all need after this chapter! <3 You can find me @IceyVoreadus on tumblr!
Mei felt her consciousness pour back into the waking world. Adrift, out of time, out of place, and
gasping for breath, her body screamed its deprivation as she came up for air. Her aching muscles
spasmed, causing her to sit straight up, colliding headfirst into something above her with force.

“Oi! Easy now!”

_I’m not alone... I’m not alone!_

The voice floated through her, as she felt faint, the blood rushing through her head and throbbing at
the point of contact. The tension in her let go, and she felt herself fall limply back toward the surface
she was laid out on. Instead of an impact though, someone's broad hand had spread across her
shoulder blades to steady her.

“Niko?” The question ventured out as she blinked her eyes open; everything blurred without her
glasses, “are the long range comms back up yet?”

“I, uh, got no idea whatcha mean, Snowflake,” the familiar voice soothed, leaning in closer so she
could see a faint form in front of her, “just breath for now, okay?”

Her mind rolled through her memories, trying to place the accent, the flashes of color through her
vision.

_Australian. Bright, like fire._

It all crashed back into her at once, a disorienting return to the present. The feeling of her fever dream
hanging over her, viscerally making reality the thing that felt out of place now. Wrong, like she’d
been ripped away from something else to be back here.

“Junkrat? Roadhog?” She reached out a hand into the bleary space in front of her to touch
something. To make sure it was real, “are you there? What...where...?”

“Woah, woah, what did I say? Breath!” Junkrat had moved toward her hand which made contact
with his prosthetic arm as he said it.

Her fingers gripped around it with an unsteady tremble she was sure he could feel, but hoped maybe
it wouldn’t transfer through the metal limb. She didn’t want to push this on anyone else. She wasn’t
ready to talk about it, or explain it, or think about it right now. She’d had the nightmare before,
granted- not as believably, but she’d survived it once.

Her mind had traveled through time, and now she just had to push it back, like she had before. When
it was real. Her colleagues, her friends, and family. The memory of her love, her loss- it was all
something she had to relegate back into the realm of stories. Distant, detached, long long ago, far
away.

“You musta been havin’ one hell of a nightmare!” Junkrat gave a nervous laugh after the long
silence, the prolonged clutching to his arm.

“I don’t remember.”
Liar.

The darker voice voice remained, a relic revived, and it hissed over her thoughts as she shivered.

“Well, guess it's a good thing,” he shrugged, but made no motion to remove her grip, “you feelin’ any better at least?”

“Yes.”

Lies.

Her tone had come off sharply, as if she was answering to an interrogation, and so she softened herself a bit to make a sweeter sounding lie at least, “um, sorry. I’m...I’ll be fine!”

Junkrat shook it off easy enough.

“You’ve missed out, Hog’s gonna have to tell you about how he got the supplies for Mercy and Lucio to patch ya up,” he continued to fill in some of the details, but the story skipped around nervously as he was over excitedly recalling the detail. She had at least managed to let her hand slide from his arm as she tried to puzzle it together.

“Wait, wait,” she interrupted him with a lost expression, “ambush, medical supplies, some kids, the guy from the shuttle...Mercy, and Lucio, and the others? How long was I out?”

She felt Hog’s hand at her back jostle around from laughing at her confusion, and Rat’s bad storytelling. Before Junkrat could really clear anything up though another interruption had found their way inside.

“Mei!” Lena’s voice peeled through the obviously cavernous space, “glad to see you up! How are you feeling? Have they told you what’s going on? Has anyone come to check on you?”

“Lucio, commin’ at ya!” His voice slid in behind Lena as she asked, and he helped her make it to Mei’s bedside, or tableside as it were.

“Hey, slow down there you two, she just came around. Take it easy!” Junkrat stepped in their path to keep them from crowding her.

“Let him look over her,” Hog finally grunted out after a few seconds of staring each other down.

“Need to see if Mercy is around,” Lucio mentioned over at Lena as he found Mei’s wrist to take her pulse while Junkrat kept a close eye.

The woman immediately turned over her shoulder to scream out, “Mercy!!”

“Hooley dooley,” Rat stuck his pinky into the ear closest to her, scabbling it around a bit, pointing his other hand toward her, “you sure got a set on ya!”

“Hey!” Lena’s eyes got big.

“Oi, of lungs, got your mind in the gutter,” he waved her off as she looked down at her chest where he had been indicating, “no comment on the rest!”

Lena blew her bangs out of her face as Junkrat let off a peal of laughter, “oh, aren’t you just a riot!”

They both smiled when they noticed Mei had let herself laugh a little at their exchange.
I’m not alone. My colleagues, my friends, my… my family.

“Oh, hey now! There’s what I came to see!” Lena crooned hopping over to sit next to her on the lip of the table, “you always got the brightest smile, luv! Makes this whole thing feel less gloom and doom!”

Mei giggled softly at Lena’s constant friendly optimism, “I’m happy to see you too, finally!”

She felt her eyes misting up a bit and pressed her palms into her cheeks to hold back the pressure. If she cried now, it would all come down.

“Looks like you’re recovering well!” Lucio finally set her wrist back into her lap, “we had to use a pretty heavy sedative though, and so if she’s acting strange that’s probably why. Anyway, you guys are gonna have to look after her for a few hours until it wears off.”

“Who, us?” Junkrat looked at Hog and then back to the audio medic.

“Well, yeah,” he seemed to find their confusion strange, “you two have been holed up in here since the surgery was over, figured you’d make the best nurses for…”

“Mr. Roadhog! Mr. Junkrat!! Hello!? Are you in here?” A young girl frantically pushed herself under the curtain that closed off the foyer from the elements, and upon seeing them all motioned for some people behind her to follow.

Another boy about her age, an elderly man, and three college age kids came through, all looking a bit skittish. Everyone seemed to know who they were as the child who had spoken, and the little boy, ran directly up to Hog, stopping just short of clinging to his legs. Junkrat quickly introduced them all, and told Mei briefly about how they’d met, and now she recognized the two older boys from the shuttle. It made her feel a little apprehensive.

“I’m Nadia, Lucio asked if I could help Pappy with the kids, and it’s been a nice distraction,” she waved a hand up from the arms hugging her chest, seeming to be the only one left out of the introductions.

The older gentleman followed up her greeting with something quick in Spanish, and Hog replied.

_Hog replied?!_

“Long story,” he turned to Mei, and she swore she saw a wink under the mask.

Something suddenly swept their greetings away, but this interruption was entirely different.

A strange sensation moved through the room. It was felt, or heard...Mei wasn’t sure which, but she did know it had been something everyone sensed, as they had all turned in the same direction at once.

It was like the uncomfortable sudden change in air pressure right before a storm, or something humming just out of the range of hearing. It thrummed through your chest, just on the edge of your senses, and it had left her with a deep sense of dread.

“What...was that?” Lena whispered into the quiet space.

“I dunno, but I don’t like it,” Junkrat scrunched up his face as they all stood transfixed by the anomaly.
“The doctor lady told us to come here,” Dani, the little girl, spoke out in her small voice, “she wouldn’t look at us.”

“Uh, yeah. She did seem a bit apprehensive,” Nadia interjected, seeming to have drifted back over to the children, “told us to come in here and tell the uninjured to come out to her- the rest are supposed to barricade in upstairs. Maybe she knows something about… whatever that is.”

Lucio nodded and Lena started following him toward the exit.

“Hey, you can barely walk, why dontcha stay?” Junkrat cleared his throat as Lena looked back over at him, “I’ll go with Lucio, and find out what this is all about. Hog and you can figure how to get all these kiddo’s and the old man up the stairs.”

She paused for a moment, and considered it, and Mei hoped she would listen- her ankle seemed pretty messed up.

“Alright, yeah,” she agreed limping a bit back toward the table, and Junkrat trotted over to take her place.

“Don’t forget me!” Junkrat waved at them as they rushed outside, and Mei let out a shiver of worry.

The old man turned to Hog, seeming to explain something they were all missing, and in turn Hog attempted to convey it to Lena and her, “Say’s we gotta look out for a signal from upstairs.”

They looked at him blankly as the boy from the shuttle gave a huff and stepped up.

“There’s some fancy offices up there, should have couches to crash on, and if we get high enough a view of a building a few miles up the way,” he had filled in Hog’s sparsity, seeing their confusion, “The doc said you guys needed to wait for some signal you should see in the north facing windows from the big energy sector building. She wouldn’t say what, but something big is going down, everyone’s been told to leave, but we don’t have no place to go back to, so she told us to come with you guys.”

Mei did not like the idea of having to be holed up with those two, but she knew there wasn’t much of a choice. Hopefully Junkrat would give them a little more when he got back to them.

Mei felt herself once again being hoisted into the arms of a Junker. She was wondering if they thought her legs weren’t working, “is this necessary?”

Hog looked down at her and hummed from his belly in a way that told her he wasn’t going to argue about it, and to be honest she didn’t have the energy to anyway. Despite her slight frustration at the practice, she still couldn’t help but give a little blush at his lack of hesitation at what left her so embarrassed.

As they headed toward the stairwell she heard Pappy let out an endearing laugh, patting Hog on the shoulder and quipping about something that got a groan, and most likely an eyeroll, from the giant man.

“What did he say?” Her curiosity was too strong not to at least ask.

“Old man bullshit,” he gave a single laugh as Pappy seemed to have caught the last word, adding an indignant sound of his own, rattling off another few sentences of what sounded like quickfire wit.

The old man laughed to himself, seeming to be the sole person to enjoy his own joke, and before she could ask again Hog had answered, “same bullshit, more words.”
She could see the elderly man shook his head from the edge of her vision as the door to the stairwell creaked open. The kids rushed in past them and dashed up the stairs as their playful laughs echoed in the dark upward shaft.

“We’re goin’ to the sixteenth floor,” Hog turned his face up to the kids who were already looking down at them from the second flight.

“I’ll catch up to them,” Nadia chimed in cheerfully, “we’ll wait for you on the upper flights.”

She took off after them, easily hopping up the stairs in front of her, and the two young men from the shuttle followed her without saying much of anything. Hog sighed a deep breath before taking her up the first few steps onto the landing, but looking back Lena and Pappy seemed to be keeping about the same leisurely pace.

“Wait here. I will come back for you.” Hog ordered at them, but their reaction seemed about the same too. A dismissive sound, followed by another agonizingly slow step being mounted.

Hog ignored them in turn, and seemed to take the stairs two at a time easily enough. It didn’t take them long to catch up to the children. He barely seemed out of breath, or more than usual at least. She had been startled when he kicked down the door though, opening to a long plain grey hallway lit only by the glowing emergency exit signs.

“Come on.” He huffed out as they all followed him closely into the maze of winding office corridors.

It was all plain black doors with numbers, or occasionally a plaque with a business name, which seemed to be locked down firmly, with more modern doors than the age of the building might suggest. They did finally find a light at the end of the tunnel though—almost literally.

The glass doors of what looked like some kind of design or architecture firm, still being lit by a few small lamps powered by an auxiliary power source. Mei recognized the Vishkar logo, but couldn’t decipher how this place was related besides the clean modern lines of the lobby visible beyond the doors. Doors that were soon also kicked in, shattered glass littering the floor, something of a common theme for the day now.

Hog signaled for the kids to wait as he carried Mei inside, boots crunching over the debris, and he sat her gently on one of the two giant plush couches in the room.

She watched as he returned to the kids, and standing in the middle of the glass, picked them up and hoisted them to the other side of the sharp obstacle. He indicated to Nadia he would lift her as well, and she nodded and giggled as he swung her over, but as soon as he’d sat her down he’d turned back into the room, leaving the two miscreants to their own devices.

Hog drifted back to her, and stooped a bit, “you okay?”

She sighed. “I’ll be fine.”

Liar.

She shut off the voice in her mind and forced a convincing smile, as they both turned back to look over the well appointed waiting room. The two children had already found a stash of old fashioned board games, meant to distract the kids of the wealthy clients that must find themselves in such a place. Now, being put to good use to help these kids take their mind off what must be an intense night for them. The two boys had made their way over the glass gingerly, and were now raiding a small fridge for some water bottles.
“Go easy on those, we don’t know how long we have to make them last,” Mei chided them from her spot on the couch, and the one named Kyle nodded sheepishly.

“Be right back,” Hog’s voice rumbled over her, and she nodded as he left to go back down the hall for the two in the stairwell.

“Hey, miss?” The little boy, Art, had crept up in her distraction, kneeling down to be eye level with her as she laid on the couch. It made her a bit nervous.

It wasn’t that she didn’t like kids, but historically for her she’d just never gotten along with them. At least not when she was their age, and after that, she hadn’t actually been around any. She never had siblings. So, she just wasn’t sure how to communicate with them, and had never seen the need to try before.

“Um, yes,” she finally prodded him to ask what he’d come for.

“Oh, uh, well- I heard Pappy talking with Mr. Roadhog. Ya know, about my brothers, and um…” He seemed to fidget a little, unsure how to say what he wanted.

Mei was definitely uneasy now, Junkrat had explained his relation to the two from the shuttle, an older brother, and an adopted older brother.

“I’m real sorry that they were mean to you. I don’t like when they’re mean to people,” the boy looked down, his eyes a bit glossy, and Mei was taken completely off guard. She glanced down at his missing arm, and his determined expression. Hog had told her how they’d ended up here, what had happened, a small world. A sad one today.

She was overwhelmed by the sweet selfless gesture of his apology, but he had taken her lack of reply with worry, filling in the space “I just, um- Dani told me you are Mr. Rat, and Mr. Hog’s pretty girlfriend, right? And they were sad because you got hurt, and they were mad because of what my brothers said to you. And, anyway, I just hope… they will still be friends with me, and you too. Is that okay?”

Mei’s heart pulled in a million different directions at full speed, but it was his little eyes that were tearing her apart. Poor baby!

“Of course! Oh, please, don’t worry. It’s not your fault, what they said,” she practically cooed at him, “you are so polite, and smart, and brave. I would be happy to be your friend. Your brother could learn from you!”

Mei felt her heart swell as the kid smiled again, looking up to her and over to her brother who had ignored the conversation, “you really think so?! You should tell him that! He thinks he doesn’t have to listen to me caus I’m little, but that doesn’t mean I’m not right sometimes, ya know?”

The little girl had run over to chime in, “Yeah! Kids are smart too. I can speak more languages than Pappy!” She held up three fingers proudly.

Mei was instantly taken in by the pair, delightfully cute, and they were right- smart for their age. Where were these kinds of children when she was their age!?

“So, what’s the third one?” Mei asked her softly.

“I speak Mandarin,” Dani answered in the language with impressive pronunciation.

“Oh! How much do you know?” Mei asked, elated to speak in her native tongue.
"I don’t speak it as well as the other two, but enough to get by. I’m not very good," Dani returned at her, to Mei’s delight.

“So modest, you’re practically a native, at that rate! It’s been awhile since I have been able to speak in my own language with someone who understands, so thank you!” Mei beamed at the child as Art watched, impressed, but lost.

“How many languages do you speak? I can only do two,” Art watched Mei with reverence.

“Hmm,” she thought about it in her head, “well Common of course. Then many dialects of Chinese. Japanese, English, and Korean, a bit of Russian and Hindi, and a few words in German and French if I concentrate.”

She’d been lucky to work with a diverse array of people during her scientific education, internships, and studies, many of which involved hours on end with nothing to do but chat with her colleagues, some who spoke only a bit of Common. Language barriers were a fun pastime to overcome.

Both of the children seemed beyond impressed by her long list of languages, and Art’s eye’s got big as he came up with an idea, “can you teach us? When we come to learn about mechanical engineering with Mr. Junkrat?”

“That’s my name, don’t wear it out!” Junkrat made his entrance, Pappy was clinging onto him like a backpack, and urging him forward with a gentle tap of his cane as if Rat was his steed. “Hey, cut it out back there old timer, or I’ll take you back downstairs!”

This just prompted him to kick his heels into the Junker’s side. Hog followed close behind, a very upset brit over his shoulder, backwards and arms crossed in a huff. Mei held back a giggle as he sat her down, and she did her best pouty limp stomp, coming over to sit on the cushy chair next to Mei’s couch.

“She’s gonna teach me Chinese!” The boy announced to Junkrat proudly.

“Oh, yeah?” He mussed the kids hair as he sat the elderly man down on the couch across from Mei. “Guess you got your Junker High courses all lined up, cept for ole’ professor Roadie. What you gonna teach?”

“Rocket science,” Roadhog grunted without missing a beat, all in a tone that led Mei to believe he wasn’t teasing, despite the fact it got a laugh from Rat and the kids.

“Well, I dunno about you, but I’m knackered,” Junkrat yawned, all sharp teeth and lean muscle as he stretched his limbs out, and then practically dead dropped to the ground with a laugh as the kids came over to sit in front of him, their backs against the couch as Junkrat looked up at Mei.

“You doin’ okay, Snowflake?” His expression dropped a bit when he had met hers, and she knew she must look wracked with the experience of her evening.

She wanted to laugh, or cry, but she could only hear the static in her mind answering him.

I want to vomit from having to be in the same room as that asshole from the shuttle again. I want to go somewhere else. I want to take these children away from this. To take all this away from them. I want to know, for sure, that you and Hog are alright- that your injuries aren’t worse than I can see. I want this nightmare to be over. I want to wake up from the daze of the one I just had. I want to be warm. Safe. To be… to be held.

“I’ll be fine,” she didn’t bother faking a smile. “Tell us what happened, what Mercy said, so we can
all get some sleep.”

“Oh, yeah- I caught Hog and Tracer up in the stairs,” he scratched at his head and looked over at the kids heavily, and then back to her, “They don’t know for sure, but those guys with the guns were spotted close, and she evacuated all the refugees. The archer and his boyfriend are holed up in the building a few miles off for recon. Apparently the Russian has been holding it down this entire time, and Mercy and Lucio are headed to them to get a better read on whatever that sound... feeling... thing was. All I can say is, she looked a bit frazzled, ya know- more than just someone who’s been up all night with this mess.”

Mei’s attention went to Hog as his boots cracked back over the shattered glass, and Junkrat rolled to get a look himself, “Where ya off to?”

“Gonna go find a north face window,” His voice rasped out, “I’ll take first watch.”

“I’ll relive ya in a few then. Take it easy Hoggie! Love ya!” He smiled an impish grin that split his face, all upside down and twisted from her point of view, and Hog’s.

An inaudible laugh rolled over hog’s belly, “love you, Rats.” Then he turned to lumber down the hall into the darkness.

Junkrat rolled back onto his side, facing Mei, and giggling himself into a happy little fit as he pumped his feet up and down, and the children joined him.

He was so bright. It made Mei feel warm, while at the same time it crawled through her viciously, to hear the words from them to each other. She hated herself for coveting the light she felt in their happy moments.

She didn’t want to hurt them with her feelings, and she thought she might have suppressed them somewhat. She could support those two as friends, care about them, find a way to have her more confusing feelings, and still be around them. She was good at pushing things back. She could survive this too.

**Liar.**

“Shut up,” she whispered to herself clenching her eyes shut, and bringing her hands to her ears.

“Huh?” Junkrat’s face popped back up into her view as her eyes opened with his voice, and she felt a tinge of pain in her side, “you say somethin’?”

"No, no, just talking to myself. Just a little pain, nothing to worry about,” she waved him off and forced a small smile onto her lips.

**Liar.**

“Alright, if you’re sure,” he put his head into his hand, propped up by his elbow, as the fingers on his free hand danced across his belly, “anyway, Pharah’s patrolling the ground floor and surrounding block, and Hog’s taking first watch, so until we find out more we should be safe here. Think we could all use a few winks! Miss time-traveler over there is already on the fast track to morning,” he pointed at Lena, who was limp in the chair, her head against her shoulder, and fast asleep in her cute outfit from their interrupted night out.

“Mmm,” Mei agreed, clenching her hands to keep them from trembling at her thoughts, “looks like Pappy, and the babysitter have drifted off as well. I haven't heard the other two chatting much, so maybe them as well, but I can’t see from here.”
Junkrat twisted his head and nodded, whispering back to her as he turned and pointed his chin to the kids, “them too. Should put um somewhere more comfy I think.”

Junkrat got up, and delicately lifted each of them in turn onto a strangely shaped oversized designer chair closeby that reminded her of a giant egg. Her heart fluttered to watch how delicate he was in handling them, wondered about his past, and when he’d been around children- he was just too good with them not to have some experience. It was a side of him she had never expected, but somehow- after getting to see him tonight, wasn’t surprised by.

She rolled over and faced the back of the couch on her side, hiding the warmth she knew had spread into her cheeks. The room got a bit dimmer as he turned out a few of the lights, and her eyes had started to adjust a bit when his voice startled her. So close to her ear.

“Don’t suppose you’d share the couch,” slouching over her until he was close enough to whisper, the smirk he was wearing apparent in his tone. He had let the back of his hand fall down onto the top of her shoulder with a warm heavy weight. A familiarity she wished she could indulge in.

She didn’t have to look at him to reach a hand up until it made contact with his face, hiding the shiver his touch had brought as she pushed him away slowly. His silent laugh came out in warm huffs onto her palm.

“Guess that’s a no?” He made a funny sound in his throat to hold back the laughter as the words mumbled into her hand. She took it away quickly to reach in front of her and toss him a couch cushion, which she heard him catch.

“Heh, guess this is good enough,” she heard it hit the ground on the floor right next to the couch, and his body follow- that boy was determined to hurt himself! “Still smells like yer hair.” He snickered low.

“Don’t be gross, Rat,” she smiled broadly as she buried her face into the cushion she had left; hoping she hid the expression from her words better than he had.

“Like ya mind,” he gave another tired little laugh, and a yawn, but then there was a long unsure pause. “You don’t do ya?”

“What?”

“Mind,” He whispered back, a bit urgently.

She snuffed out a tittering laugh in the pillow, “that’s a trick question, Junkrat. I’m not answering that.”

“Pshh,” he let the air escape through his teeth, and she felt the relief her answer had settled back into him as he pretended to mock her, “guess I’ll have to keep pestering ya, until you can tell me the truth then.”

She smiled again, this time rolling over to face him, scootching herself to the very edge so she could see him in the remaining light. He layed on his back, his hands woven together to support his head, and the cushion under his knees, but he turned to face her when he noticed her watching.

She saw his eyes on her too now, and for a few moments, they just simply looked at each other. Their eyes sweeping over the features of the person laying across from them, and for Mei, it felt soft. A quiet moment. Neither of them had anything to throw at the other. They both just wanted to look. To see.
She hung onto the moment. Wrapped herself into it.

She hoped the darkness hid her blush, she searched to see if he had one as well, a guilty swell rising in her belly. She still didn’t look away, nor did he, and the idea hit her to not be the first. To see how long he’d watch her, watching him, as they laid beside one another quietly in the dark. It was a thrill, and a panic, all at once. It shocked through her as his intense eyes stayed on her without fail, almost without blinking. She wondered if he had challenged himself the same.

She waited for him to break the contact, waited for him to feel awkward, or embarrassed for her, or repulsed by her. She waited watching as each time he blinked his eyes took just a bit longer to force themselves back open. Until finally, with one last glassy stare, his lids slipped shut and stayed that way. The edge of his mouth quirking up, and his breaths easing out.

She watched until his lips slowly parted, pulling away from one another to roll ever so slightly open as they tried to form tiny words from his dreaming mind. His pained, and eager expression made her wish she could read the shapes they made. The way his breaths came erratic in his chest, bruised above the forms of his sinew, and the angles of the bones they carried. The way they became little noises as his eyes began to wander beneath his lashes, little moans, little words.

Lips clicking apart, a syllable came as a breath from deep in his chest, stopping her heart as it slid over her. A rich, warm, pleading word.

“Mei.”

Chapter End Notes

A little pick me up after the last chapter- which of course I write just before they release the Ecopoint Antarctica map!! Though I'm happy my story doesn't contradict too many canon details- heck it even lines up with a few! I may make some minor edits to the chapter (i.e. Watchpoint to Ecopoint) but for the most part consider inconsistencies AU territory.

The next chapter will be Mei as well (and maybe a few after), but I'm happy to say I've filled a new notebook with pretty much the rest of the story! Now to edit, refine, and type! No estimates on final number of chapters though- I'm bad at figuring out handwritten vs typed length.

Anyhow, your words are like the syrup on my waffles, they make me feel sticky sweet! Thanks for all the continued feedback and support! Find me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus!
She sat up in a jolt. Holding her breath, and losing it all at once.

*Not for you. It's not for you. Stop lying to yourself. You're alone. You've surrounded yourself by those you have keep out of reach. Alone.*

She delicately put her feet on the ground next to Junkrat, trying to stand without losing it, and taking a step over his slender torso. She didn’t look back. She didn’t even walk. Her feet took her over the glass, and into the darkness.

*You’re all alone. You steal your happiness, you borrow it, and you are all alone.*

She found herself heading toward the north facing hallways. Maybe because she was a coward, but when she turned the corner to see the hole next to the control panel of a fancy door, now broken open, she felt relieved. The gap revealed an even fancier office waiting area, and she found her palms on the oversized ornate handles of real wooden doors beyond the reception desk, as tall as the vaulted ceiling. Real wood, solid. A whole tree for two doors. She pulled them open.

A window spanned the length of a massive office. It was sparsely appointed, but somehow still lavish to a degree she’d never really seen. The floor was some stone that swirled in dark warm creams that sparkled deeply, and the walls were brushed copper, with green onyx inlays patterned through it. It was just on the edge of gauche, but the masterful execution imbued a beauty in the craft of it alone.

Her attention was drawn to the desk, a solid white marble slab artfully carved, though it reminded her of a mausoleum, and Hog sat on top looking distantly out the window as she took him in. Watching how still and thoughtful he seemed.

“It’s snowing,” his voice filled the room, warm and husky, but he didn't turn to her. She heard the sound of ice shift, clinking on the edge of a crystal glass, and he held the rich amber contents of it out toward her, “it’s older than you.”

She walked to him, her heels clicking along the stone, and resonating with a pleasant sound. She lifted the heavy glass from his hand, and he finally turned his head to her, his mask lying next to him on the massive desk, he was lightly flushed from drinking. She didn’t break eye contact as she took a gentle sip, all caramel and leather, spice and easy warmth; it suited the man who had offered it.

“That really is something else. Why the ice?” She rolled the ball of it around the glass.

“Hmm,” he hummed as she handed it back, and he picked out the rounded ball with his fingers, sucking at it and then tossing it at the wall to his right shattering it into powder, “ya like it strong too, huh? The damned machine put it in.”

He pointed to a niche opened up in the wall, where a non sentient automated bartender was awaiting another order for some ridiculously aged spirit. She looked back up to him as his attention had drifted back outside the window, but he indicated the empty desktop space on his other side making room for her to join him. She noticed the discarded accoutrements he’d pushed off on the floor. All trinkets, no framed photos, or personal mementos.
Her eyes wandered to the flashy golden libation as it sparkled in the glass, held ever so delicately in hands that swallowed its size. Her gaze wandered up to his, as he looked sedate watching the snow fall outside. She shivered. From the cold. From actually getting a real look at his face this time.

**Handsome.**

A thought repeated, echoing through her mind as she realized she'd heard her voice say the same thing aloud in her delirium not too long ago, her color rising. She couldn't see herself doing that, maybe she'd imagined it, but she had also just realized she'd been smiling warmly up at Hog for an uncomfortable bit of time while studying his features.

*I wouldn't have. Right? Not that it's not...true, but...*

“Now that ya gotta better look, ya still think what you said earlier?” The question came from his pillowy lips, boldly answering her own— which this time she was sure she had kept to herself. She tried in vain not to turn red.

He took a sip from the glass, and then his hand was in front of her offering it up. She took it, swirling it around, and staring into it hopelessly mortified.

Yes. But...

“That’s a trick question. I’m not answering,” she gave a hard laugh at her own callback, even if he wouldn’t realize why, and drained a bit more of the glass than she’d intended.

An amused laugh shook over him too as she put the glass back in his hand. Both of them lingering their hold on it for just a second longer than needed with each subsequent pass while they continued to watch the snow through the window in silence now.

It was nice. A quiet, gentle moment in a very different way then she’d just had with Rat, and she had realized with each pass of the glass they had leaned more and more into each other. Nested into his side like she had been on their bed earlier when she’d been drying Rat’s hair, but unlike last time he didn’t move away. There wasn’t the same sense of hesitation.

Mei felt a gentle warmth on her cheeks that settled in like a blush, and she chose to blame it on the alcohol. She prided herself a bit on not being a lightweight, but tonight she felt it. An insistent heat in her stomach, and her head felt that lovely feeling you get when you’ve laughed too much. Like she’d been tickled.

It made her fidget, swinging her legs back and forth, and then she was up—heading to the window with a bit of a skip in her step.

*Is this how Junkrat feels all the time?*

Her gait proved less graceful when she realized how dizzy she was, and she had to put both hands against the window to steady herself. She leaned into it to look down over the edge, like a kid at the aquarium, nose squished up against the glass.

First she could see the darker things. The distant fires, the destruction, the roiling clouds against the still dark sky, but she couldn’t take it in. Instead she did what instinct dictates when you stand on a precipice.

“It’s so far down!” She giggled delighted at the view.

“Well yeah, we’re sixteen stories up,” Two large hands suddenly took her by the shoulder’s, tipping
her off balance ever so slightly from the shock, “so, careful not to FALL!”

“Ahhhhhh!” She flailed a little, embarrassingly, but he didn’t let her topple over, “HEY! That’s not nice!”

As she said it though she had started to laugh hysterically, her vision reeled around in her head, and she turned around to face him. He playfully let her wobble a few steps in between his closely floating hands before steadying her again; joining the laughter.

When he’d cautiously taken his hands away, she had used her free arm to slug him jokingly on the arm, to which he replied with equally joking fake pain.

“Ya got me!” He fell to one knee grabbing his arm as her hands wrapped around herself in renewed laughter.

It felt so nice to laugh. It felt nice to hear him laugh.

“I shall remember today as a great victory,” she declared, pumping a fist into the air only to immediately throw off her balance again, but this time it felt different. Sparks floating up from a fire through her vision as she flushed warm all over.

“Hey, hey, no more conquering, you don’t look so hot,” he didn’t bother standing, he was still well over her height even on his knees, but he did offer an arm for her to find purchase on. She clung to it in the tide that was sweeping her back out.

“That's funny, because,” she blinked away the closing darkness on the edges of her vision, “I feel very, very hot.”

She was distantly aware her whole body was covered in a dewey sweat. Then the pain. It built like a low hum, and then screamed through her side, radiating out and making her feel like her whole consciousness was vibrating.

She noticed his expression had shortly gone from playful to sober, and as she worked her way through her fading vision he quickly took charge, guiding her forward as she took her unavoidable spill.

Right into him.

Soft. He was so soft. And strong. Solid. He was all those things at once, and his shirt was cool over her fevered warmth. So she put her face onto it, into his shoulder, seeking the relief of him. The comfort of touch, and she gave into it easily.


And he gave. Oh, he gave it back, and she was elated, and terrified.

He let her stay, and he held her steady. Arm pulling her in, there on his knees, still and quiet. She draped onto him, head in the crook of his neck, body against his sloping chest, and her wobbly legs trembling beneath her. She felt his every breath as she rose and fell with it, as it rocked her, as his heartbeat reminded hers to go slow- even if his seemed quick too.

You aren’t allowed. It's not for you. You shouldn’t be here.

She held back all the tears of all the frightening things she was letting go of, forgetting, and throwing away. She held back the tears, because it was selfish, and stupid, and she knew better.
It’s not fair. I shouldn’t be here. I’m long gone.

Her whole body shivered violently from all the levels of pain that had wormed inside her in a moment she wouldn’t let herself have. Didn't feel she deserved.

“Are you alright?” The way his worry rolled into every syllable, reticent, but entirely obvious to those who knew. The way that knowing made her feel. It had endeared her more to him, evoked an even deeper shiver.

“I...I’m fine.”

Lie.

She struggled against his grip a bit, and he loosened it right away, but still hovered his arm in worry she’d fall back. Instead she sank down unable to support her weight on her legs anymore, and he joined her in sitting on the floor.

She rubbed her hands over her face, still warm, still wet with the sweat of her pain. Her panic. His concern stabbing through her, and her guilt at accepting the familiarity in his comfort. For using his kindness to be close. To be self indulgent. She couldn’t stop the trembling in her limbs.

“Are you cold? In pain?” His brow had furrowed, and his distressed look moved over her.

“Nothing I can’t live with,” she met his eyes with a weak look.

Lies.

“Is something hurting you then?” The question was bundled tightly into a tone that held back something. Something harsh, or pained, or dissatisfied. Something that put her on edge.

“I..um, no. Like I said, the pain isn’t too bad,” her body swayed where she sat, “I’m fine.”

Liar.

“That’s not what I meant,” his voice was palpable, she felt it rumble in her chest, and it propagated a new shiver for an entirely different kind of reason.

“Huh?” She tried to puzzle out what he had meant, what he was referring to.

“Why are you shivering?” The question had a severe edge to it, not in a threatening way, but it demanded an answer she wasn’t sure how to give. A curiosity she wasn’t sure she could satisfy, as he clarified further, “if you are alright, no pain, not cold. Why are you shivering?”

“I...I’ve,” she couldn’t look up at him, she didn’t know how, she wasn’t brave enough, “i have a lot on my mind, I guess.”

A sound escaped him as his body had tensed up violently, a reaction she wasn’t sure how to read. How her words had caused such a response. He still reached out to her when she’d started to loose her balance again. He’d still put a gentle hand on her, that engulfed her, that made her feel safe.

“Hey, uh...” Junkrat’s voice echoed from the door through the rich acoustics the room seemed to promote, “everything alright here? Heh.”

His laugh was weak, and her mind felt like she was looking through the rainy window on a train. Everything was moving too fast, blurred, with bright spots washing across her vision. Even with Hog’s body blocking her view of Rat, she could hear the cord that had plinked in his heart at seeing
them there on the ground. Intimately close in the space she’d stolen between them.

*I promised I wouldn’t bring them hurt. I don’t belong to this. Please, please, please. It’s only been a day. A night.*

She pleaded with herself to pull together, this was not her, she was not some useless emotional burden. She wouldn’t be to the two..

*Who I… I care about. Who I think I… I might…*

It hadn’t even been a day, despite the eternity that this particular span of time seemed to encompass. Here she was, hanging on a word- the word. So rarely given. The word belonging only to the dead now.

That word- it had only been pain for her. It was pain for her.

She tried to stand, but couldn’t. Everyone had moved fast, but no one could catch her, and she fell back into the window with a hollow thud. The same dull evocation as a bird crashing just the same, but at least she’d survive. She was fighting to survive.

Junkrat had rushed over. Whatever noise had plucked at the darker places in his heart had faded, and he was all awkward hovering. Lanky limbs making him feel like he towered above her as she searched him for something, something she could hold onto in her mind to absolve her guilt, as his arms hung in the air unsure what to do.

“Guess not,” he finally filled the prickling silence, “Hold tight, we gotcha, right Hog?”

Every time he said it, the words made her heart freeze in her chest. The meaning, the gesture, of it was like a spell from him. Like he’d cast something over her that could, in that very moment, make her feel like she was part of someone’s heart- safe, and cared for, and wanted. Part of a family.

Rat twisted his torso to take in the other man, finding his laugh again, as Hog worked his way back to standing. They both stood over her, with heavy concern, each offering their hands, and their support. Their very being radiated the sentiment, “we gotcha.”

When she was back on her feet they had helped her lean against the glass, and she saw Junkrat’s focus shift over her shoulder and out the window on the gentle flurry of snow. Well it had picked up a bit now- and patterns of frost swirled over the outside of the window reflecting what lights were still on across the city. What fires were yet to be extinguished. She shivered again, letting out a breath she could see in the room as the temperature dropped.

“You cold? Hurting? Everything okay?” Junkrat asked quickfire, his eyes coming back to focus on her, the same curious intensity as they had in their earlier staring contest in the waiting room down the hall.

“I’m fine. It’s not so bad, I’ll be alright, thank you.”

*Lie. Lies. Liar.*

Junkrat gave a sidelong glance to Hog, and a dismissive laugh, “she serious?”

“Same BS she’s been trying to feed me since she came in,” he shrugged as they ignored her like she wasn’t there, “least she’s lying consistently, I guess.”

“I...I’m not lying! I told you, it's just a lot, and…” her eyes darted in a way that highlighted the flighty
pace of her speech, “please, it’s nothing to worry you both over.”

The look she pointed at them begged with a quiet pain.

*Please, I can’t. I can’t survive it right now.*

“Hey, you heard what I said,” Junkrat leaned in a little closer, but tried not to crowd her, his eyes pleading against her own, “just now, and when you were hurt, and on the shuttle too. We gotcha. Just like you’ve had us. It means more than helping you up when ya fall, ya know. Heh, well I mean metaphorically that works too, I guess, but you know what I mean. See I know some of them five credit words too!”

Junkrat crossed his prosthetic arm over his chest, rubbing at his other as it hung nervously at his side, and Hog resonated with agreement.

“So, If ya wanna, uh, you know-talk or whatever...we’re here for ya,” Rat didn’t seem to be able to look up from his feet, but she could see his eyes searching for the right words, “I get it, sometimes you gotta fight this stuff out on your own, but it can help to get it off yer chest. So, like before- if ya need us, we got your back, yeah?”

His words felt like a distant hope, a long shot, like a smile in a memory. It teased her with the closeness of an embrace, the one she’d wanted, and needed since… since she’d woken up alone.

She just wanted to to keep the destruction in her from spreading. To keep the shards close, but they kept falling away, and she didn’t have enough arms to carry them. Alone. She was broken, and she wanted something to twine around the shattered pieces. She was so exhausted of keeping herself together.

“I...I’m fine.”

A sound splintered through her consciousness. A pop, loud as a gunshot, and then a crunch. Like lightning had split apart her mind, frozen in a pattern like shattered glass across everything she felt, but held in place- just so. The sound was fissuring glaciers, a pressure inside her, holding against time.

A scraping frozen wind slid across the window outside, and her eyes were filled with the flashing red emergency lights of a building whose bones groaned in the rising wind. Familiar.

*You will not cry. You will not. No one can see it, no one can see what it’s done to you, and you will not cry.*

“Hey, look,” Junkrat’s voice was crystal clear, firm, she rolled her head against the glass to face him as his volume rose, “I told you, ya don’t gotta talk about it, and if you don’t wanna open up- fine! I get it. We all got our ghosts, but ya don't have’ta...to lie neither!”

She’d never seen it before. His true, justified, anger. How his raised voice was frightening, but not because she feared him- she feared his disappointment, dissolution, his denial. For them to be done with her, abandon her, because she’d hurt him with her pain- all her pain. The pain that wanted him, and wanted Hog, and the old pain too, that hadn’t had time to heal.

*You’re right. Let me push myself out. I don’t deserve your kindness. I’m not who you think I am. I’m no good. I’ve failed. I will hurt you. It’s you who won’t survive me. I can’t repeat history*

“I...I’m,” she pushed herself up from against the window, her eyes warm and heavy, “so sorry, so, so sorry. I didn’t- I never intended to... I just, need some air.”
She pushed past them. She didn’t look back. She didn’t even walk. She was getting better at running away.

She’d barely heard them call out to her as her feet took her through the wooden doors, and into the hall. She took off, turning in any direction that had a wall to lean against. His words left her ready to fall apart, her tight hold on her memories unraveling. Her eyes remembering the heaving sobs she’d once cried into the empty quiet of Antarctica, and the way it had torn her to shreds the last time she’d let go. How much time it took her to build herself back up, and she had plenty of that, all alone. Waiting.

The spasming breaths in her chest became hiccups, her huffing effort to hold back finally succumbing to the pressure inside. She pressed her hand into her mouth, painfully against her teeth, to buy herself a few more moments. To find a place to hide away. To fall apart.

Finally an unlocked door, and she ducked inside a much smaller office area, a few scattered desks covered in sheets, and surrounded by boxes. Unused, with another large window that filled the room with the crushing sight of the crippled city. Her hand slammed against the button to close the door as she sank against the wall.

The first painful lament bursting out, “why? Why? What is wrong with me?!”

They will come looking for you. They can’t find you like this. Pull it together.

She sucked in hard breaths, holding them in her ribs with vivid pain. Her racing heartbeat made much more apparent by the denial of her burning lungs in their pleas to let go.

It took a while to control her breaths, but just in time, she heard them calling her name in the hall. Passing by as she held her quiet. She wasn’t ready. She had too much pain left to face them. She cared too much to force it on them.

If I do truly care about them, I should stop this. I have to.

Her feelings for one, already betrayed her feeling for the other, and acting on those feelings with either of them asked them to betray each other. Her feelings were only hurt. Stolen moments for selfish desire.

She wouldn’t introduce that pain to them, if she cared, she’d continue to be happy for them. It meant not hurting them.

Not putting my hurt on them, my feelings, my selfish infatuation. Not inviting that into their lives. It means I can’t…love…them even if I do.

To love them means letting go, and she knew it meant letting go of her feelings or letting go of them. For their sake. For her own. Her heart struggled into the thought, of pushing it out, pushing them away. It was, after all, just another form of pain.

What if I can’t let go? Is it selfish? To try. Of course it is. I want it all- and I don’t want to loose any of it. Ha! Love is sacrifice, and my heart is choosing greed.

She started to weep in earnest now. Whimpering little sobs. A growing lamentation. A keening wail, mourning something that never was, and she knew couldn't be. To love something that love would destroy.

She wished she could be back in the office with them. With Hog, and with Junkrat, and they could just be together. She could come to the door, a guest, and throw down inhibitions, and put the weight
inside her away. Just leave it here. She could be safe with them, in the dark, in the warmth of what was burning up inside her. Knowing that they’re the ones she wants. That it’s written on her skin as it prickles at the thought. Even if it’s a trespass. Even if she finds herself alone when she goes through the door again. Stealing a moment, laying down her identity, her life- and just coming inside. Just for now. Until the morning.

Chapter End Notes

Well, it's been a rough week, but the next few chapters are gonna be fun! Well, in a way- you'll see! I'm trying to release chapters as I type and edit them from the notebook their written out in, so hopefully I can update again sometime mid to late this week, so keep an eye out!

Thank you again to all the lovely people who have stuck with this story so far, and for those just joining and reaching this point. All your feedback means so much to me! Your comments are like the paint on my palette, they fill me with hues of inspiration! :D Thank you so much for each and every one! <3 Find me on tumblr @IceyJoreadus
Meant to Live in Sin

Chapter Notes

Warning: (consensual) Sexual Content
*if you'd like details skip to endnotes*

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Roadhog was furious, and distraught.

Mei was being an idiot, she was injured, and she could get hurt even more, and Rat would blame himself. Jamison who opened up, and worried, and wanted her to be safe, to be happy- and she lied to him, to them. He would blame himself. She closed Rat out. What a luxury to even have! To be able to decline, to reject. Yet she had no idea. She didn’t know how lucky she was to have a chance to choose to withdraw from a side of Junkrat that Hog had rarely had the chance to see. To see the part that was Jamison, the man, and not the treasure, or the explosives, or the survivalist scavenger. And she ran away, and Rat would blame himself. Jamison would blame himself. Hog was furious.

The Snowflake thought she was protecting them, from her injury, from the responsibility of her care, and she obviously saw herself as a burden. The lil’ Snowflake who had opened up, and worried, and wanted them to be safe, to be happy- and yet she lied. Because she blamed herself. She had closed them out. He though they hadn’t expected much. To give, and in turn be accepted. Yet they had no idea. They hadn’t realized how lucky they had been, to have come so close to seeing a part of her that laid beyond her sunny exterior, unexplored by anyone. To see a part of Mei, the woman, and not the scientist, or the technology she developed, or the mask of social engineering she put on to survive. Yet she had run away, because she blames herself for it. She didn’t want to put it on them. Hog was distraught.

“Where is she, Hog? We gotta find her,” Rat’s voice was frenzied as he ran down the hall after her, but this place was a maze.

She didn’t want to be found. They had no luck

“Rat, come back with me,” Hog stopped, he turned without waiting for Rat to answer, knowing he would counter.

Aaannnnndd...

“Hog, what are you doing. Lucio says to watch her. What if she hurts herself?!”

He loved the man, but he was easy to read.

“She might need her space, but what if she came back?” He didn’t bother turning, waiting for the realization to hit him.

Junkrat’s steps spun in the hall, all thump clacks, until he’d finally made up his mind, and caught up with Hog with his usual dramatics. He knew better than to take the bait. They walked in silence all the way back to the fancy office, Rat’s hangdog posture giving Hog a bit of a laugh when he’d finally seen him.
“Oi! It ain’t funny! I’m worried, Hog!”

“I am too, Rat, but I also know she’ll find us when she’s ready. I know she can take care of herself, and she’ll be fine,” He walked to the far wall, with the weird little disembodied robot arm sticking out, and asked it for a few new drinks, “neat.”

He handed one to Rat, who held the glass with distaste, “you don’t know that Roadie. Ya don’t…”

Hog tapped his glass to the one in the lithe man’s metal hand, “I do. She won’t leave this floor. She’s smart, I’m sure she’ll be safe. I’m worried too Rat, but we can’t force her to be around us.”

Hog tipped the bottom of his glass up and took down the tumbler of scotch in one smooth dreg. A glass of aged liquid with a label that made it worth it’s weight in gold. Rat sniffed at his glass and crinkled his nose, turning it over and dumping the contents on the glimmering stone floor.

“Ya know I don’t like that swill,” Junkrat sneered at the wet spot.

Hog shrugged, tossing his glass across the huge room, as he had earlier with the ice, to let out some steam, “figured you’d try it, seein’ as it’s worth about as much as that car you wanted the other day.”

Rat looked a bit regrettably at the floor, but it didn’t take the sour expression away, “swill is swill, don’t like bitter. Don’t need to burn me insides anymore than I have already.”

They both ended up wandering closer to the windows, a strange fidgety silence forming between them. Hog knew what he needed to say. That it needed to be said now, because things were turning pretty out of hand, and well- he wanted to have the chance. Just in case.

I mean, they’d said it. They’d said, ‘love’. For them, it was simple, and huge. This expressing your feelings thing was all new. All bright and shiny new, and it was wonderful, and scary, and now he knew there was a new feeling he couldn’t let sit in his gut, but that didn’t make it any easier to know how to let it out. A few thousand dollars worth of scotch didn’t make a bad start though.

“Oh, Hog?”

Well good goddamn, he beat me to it, didn’t he? That little shit.

“Yeah, Rat?”

“I think I need to get some stuff of me chest, since all we got is waitin’, figure it’s as good a time as any, and I’ve been doin’ some thinkin’,” Rat rested his metal forearm against the window, peering outside thoughtfully, leaning his weight into it.

“Uh, oh. We all know where that goes, you an’ thinkin’,” he teased.

“Oi! I’m serious, Hoggie,” He turned to give a whine, and a sort of begging look.

“Yeah, I know,” he stood next to Rat, back against the glass, “I got some stuff to say too, but you go on ahead first. We both know it’ll work better that way.”

Junkrat rolled his forehead along the glass to give him a quick glance, but it seemed neither of them really felt much like making eye contact.

“I, uh, I know we don’t talk about this stuff,” He made a fist with the arm on the window, tapping it a couple of times from his frustration in finding the right words, “hell, we don’t talk about any stuff too much, huh?”
They both chuckled, the sound layering over itself as it bounced around this rich boy playpen of an office. Hog knew it was best to just let Rat do most of the talkin’, until it got to be his turn to say something, by that point he’d only need to fill in his bit. Neither of them were what you’d call stelar communicators, but Hog knew Rat’s heart was always in the right place. It had made him always want to make sure his was too.

“Anyway, so... I know earlier, we did the thing. We said the thing,” He fidgeted, unsure if it was something Hog wanted as much as he seemed to.

“I love you, Rats. I’m not afraid to say it. I’m not afraid to talk about it,” Hog’s voice was the smooth and even to Junkrat’s jittery all over the place train of thought. “I am who I am, but that feelin’ has been there for a long long while. Enough that it don’t change much to say it now - specially if it hurt to not say it then. I can make up for it. If it makes ya happy.”

“I love you, Hogs. And It’s not like I ever went out of me way before t’day to say it myself,” Junkrat pushed himself up off the window, adjusting his position a few times before settling back the same, just against the opposite arm, “even though the feeling has been there for a long haul now for me too, ya know. I didn't realize how much I wanted to hear it, if I'm bein’ honest here, ‘til I thought you might not say it back earlier.”

Hog felt a sharpness around that last statement, a fear that hurt to have been the cause of. That shamed him to be the cause of. He’d been with Rat for a while, he’d cared about Rat for an even longer while, longer than he would have admitted before, even if he realized how silly that was now.

“Rats, I’ve wanted to be with you since the first run we did together, you know that don’t you?” He turned to face him now, standing behind the spitfire of a man, who he loved; who he’d loved since the first damn thing he saw that asshole go and blow up.

“Wh..what?” Junkrat picked up his head, straightened up his posture, looking over his shoulder at Hog.

“I’m a simple man. I know what I like. I know what makes me happy. I knew before the crisis, and I damn well did after,” he put a hand on the glass next to Rat’s elbow, “I always know what I want, Rat.”

Hog moved himself around Junkrat, pressing the small frame of him into the glass, eliciting a wanting sound from his slender throat. He pinned Junkrat into the window with his other hand, surrounding him, engulfing him in the narrow space he afforded.

“And I get it. I got it,” he pressed in, pushing Rat against the window, and Rat pushed back, finding the yearning that had awakened between them, “and what I wanted was you, from day fucking one, Junkrat, Jamison Fawkes.”

**Well, so much for letting him talk.**

“Yeah, I, uh...I had a thing for you too, after that one,” Rat’s words were distracted by a pressing want, stuttering through his sentences at Hog’s attentions, “you were, oh...you were BIG, haha, and you knew yer shit. You got it done, and I wanted you to get me done, but ya rode somethin’ else out-in style might I add, the bike was part of the appeal. So before I could stop ya, you were gone, I was sure I wasn’t ever gonna see you...ah..again.”

“Hmm,” Hog hummed into the back of Rat’s neck, and his mouth blazed a trail, finding its way to the end of his shoulder, “Then, there I was, and I bet you got excited just seein’ me ride up on me bike again. Just like now? Hmm?”
Hog teased a hand around the front of the shivering mass of a man, Rat melting into him as he tried to keep his balance. Screw his composure, it was too far gone to keep, but Rat was fighting hard not to lose his - not completely. Not yet. He knew how Hog worked, and how to work him. It’s part of what made them so electric together, and if we’re being honest, all this talk - it was kinda doin’ it for them both as far as Hog could tell. It felt good to let go in more ways than one.

“I...uh. Oh man, that’s the spot!” Junkrat trailed off at his touch, and Hog withdrew his hand, and gave him a firm bite on the shoulder, causing Rat to arch up into him.

“Stay on topic, Rats, I wanna hear the rest.” Hog growled over his shoulder, and Rat practically purrred into the warning it implied.

“Might as well have thrown myself at ya on those next two runs, ya know, and not...not...ah ah...word,” Junkrat took the arm he wasn’t leaning on and twisted it back to grab hold of anything he could find on Hog, pulling him in hopefully, “not a second glance! I had to fucking finish myself in the damn trunk of that junked out car I was hidin’ in, when we got pinned down in damn Slag Din territory, remember? “

“Guess it’s once a beggar always a beggar, hmm,” Hog pulled away from Rat’s insistence, denying his famous neediness, feeding his revelry in denial, “but that was one hell of a shit day. Did ya really sit stewin’ in your own mess over me?”

“It’d been hours, I could see ya layin’ low in that van across from me through a rusted out ho...ho..hole, damn man oh..fuck,” Hog had continued his exploration of Junkrat’s midsection, working his way down, down, “I uh...I...fuck damn, slow down, yeah...Ok. So I couldn’t stop thinkin’ dirty stuff when I was bored. Just watching you for ho...hours on end. Thinkin’ about stuff. Was the fuckin worst after I came, realized I was stuck in that oven with the sticky mess for the rest of however long.”

“That why I couldn't track you down when it was over? Caus, ya know, I would’a gone for a good root after all that, heh!” Hog’s mouth worked its way back to Rat’s neck, which he tilted his head to expose, as Hog ran his teeth along the delicate skin there.

“You know I like a do it myself approach,” his whisper sent a little chill down Junkrat's spine.

“No. No fair..to tell me now,” he moaned out, unable to whine through the sensations he was enjoying, “also, why the fuck did it take two more years before anything happened?”

Hog had finally found his way around to regions equally glad to find him there, and Junkrat ground his hips to oblige his searching, rising to meet his hand. Rat’s hand left Hog’s side to try and find his fly, but it wasn’t long before he had both of Rat’s hands in his grip, pinned away against the window for safekeeping.

“Don’t do one night stands. Never did. Didn’t see a point in starting then, and that's all I figured it’d amount to before it actually happened,” Hog worked the first button open on Junkrat, who sighed out a delicious sound, “then I heard about the treasure, figured it was as good an excuse as any to see if we could do somethin’ together long term. Figured you could use the help either way, and if nothing happened I’d make some cash. If so, then I’d, well, you know…”

Hog released the second button, and reached inside, working his first two fingers behind the waistband and exploring the warm wanting darkness inside.
“I remember that pp..ppp..ppah part,” Junkrat held still, not wanting to stop what Hog was doing for him by making the wrong move, but that was the game. Every move could be wrong, and it was Hog’s whim that dictated it. Hand retreating, and Rat’s sound’s turning delightfully needy.

“Yeah, it was when I knew I’d made a mistake,” Hog smiled as he felt the man under him deflate a bit, his hopeful little sounds taking on a sad tinge, and Hog let him flounder in it for a bit. Teasing kisses into his neck, before whispering near his ear, “that I waited so long.”

A moan peeled out from Rat’s throat as Hog’s hand had found it’s way back into his waistline, opening the rest of the buttons, and starting to work with purpose now. There wasn’t much point in talking, and Hog was happy to focus on his task.

Happy to reminisce about the first time, happy to know he could still draw out the hungry wanting sounds from the pliable younger man whose appetite he was happy to continue to satisfy, who left him sated in return.

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Junkrat fought to stay still, to not squirm out of Hog’s attentive grasp, as the man’s huge hands weaved magic across his body. He needed the tension relief. He needed to not think for just a few more moments before he knew he’d have to find heavy words on his tongue instead of Hog’s finger’s as they hooked into his mouth.

He tried to focus on something to slow himself, to enjoy the sensation, but if anything it sent him back into the memory of their first time. Maybe caus they were talking about it, maybe because doing it against a window was hot as fuck, and well...windows didn’t have anything to do with the first time, but there had been a bit of a common element.

“Remember, how I made you come back then, on that night?” Hog’s deep voice hummed near his ear, sending him closer and closer as the giant hand engulfing him found it’s rhythm.

Rat could do nothing but nod.

“No, tell me,” Hog slowed with his order, and Junkrat let a breath out that he’d been holding as his mind wrapped itself into the growing feeling in his core.

“You, you…” He was in pieces, he was exhausted, wrecked, worried even now, anxious about what was coming, especially since it was nearly him, “used your..your hands. Just like this. Ugh, uhm…”

When Hog teased it was quicker now, less time for the build to drop off, creating an overwhelming loop as he spiraled back up and up with every new cycle of retreat and reinitiation.

“Tell me what made you come then,” Hog’s voice was close to his ears, husky rumbling demands warm over his face.

He was going to come from thinking about it.

“You put my hand...my...hand…” it was hard to get anything out now, all he wanted to do was release the sensation rising inside him, “on your cock, and told me… ya told me, if I didn’t come in..in.. ah..ah!”
"If you don’t come for me in ten seconds, you little shit," Hog brought Rat’s hand down behind him, and right down around something he had only imagined before. Now there it was in his hand, and it felt fucking ridiculous huge. Scary fucking shit huge. Roadhog huge.

Not that it wasn’t, that fucker is a sight to behold, but there was something about being right on the edge. Feeling something blind that you’ve only ever fantasized about, and for the first time. It left your mind imagining monsters, and making sure you remember safe words.

“If you don’t scream for me in... nine, I may lose my patience,” Hog’s hand’s worked at Rat as he ticked down the first number, and the threat he faced found it’s way between his thighs, working forward and pulling back slowly, “and, if I’m not careful...eight, I might slip. So, you best hurry up...seven.”

A part of him wished he could have held on, to see if Hog would make good on the threat, hoping he would. it was only ten seconds, all counted down in that voice- that fucking ocean deep voice he’d finished himself to thinking about enough times that it was a reflex.

The memory played out just like he had now- finished. Hog’s hand’s finding all the most sensitive places to focus on as he came back down from the fulfillment of it. Keeping him on the edge even after he’d long leapt off.

Years always changed things, and nothing would be like the first, but this had been damn close. It always left Rat wanting more, despite being completely drained. He was addicted to what Hog did for him, and he always tried his hardest to be the most enjoyable partner he could in return.

He was weak, wobbly, and exhausted, but he was determined. He turned to Hog, to display the mess he’d made of him. To show him how eager he was to return the favour, running his tongue over his sharp smile.

“Not tonight,” Hog leaned in and kissed him, gently, but Junkrat was greedy when it came to affection- and he pressed himself into the man who’d always left him twitching and blissed.

“I love you,” Hog’s voice was kinda soft. Nostalgic, and just...happy.

I love this man. I love him so much.

“I love you, too.” Junkrat’s heart did somersaults, and his mind pushed off into the stream of easy floating feelings that was post orgasm clarity.

And caus I love him- I gotta tell him.

They settled in, Hog laying down on his back as his body calmed, and Rat resting against the side of his belly, tucked into an arm that surrounded him. Junkrat watched the snow coming down, coating the buildings, and ledges in white. Hog’s look had fallen distant in the reflection he could see, looking up at nothing in particular.

“I’m happy, ya know, that ya told me. Just nice to know you're wanted, we’re wanted. That I’m not just some golden ticket you gotta keep happy, or whatever,” Rat reached up to scratch his head and found some sort of debris there, picking it out, and hanging his hands between his knees to twirl it idly. “Just, I don’t know what I’d do without ya.”

He turned over the paper or whatever it was he’d pulled out of his hair, and Hog seemed content to listen. Rat could tell when he was engaged. When he was pretending. Right now, Rat had his full attention, rambles and all.
“Ya know, I don’t mean like, I’d miss what ya can do for me. Like a bodyguard, or a guy who owns a sweet bike, or ya know- what just happened. Not saying I wouldn’t miss that stuff either, just not why I’d be kinda lost without ya.” He wished he had something better to occupy his hands, something to help his restless nervous neuroticisms.

He let his head fall back into Hog’s belly. His thoughts drifted to the Snowflake, realizing he’s glad she hadn’t walked in on them, caus he’s pretty sure he would’a died of embarrassment. People didn’t really seem to readily assume that he’s kinda a private person, but you can be loud and still not all about everyone knowing everything about you. Anyway, he thought so.

Guess that’s why we’re just gettin’ around to talkin’ about all this.

“I mean, I would miss you. YOU. Ya know. If you weren’t here I don’t think I could really ever be able to feel enough. I think it would kill somethin’ in me, and I’d never be right again. Er…less right than usual.” He laughed at his own expense, and Hog gave him a single humoured grunt.

Then they waited again. Rat knew they were waiting. Both of um. He was sure of it now. Somehow that eased his mind just enough.

“Hog I got something to tell ya, and I can’t,” He waved his hands around as if he might grab the nerve to finish the thought from the air, or the right words, “I can’t figure out a way that isn’t bullshit, half truth. Or just plain ole’ shit, straight up.”

“Yeah,” Hog’s reply came in a tone that said he felt the same, that Hog was going to hurt him too. That’s where this was heading. Good talk, good sex, heartbreaking tragedy.

“Hog...Mako, I love you. I do. I love our past. I love what we got going now. I love what you do to me when I look at ya, and when I think about ya. How it makes me feel to get to be the one who actually knows you, ya get me? Like, know you, you- and not the guy that scares people shitless,” Rat was nervous but Hog let a good laugh out at that, the kind that made him feel giddy inside just to hear, “I mean, ya still give me the chills- but I know ya good enough now that it’s hard to be scared of ya. I feel like you’re the only one that’ll ever make me feel the way I do about you.”

There was a dead space in the air, a silence of thoughts, and restlessness. It lingered stale for long moments before it was moved by words once more.

“That’s a good way to put it,” Hog sighed out, “You’re the only one that makes me feel like I feel for you, too.”

“Yeah? I’m glad then. That’s something worth fighting through this shit for,” He sat up even more rigid now, starting to see his breath in the cold air, shivering, “then, there’s this other shit. This confusing, painful, crap. Stuff ya gotta think on, and question yourself about. We both know that’s not something we’re aces at.”

“Hmm,” He felt the resigned agreement vibrate through Hog.

“So yeah, I guess I gotta just, ya know- just say it,” he felt so disoriented, stumbling through his words, “and no matter what, that stuff about you, and us- I still mean it, and it's still true. It always will be. And, I’m not saying this to hurt you, but caus if I don’t say it I’m hurtin’ us both- so…”

There was a silence, like the atmosphere held its breath for him, as if, for this second, what he said might change the world if the words came just right.

“I have this...this relentless feelin’. Like when ya said- you know what you like? What ya want? It’s like that, and I can’t shake it, even though I feel like it’s probably wrong to even have it. Like I’ll
lose everything if I let it out, but it just keeps working its way up no matter how deep I bury it. The shit thing is, I don’t need it, I got everything I need already- so why is it there Hog?!”

He pulled at his hair, put his head between his knees all curled up into himself.

He was about to continue when Hog spoke, his voice hard and distant. Finishing Rat’s thoughts, but with his own instead, "why is it when I already care for someone, when I’m fulfilled by him, when I already love someone, wholely. Why is there some new place inside me when I thought I was full, Rat? When I still feel complete, how is it that I can still want? Why is it that I have feelings for someone else?"

“feelings for someone else.”

Oh, fuck. It hurts.

It hurts so fucking much.

What's wrong with me? Why can't I breath? Why can’t I see?

Fuck. Fuck. Who? Why?

Junkrat took a few nervous breaths, not knowing how to continue, but needing to push through it. Needing to understand all of it. Why he felt this way, why Hog’s words hurt him, why his own feelings hurt him. His mind churned behind a distant expression.

I’m going to hurt him too, aren’t I? Just like this. I’m going to hurt him back, and I don’t want to. Even though this feels like dying, and I’m angry. I don’t wanna hurt him back. No one should ever feel like this. But I can’t, caus it would hurt worse to not tell him.

“I...I’m not sure what to say, fuck Hog. That hurts so damn bad,” Rat was dazed, but he saw Mako, his red eyes- tears falling into his messy hair.

“Yeah, Rat. It does,” the sparkling trails on his cheek rippled with new floods, “I don’t think I ever said a single more painful thing.”

I don’t think I could hear a single more painful thing. Or have to say it back.

“Who?”

He knew. He had to know, but he didn’t want to, because he was going to hurt Mako just the same.

“I saw, and I knew. I wanted. I still want,” Mako sat up, his pained eyes looking into Rat’s, “I want you. I want Mei.”

Mei.

He felt like his insides were floating, like he was sitting outside himself. They were haunted by the same feeling, and yet it still burned through Junkrat’s heart.

Why? Am I not enough? Do you not want me anymore? What does she give you, I’ll find a way to give it, because I can’t share you. I don’t want to share your heart!!

“Fuck,” Rat’s hand clawed into his face, wishing he could rend the thoughts from his mind.

Wishing he could tear out the paradoxical jealous hurt, because he knew the reasons why he had these feelings. Why, just maybe, they weren’t wrong, because he knew- HE KNEW- that he loved
Hog with all his heart, and he should understand. He would forgive him for this thing he can’t stop- and he’d tried. This thing that doesn’t change anything about how he feels. Not about Hog. Just about her. How he felt about her. How they both do, obviously.

Mako waited, he waited and watched, and Rat realized- Hog already knew. Just like he had already known who it was when Hog had said it. Why it was.

“Why does it hurt, Mako?” He almost whimpered out, his hand going to rest over his chest without thinking.

“I dunno, but it does, doesn’t it? It hurts fucking bad, Rats.”

He needed to say it out loud. It wasn’t fair. To have the same pain, and be the only one of them that had to hurt from the words. From actually saying them. He had to for him. For Mako. For her.

“I want her. I want Mei. I want her with all me heart, like I want you, and yet I feel torn apart when you say it. I feel torn apart to say it to you. What a fucked up thing, Hogs,” he drifted into despondency.

There was a dark, heavy, silence.

The sound of snow pipped against the glass, patterning harder now, and everything was wrong.

He wanted Hog to hold him, he wanted Hog’s love, his affection. Even after he had just experienced this pain Hog was part of making him feel. He wanted Hog’s comfort for it. Even after one of the most romantic physical connections they’d ever had, he needed proof, he needed reassurance. Even if it was from the one person capable of hurting him as much as this was hurting now.

He felt fragile.

Part of him was repulsed by Hog’s words. Hog who loved someone else. Hog who wanted someone like he had wanted Rat, even if it was different, even if no one could ever be him to Hog. Even if Hog still wanted him, the same, with the same feelings undiminished. No one could ever be the person that Hog loves like Hog loves Junkrat. Like Hog wants him.

Right?

Yet Hog wants someone else, and he feels like he might never want to look at him again.

He does anyway. They look at each other. Torn in half. They are both severed along the same margin, the same doubts, and insecurities plague them like something broken behind their eyes.

And somehow, through all this, the only thing he can think. The only words in his mind. In his heart.

“I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

He loves this man.

And it feels warm, and less like a hole inside, and more like a bridge. An understanding growing, and a retreating fear. Retreating self doubt, self hate, loss. He repeats his reasons in his head, he says it until the words are bold, and the doubt is gone, and his love is still true. He wants Hog. He wants Mei. He loves her. He loves this man.

He loves two people.
He’s frightened, and so is Hog. It’s not hard to feel they both just suffered the same thing, and they are both coming to terms with it at their own speed. They are both realizing all the pain that is going to lie ahead, no matter what the outcome, because love is difficult and scary, and it’s a struggle. Shit, if anyone knows it’s them. And he’s willing, because it’s worth it, because he loves two people.

Maybe two people can love him back.

And he’s hurting, and he knows there is still so much to say, so much to think about, but he’s not broken. He’s not split apart, or missing out. They may have felt broken, but they are whole. They might have been doubtful, but now they are sure. They were insecure, but together they know they have nothing to fear. He has nothing to fear, because maybe two people can love him back.

Maybe three people could love together.

He sees it in Hog’s eyes, like a truth. Like a mirror. The idea of someone he loves, being in love with someone else he loves. What’s surprising? What’s hurtful? Where’s the wrong in it? If he loves two people, and two people can love him, and those two people love each other. He could be content to lay himself down into that happiness and slip away. It’s more love than he ever thought he could have deserved, or could have felt, or understood. It was indulgent, and proud, and jealous with want, with lust. It was overwhelming, and perfect, and hungry. It was starving. And yeah, maybe that was sinful, that greedy hope that maybe three people could love together, but maybe...

It was a sin he could live with.

Chapter End Notes

warnings expanded: this chapter contains sexual acts, all of which are written with the intent of being consensual. These includemasturbation, handjobs, thigh sex, pinning against walls, biting, teasing, and if I missed something you’d like me to add I will.

Endnotes: Guess who had a glass of champagne, and wrote smut- this gal! That's who! So uh, not sure if this is the smut people expected first, but...uh, yeah that probably will happen also so dont fret. Please forgive the vagueness, I have my reasons, and also I am new to writing naughty things, this being only my second time. So approaching it this way made it easier. Anyhow I hope you enjoyed the rollercoaster that was this chapter! :D

Comments are like finding cash in the dryer after a load of laundry- it makes me feel rich! Thank you for continuing to leave all the awesome and kind feedback! You can find me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus!
Hog watched Junkrat as he twisted around, until Rat could fling himself forward into his embrace, and for a long while they just held each other. It was a culmination of all the feelings the last tiny span of time had laid onto them. Lust, and release, crushing weight and floating freedom. It felt good to hold him close, and remember what made all this worth it.

Then it hit him. What could happen. The worst case, the future, the struggle.

*She will not love you back. She will not love him back. Or she will- and I’ll have his heart, but never hers, and I will only be able to watch a happiness I wish I had too. Or if she loved me, and not him, and how I would want to do that to them. To hurt them so I could love them both. To not be able to stop it.*

“Hog, do you think…” Rat’s voice trailed off into the cold room.

Hog felt the rest of the question, he knew it, “think it could work?”

“What if… if she only,” Rat started to choke up a little, “ya know, only liked one of us that way? Or neither, and she didn’t wanna be ‘round us no more.”

“Hmmm,” his chesty noise carried the ugly truth of knowing they had both gone down the same path of fear in their minds.

“I don’t wanna hurt her either Hoggie,” Rat let himself fall forward back into Hog.

He brought his hand up to find Rat’s boney shoulder blades with a gentle touch, resting across him, and drawing him in.

“Where do we go from here?” Rat mumbled into his broad stomach.

Hog took a deep breath, and let it out from his nose, the air escaping caused Junkrat’s hair to tussle in the downdraft. He let his deep voice boom into the ear that Rat had pressed flat against his ribs, “I dunno, but we gotta talk it out. We gotta do it together.”

“Hmmm,” Rat stole his typical short form answer to anything, “should we tell her?”

“How,” Hog gave a laugh, “do you think that would go?”

“Pssh, not even gonna pretend to know, but based on what I feel like I know about her so far- not well,” Rat put both hands in the air balancing by his head on Hog. “And isn’t that just the shit of it? What I know. How long I’ve know- that we’ve know her. We’re both here tryn’ to figure out how to throw ourselves out in the cold.”

A far away laugh jostled the man on his belly as it released itself, and Rat joined in. They both seemed to see the ridiculousness of it, but after a long while the sound faded into painful sighs.

“It feels like I’m about to do something stupid at any second whenever she’s close. Like I’m just gonna touch her face,” Rat sat up again to look at him now, rubbing a palm into his right eye against the pressure throbbing in his head, “or, ya know, tell her something I don’t talk about to anyone but
you. Like it’s ok to be close to her that way too. To just watch her. To want to just look at her, especially when she’s looking at me- like she’s not put off by what she sees anymore. Where’d that come from Hog?”

“We know what we want,” he let his voice escape harder than usual, thoughtful, maybe hopeful, “I think she might too. I hope she might too. I can’t tell.”

“What?!” Rat’s expression expanded, “you saying you think she’s got feelin’s too?”

“I dunno,” Hog scratched at his jaw, like he did when he was self conscious sometimes, “she blushes an awful lot around you.”

Hog felt himself looking a bit distant, thinking about the way Mei had acted around Rat. Her warm cheeks, and giggling. Their back and forth, their friendly ease with one another. Somewhere inside he was happy for him, and somewhere he hurt to be left out.

He hated jealousy, but it’s hard to hear the person you love say they have feelings for someone else, someone who smiles at them, and not feel a little out of place. A little far away from the pattern you're used to. Even if you have the same feelings. It was all so mystifying, and mortifying.

“She called you handsome, Hoggie,” Rat poked out at him. “Think that says more than some rosey cheeks.”

“‘Too.’ As in also. She said, ‘handsome, too’, Rat. Like she hadn’t considered it before I took off the mask,” he couldn't help but feel a bit deflated.

He knew Rat would think that statement so very ‘Mako’ of him. To find a way to take a compliment and make it a fight. It wasn’t as if he lacked self confidence, he just hated when other people lacked it for him. Or thought he lacked it maybe? He knew he always got to feeling low about himself if he thought someone else was pointing something out about him. In this case, he’d twisted a compliment to find a way, so maybe he did have a bit of a morale issue.

“Really, Hogs?”

He gave the man a withering downward glance, “fine. I guess I think she meant it. Wouldn’t admit to it when I asked her about it though.”

“You asked her...if she thought you were handsome?” Rats seemed taken aback by the idea.

“I teased her about calling me handsome, to see if she remembered,” the hand that had been on Hog’s jaw had migrated to rubbing at the back of his neck guiltily.

*Does he think I made a move before we talked about it?*

“How did that even come up?”

“She was, uh,” he seemed to give it a second of thought before he tried to push back the rising color in his cheeks, “she was starin’ at me. At me face.”

He pointed at his own face as if Rat might not get what he was referring to, feeling a bit absurd afterward. He was rolling through the idea of what had happened when she came in, hoping Rat would understand what he meant, not think he’d done anything out of line.

“While she thought I wasn’t looking,” he tried to explain as if it didn’t make sense. “She was kinda smilin’, but she had taken a little to drink, so maybe that was it.”
“She had a sip o’ some suit’s fancy stash, and you assume she smiled at ya caus she got drunk goggles?” Rat put his hand up in front of him in the kind of frustrated manner he always seemed to get anytime Hog started to be down on himself. “I know why I smile when I see yer face, Hogs. Don’t suppose many people have seen it and lived, if I think on it. She got to look at the softer side of ya, and I think that’d make anyone smile.”

His eyes seemed to come back into focus a bit, he thought about how he had wanted to turn to her when he had seen her smiling up at him from the desk. When she’d fallen into his arms. He had wanted to bring her close. To see what she might do, to see what he might let her do, “you’re not the only one feels like they’re gonna do somethin’ stupid around her.”

His gaze returned to the ground, still rubbing at his neck, as if all his tension had settled where his shoulders met. Junkrat raised an eyebrow at him.

“When ya came in, uh, she’d almost fell, and,” his eyes went from the ground to almost making eye contact with Rat, but instead skipped right over to look at the ceiling instead, “I may have guided her to land on me. It was the safest place. Just wasn’t the only one. Made me happy to feel her close. To know she was okay.”

He felt better to say it, guilty but better. Like he had cleared himself of the wrong he had thought of doing, or almost wanted to do. As if it was his sin. It felt good to talk. To admit and hope to move on, forgiven. So they could move forward, together.

Rat shook his head at him, made a show of crossing his arms, and being dramatic about it, too. In the way Rat often did when part of him was actually upset, but he knew he didn’t have any ground to stand on. Junkrat opened and closed his mouth a few times before he finally came out with it, now looking at the ground himself.

“Her and I, when we were in the waiting room, she kinda smiled, and gawked at me too,” Rats got flustered saying it out loud, and Hog found it cute, “and I, uh, I looked back, and she looked back, and I didn’t stop. We just watched each other, all quiet like, until I fell asleep. It was, uh… it was nice.”

He let a half smile quirk over his lips at Rat’s nervous recollection.

Rat took a breath, finishing his thought, “and it just feels like she’s lookin’ right into you, and the smile shes givin’ you is clearin’ away some of the darker things you carry around inside ya. Like sweeping away the hard stuff, and makin’ it worth the fight of gettin’ to right now. To have met her. To see the brighter things in the stuff you got right in front of ya. She gave me the words for what I already had, and left me without the breath to find the ones for what I want now.”

“She makes ya feel like everything is gonna be okay. Good, in the way she's good,” he sighed with a remarkable understanding, “makes ya feel like you can be good too.”

“Yeah. But, I can see somethin’ sad there, behind the pretty pink cheeks, and the long lashes, and the sweet smile. Like, her own dark place, and she won't let it go. Hog she wouldn’t tell us!” Junkrat threw his hands back into the air, and then down on top of his head to grab at his hair.

“She’s protecting us from it, Rat,” he put a huge hand on top of both of Rats, to keep him from pulling out his hair, “least she thinks so.”

“But..but, she’s not. It hurts more to be pushed away, to not be able to help, and it's not fair. I wanna give her some of that warmth back, ya know!” Rat struggled out from under his hand to stand up, “What should we do, Hog?”
Hog’s felt himself looking far away through the window, honestly unsure.

When the silence had drawn a long line through the dark room, he defaulted to the weather, “it’s gettin’ pretty rough out there.”

Icy chunks of snow blew hard into the surface of the glass, making sounds like claws dragging across the surface, and it was obvious the wind had picked up quite a bit. He realized the building swayed under his feet, like he was on a huge boat, and it sent a shiver up his spine. He exhaled a clouded breath into the air.

“Oh, your right. Is it just me or does this seem like it’s gettin’ a little out of hand,” Rat pointed out the window as the visibility had been reduced to barely reach across the street.

They couldn’t see the building that was meant to signal them anymore.

“I’m worried about her,” Hog’s voice had gotten low as they both stood with their eyes glued to the white world outside, the monstrous storm building up. It made him think of something he’d read in Overwatch’s system.

*Overwatch Data Files*  
*Agent Files*  
-Agent: Mei-Ling Zhou (周美玲)*

*Agent History:*

...a extremely severe weather [Redacted] developed suddenly. Damage to the Ecopoint Antarctica was heavy across the facility, and [Redacted] the life support systems. [....Redacted...] ...she was able to reassemble a broken long range beacon to signal for help. She was rescued by a commercial seafaring vessel, and recently was one of the first agents to return upon the recall....

He watched as the ice started to leave gashes as it swirled against the window outside, the sounds were fierce, and sudden. It sent another kind of shiver rippling across him, wondering if this felt all too familiar for her. All at once his fears, this talk, it could wait.

“Rats, this is bad,” He looked over at the man whose eyes were damp, who had his palm against the glass with the same fear written on his face.

“She’s all by herself, Hog,” Rat whispered toward the window, then turned to face him, “we left her all by herself. Just like then.”

They both had an idea about her past. That she had survived something bad in Antarctica. That whatever it was had started with an ice storm, like this. That she had been alone then.

“We need to find her,” Hog was urgent now, his eyes told Rat to run, to go, “right now!”
Mei felt it in her chest, in the trauma beneath her ribs, and in her secret heart— in the heart that wasn’t physical. She wasn’t with them, and she couldn’t be. She was alone, and that was for the best.

Right?

She peered out through foggy eyes, pressure creating auras from the small amount of light making it in from outside. When she put her glasses back on, she could see the snow again, as she curled up in on herself against the cold.

She pretended each perfect crystalline flake was a falling star, and that she had an infinity of wishes waiting to be granted just outside the window.

_I'd just make selfish ones._

A tear streaked across her cheek leaving the same bright trail as the heavenly lights she imagined crashing to earth.

Then, something struck Mei about the flurry, about the white storm, as she set up straighter against the wall, pushed her glasses up her nose. She could see it even from all the way across the room.

It wasn’t right.

The conditions for this weather weren’t right. She stood up briskly from the floor, and strode to the glass wall with purpose. Leaning in until her breaths left ghosts across the window. She looked up, she looked to the horizon. Wrong. This was wrong.

“That cloud formation, there is something off,” the subtle inconsistencies felt like pins across her skin as she whispered to herself, “it’s not right!”

_That- over there. Those clouds, from that direction, with the sea, and the mountain. It doesn’t work that way. The pattern is contrary to the airflow in the region. How did I not see this before?!_

She strained to get a look at some unusual structures in the clouds to the east through the flurry.

_The clouds are moving the wrong way, the snow, the ice- it’s getting stronger._

She pressed her face against the glass to peer out toward the darkening southeast sky. It churned with angry colors, and she felt the pain in her side rise. The pressure in the air was changing, and her injury reminded her of its sensitivity to it.

_If a system like this keeps developing at the rate it is- it will be...it will be...worse than...than..._ 

_Then. It would be worse than then. Another anomaly..._

It would be less cold sure, but still- unheard of temperature lows, and a city like this, it wasn’t built with that scale of storm in mind. She shifted her view lower into the window to watch the little mounds of white forming on every ledge in the architecture surrounding them. So much standing snow so fast. It was definitely falling harder now than when she’d sat down with Hog in the beautiful office down the hall. When the glass had been half full, and not empty.

Something hit the window in front of her hard, causing her to jump back with a squeak. She could see the scar on the outside of the thick pane of glass where it had struck. Then another, and another, and soon it was as if the snow was sharp hail, flinging into the window at enormous velocity.
Making sounds that made her remember what fear truly could be. What loneliness was. What loss felt like.

It’s...it’s just like then. Alone.

She pressed her palms over her ear until it hurt, until her arms trembled.

“Holy fuck! Snowflake!!”

She turned around, startled to hear Junkrat’s muffled voice busting through the door as she made herself small. Her back against the glass, she took her hands from her ears slowly. She could see his face. All temper and fear, his eyes were frenzy and vexation.

Worry. Caring.

He walked to her slowly across the room, as if he thought he might spook her, she was a wild animal against a wall. She sank to the floor, sliding down the glass under the weight of her feelings. His jaw worked around in circles as he ground his teeth against the anguish in his expression. Pushing something back.

Then he was in front of her.

He fell to his knees, head down, arms limp. The intensity of him, the pure energy of whatever he was feeling, made her eyes go wide, made her draw back against the window harder.

He picked his head up slowly, as if the weight on his shoulders was the heaviest he’d ever bared, and his eyes made it to her first. They were imbalance and tenderness at the same time.

His posture pushed a question at her, imprisoned inside him. A desperate need to say something or do something that was chained up, so much so that his very presence felt like pulling.

A prisoner in a dark place, dragging, fighting against his chains. The binding of everything inside of him that yearned for a glimpse of the sun. He strained toward her as if her very being held the answer. He looked into her eyes like they were the place where light came in.

She was frightened, and bewitched. She wanted to get away. She wanted him to be closer.

Please, you can’t look at me that way. I can’t weather this storm. You don’t know what you’re doing to me. Please...

His body lurched toward her, his hand against the glass wall kept his weight from crashing into her as she let out a startled breath. It was like in the locker rooms, but this time there was no punchline. No pretense.

She had to tilt her head up to find his face again, her hands in fists at her side, white knuckled as she shivered. His other arm came around, closing her in beneath him. A small frame, but still much taller than her. Still powerful.

“You! Don’t...you. Don’t you ever,” he sucked in a breath through his gritted teeth as she looked up in shock at his tone, “EVER do that again, Snowflake!”

She huddled against the window as his voice filled the small space he had closed her into, and she shrunk back even further at the shock of it. He pushed himself back a bit, and she saw the hurt on his face that she was frightened of him, and the pain of having caused it. She saw his shining eyes brim over.
She searched for his face as his shoulders sunk, as his chin drew into his chest. She heard it, the pained gasping little breath, short. He was holding back. Shaking.

“Junkrat,” she barely whispered his name.

“Please, Snowflake,” his voice warbled quietly, almost swallowed into the sound of the wind, “I was… I was so scared.”

She barely heard the last words as he spoke down into himself.

“Junkrat?” Her answer was so small, consumed by her sorrow, and his state.

“What if...if,” he sniffed in sharply, another quick breath as his hands sank down the wall, and he started to draw into himself. His hands still on the glass and his forehead almost in her lap. “What if you’d passed out from your meds, and got hurt? Huh? What if I couldn’t get to you? What if it was my fault, again? Again?!?”

Before his head settled onto her he finally drew back into himself, doubled over in front of her.

*His fault?....again?*

She was confused and helpless. She didn’t understand where his pain was coming from. He’d bent into himself, arms wrapped around his torso as if he’d been kicked in the stomach.

“What if something bad happened, and you were all alone? No one around, in this frozen hellhole, and it was my fault...again!? Snowflake…I…”

She sat very still, almost in shock as he beseeched her, hoping for a forgiveness she didn't know she needed to grant. Didn't understand why he was seeking.

She was the selfish one. The liar. The treacherous heart.

His hands crawled back up onto his head, grabbing handfuls of his hair, as a noise of frustration and pain pulled from this throat.

“I…” he sobbed and it broke her heart, “Snowflake...I can’t lose ya.”

*Lose...me?*

So many possibilities flashed through her, the dim heartbeat that once only whispered possibilities now sang out hope. Her mouth hung open as the floor felt like it had fallen out from under her, because she knew -She Knew- that want was a betrayal.

She had her metaphors all wrong. She was the prisoner in the dark cave, and his caring, Hog’s caring, what they had together- that was the light, and she could only watch it from her chains. A captive to guilt, to circumstance, and emotion. She knew either way that she couldn’t give in to a moment. She was locked away for a reason.

*I care about them, I’ve already made up my mind. I...I love them. I can’t.*

Her hand trembled as it closed the distance between them. As it rested gently on his as they clawed at the tuft of hair above his forehead, as she tried to stop whatever was tearing inside him.

“I’m not going anywhere. I promise. Not unless you, or Roadhog want,” she let her nails run gently over his scalp and he shivered violently.
Letting go. It means letting go.

She reminded herself as he moved into her touch.

But. But! I can't leave. I can't let go, BECAUSE I love them. Maybe...maybe it means I just need to learn a different way to love.

Junkrat's breaths had quieted under her soothing, and the forlorn sounds he had made earlier were replaced with something warm as she worked her fingers over his hair. She saw his heavy tears quietly falling into his lap. He had moved one of his hands and placed his fingers softly around her wrist, not stopping her, just reassuring himself. Reassuring her. Connecting.

I want to try. I'll find a new sort of love. It's selfish, but I want to find a love I can endure, because it won't leave me. I know it won't, and I promised I wouldn't leave him. Them.

“I'm sorry, I really, truly am,” she let out a gentle breath, “I'm so sorry. I'm selfish, and careless. Nothing here is your fault. Please, don't cry.”

His grip on her wrist tightened, and he started to lift his head, holding her in place as her hand dragged from his hair and down over his face. His eyes closed as her fingers trickled over his features.

Her heartbeat pulsed through her fingers. She was sure he felt it fluttering over his eyelids. His cheeks, the angle of his nose. His lips as he spoke, “I'm not letting ya go, Snowflake.”

He held her fingertips on his lips, making her feel the words. Holding her gaze in his with hypnotic searching. His eyes darting back and forth over her features, the warmth in them caressing her face. With just a look.

“I won't let you let go, either,” his focus was overwhelming, engulfing, “you're not alone anymore.”

A tear fell across his cheek, and one of her own mirrored his. He let his grip fall off, but her touched lingered. It sent something new into his expression. Something that leaned foward, hungry, before she finally withdrew in turn.

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He wanted for her touch as soon as it was gone, but he needed her to understand.

“You got me, and Roadie. So, you're not alone, and ya can’t just act like someone who is anymore.”

He furrowed his brow as she tilted her head down, seemingly ashamed of her impulsive runaway act.

He put a crooked finger under her chin, but no pressure- asking her to look up at him, but not telling her, and she complied. Her lovely eyes overflowing now.

Seeing her cry made him feel like he was coming out of his skin. He wanted to hold it in, to keep it from needing to come out, to make her smile again.

“You went and got friendly with two Junkers, and we protect our own to a fault. Now we got your back. So, really you only got yourself to blame. You're not alone,” he tried to give her a little grin along with the reinforcement in his repetition, his golden tooth resting over his bottom lip as he
pulled his hand away, “so unless you like makin’ hardened criminals cry, you gotta think like someone who’s not alone. Who’s got someone worryin’ about um, yeah?”

She sniffed back a tear, and her laughter replaced the sad heavy quiet of the room. A giggle. He felt like he could live on that sound alone.

“I… I think I understand now. I’m sorry. Really, really sorry,” she rubbed at her eyes in vain as the tears kept falling despite her effort, “no more lies. No loner way of thinking. I promise.”

He gave her another soft smile, and a nod. He felt that strange intensity building up again in him now, he wanted to reach out to her. To make her stop shaking.

“So,” she let out a little laugh to herself again, holding back more tears, “does that make me a Junker now, too?”

She had no idea what that question had done to him, and he tried not to let it show in his eyes, out of concern it might frighten her. He tried not to let it show when he looked at her face, and her cheeks were glowing, and her nose was ruddy, and her eyes were puffy. How they sparkled with a strength that he had gotten to see over, and over today.

_She’s so damn bright._

He shook himself loose, realizing she had tilted her head at him, waiting for the quip she expected back.

“I..uh…” He was stuck in some strange loop of awe, and wanting, and he let out the first thing he could think of, “you gotta marry into the title. So you’ll have to wait till we can get the ring, I guess.”

_Oh, brilliant move! Why am I an idiot?_

He watched her face, as she tried to hide behind her hair, hoping to not let him see the color rise against her already warm face. She was adorable, and beautiful, and the way she looked up at him...it was inviting.

“Didn’t hear a no,” Hog’s voice permeated the room, and he turned over his shoulder to smile at the huge silhouette at the door, and then back to her.

“It’s true,” Junkrat whispered to her, “seems like that could very well be a possible yes, to me.”

Her expression had brightened even more at seeing Hog, and that made him smile too, as he watched her eyes turn back to him. Big doe eyes through her dark lashes. Soft kind eyes that seemed to want something from him. We’re begging him to move, to speak, to act.

_Just tell me what you want. I will. I want too._

Hog had come close now, standing over them both, “you okay, Snowflake? We were, uh...we were worried.”

“I...I’m better now. I’m not okay, but I’m better,” she smiled up at Roadie, the tears returning to her eyes.

They still held that hidden question. Weighed down by something none of them could quite wrap themselves around as they watched each other in the quiet. He wondered if it was the same want.

He nearly stopped himself, but he reached to her anyway, put a shaky hand around her cheek. The
edge of his fingers running along her jaw as it set. As he felt her tense up at his closeness, he remembered himself, and it stung to pull away.

*Wishful thinking. It's wishful thinking, Rat. Control Yourself.*

“Sorry,” he looked away, putting his hand behind his neck, “uh, just wanted to. Ya know you had a, um…”

He pointed to his cheek, trying to explain his action.

“Oh, um,” she ran a knuckle under her eye, wiping away the wetness herself, “thank you.”

She held her hand in front of her, looking at the damp place on her finger, and laughing. A removed kind of laugh, and it kept building until it was tears again. Until it was crying.

“Oh, Snowflake,” he hovered his hands beside her as she put her palms over her eyes, and leaned down into herself like he had been, “I didn’ mean to, ah, oh man- I’m sorry!”

He could hear her laugh into her tears a bit, “it’s not you. I’m just. It’s so many things. I’m all foggy inside.”

The sounds she made broke his heart. He hated every second of wondering what to do. Until, suddenly, she had sucked in a sharp breath. Sat up, stiff as a board, and pale as a ghost.

“The storm,” she twisted around, stumbling to get up, “it’s.. oh, no. No, no. It’s worse now. I let it get worse!!”

She turned to Hog, putting a hand on each of his arms as Junkrat scrambled to stand as well. She was unable to reach both of Hog’s shoulders to properly emphasize her point as she looked desperately outside, and then twisted around to him.

“Whaddya mean?” He looked out the window now too, unaware of what he should be seeing.

“There- Those dark areas, the way it’s moving. It doesn’t work that way. It’s all wrong. It’s getting too strong, too fast,” she pointed to the unusual structures she’d noticed earlier as they worsened.

“I thought you were a climate scientist, not a weather one,” he squinted out at the clouds and then back to her.

“What do you think the climate is made of, Junkrat?!” She snapped at him a bit, but he just held his hands in front of him realizing her panic.

“Yeah, guess that’s true,” he tried not to incur her wrath again, but noticed her apologetic look after her outburst.

“Look guys, the clouds are moving the wrong way, just look at it! The snow- it’s getting stronger,” she pointed out toward the darkening southeast sky, “it’s wrong. It’s going to get huge.”

They all looked out the window now.

“We need to… we need to...,” she put her hand on her throbbing senses, falling face first and hitting her forehead with a thud, shivering violently.

He jumped toward her at the same time as Hog, both trying to keep her from falling again.

“No. Not now, I need to be okay so I can help them. I can save them this time! I can save everyone!”
He could hear her mumbling it under her breath.

“We need to get them out, we have to get them out,” She was hyperventilating, “WE need to get out!!”

*She’s in so much pain. I gotta help her. I want to. Need to....*

He didn’t hold back this time.

**Chapter End Notes**

Whew, another long one, and I assume the next will be the same! Things are happening. Good and bad, but yes! I am excited for what the next few chapters will bring, and hopefully I can get another out before the end of the week!

As always, your comments are like finding the right piece to a puzzle, they make me feel like a conqueror! I appreciate every single one, and it fuels me, as well as all the other kind feedback I have gotten so far for this story! You can find me @IceyVoreadus on tumblr. <3
You’re the One I Want

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

She felt his arm come around her shoulder just when she was about to lose herself. She felt it snake around the top of her chest as the other coiled around her waist from behind. He pulled her into him. She felt Junkrat tuck her head under his chin as he pressed her back fast against his thrumming heartbeat.

She trembled. Oh, she shook in his arms. In his arms!

She stiffened, and shivered, and her hands slid from the window in front of her, and found their way onto his forearm. Grasping to him where it stretched over her neck, where his hand was splayed across the outside of her shoulder in his solid grip.

She let her chin fall, she let her breath go, as she could feel her legs start to give out. As she felt her weight fall down into his arms, he supported her, he kept her from falling out from under herself. He sank with her to the ground when she could no longer hold herself together.

She heard Hog join them on the floor, sitting behind them. Reaching to embrace them both as he gently laid his fingers on her hair.

Now she had something wound around her. Twined over her quivering heart, and her broken body, and her needing. Someone to help hold it all together now that she couldn’t.

As they sat, his legs had gone to one side of her, and her back leaned sideways into his chest where his arm wrapped around her waist like vines held tight to the walls of ancient temples. She felt the attrition of all her unanswered prayers said into the dark, in all her darkest days, and she let the betrayal of it settle into the walls that still remained. She just crumbled away.

She keened out, a sound of mourning, and it tore out from her. Past her, and through her lungs, and out into the cold air. The warmth of her pain was a cloud from her breath, and the tears that were pouring out onto the arms that guarded her were the icy snow.

And she had so many words for so many pains.

But she let it all go.

“It hurts! It hurts,” she sobbed, she trembled.

He held tight, and then another feeling; something gentle. A touch, Hog’s huge fingers brushing up her arm. A comforting soft caress that soothed a rhythm over her, and then up to her cheek, wiping her hair from where it clung to her face, where it had gotten into her mouth..

“It’s okay to hurt, Snowflake,” Hog’s voice resounded from behind, “let it out. We gotcha.”

Junkrat leaned back, and let her lay into him, drape onto him. Hog petted a crooked finger over her brow, his touch leaving a trail of tingling skin in its wake.

So she let it out, she let it all go.

She cried until it hurt, and then more. Junkrat held her in his relentless warmth, as she strung
senseless words out from between gasping breaths. Hog’s touch moved over her like running water, and it kept her from giving in to the panic entirely.

Then a note, a din that lulled across her nerves. Roadhog was humming, it resonated through his broad chest, and the sound hit her like bass from where he sat behind Rat. She didn’t know the tune, but it was velvet, and it was rust. Beautifully unrefined.

It pinned, like she did, for quiet days. For the warm arms around her in the sighing moments of this night.

She didn’t know the tune, but Junkrat did, and he joined the chorus. She felt the sound murmur from him, bubbling up, and crooning out. A strange drone that parted the air above her, that wove into the tangled mess of her hair.

It invoked memories from distant places in age old voices. Lost, hurt, and alone, and then it broke out together in syncopation. A dissonant harmony which coalesced with perfect conflict. The anthem of what it was to hurt together. To feel together.

The sound of what it meant to BE together. No longer alone.

It sounds like a new way to love.

She found her own voice in the song now, and it came out with a hoarse crack. A terrible sound, but it fit. Had its place in the lamentation, and the healing of the hymn. Her place.

Then, as it calmed her, it smoothed out, and the long sounds of her notes built something that was more whole. A grateful noise. It thanked. It hoped in their shared moment.

Her eyes blinked open, her lashes heavy soaked in salty tears. She saw the white outside the window. She heard the angry sounds of the storm batter against their shelter. She felt the sunrise, so far behind the clouds she had barely realized it was there, just a sliver of a brighter day.

She saw the light.

She was with them, they were together in this place. They'd helped her set aside herself long enough to have this, a fleeting closeness. She'd been happy here. She was exactly where she was supposed to be. Where she had wished she would be.

But I want more...

Then in came the sinking hurt that, had her earlier wish been granted, her time was drawing to a close.


She took a deep breath.

Now morning had come.

Maybe it was selfish, and maybe it was vain, but she wished again. She wanted more.

A little longer. Please, I want to be with them! A little longer.

The ones that she wanted.
Hog felt her shifting in Rat’s arms, and it rattled over his rigid senses.

*Don’t go. Just a bit longer.*

She had cried. She had let it all out, and they had tried to soothe her, but she wasn’t well. She wasn’t better. She still clung onto that dark place that she wasn't ready to divulge. That it wasn't their place to push for.

*Give us something. Let us know. Whatever ya want, we’ll do our best to earn it.*

People aren’t tokens, affection isn’t a prize, but maybe it could be a gift- if she was giving. If they weren’t just taking.

She’d met them halfway. She’d given them an honest side of her, and that was a gift. A gift like touching her face was a gift. Like sitting here with these two people, right now, right in this moment, was a gift.

*I just want to know who you are. What this feels like for you. Just one question.*

To ask was an end. In so many directions it was an end. In so many ways it could be.

Then was asking, was telling, a cowardice or courage?

*It's all familiar. It's just like with Rat. I want to say these words that feel like they're cuttin' me open.*

They were. He felt gutted. It was spilling out of him, and every unsaid admission, and emotion was viscera. Raw, and exposed even before the first slice had dared to carve a wound.

When their sound had quieted, a collective sigh of unspoken sentiment, he just wanted to fill the space with confessions. And Hog knew he wasn't poetic, and he wasn't romantic, and he wasn't one for grand gestures or bold words, but he was honest. Straightforward, and earnest. With others, and to himself.

He wasn't lying to Rat when he had said he knew what he wanted. Had always known with Rat. Had told Rat as soon as he had realized about Mei. Secrets were acid. Secrets wear away, and dissolve. Secrets become lies, and he wasn't lying to Rat. He knew what he wanted.

*Them. I want this, with them. Not just right now. After right now. For as long as I can get away with it. I wanna steal this moment, keep it for me own. I wanna make it my greatest heist.*

*They're the ones that I want.*

---

Junkrat felt Hog tense a bit when the little Snowflake had started to squirm in his grasp, but she had only turned to face him. Place herself back into his embrace.

*Stay here. Settle in. Let me hold ya here. ‘Least for now. For as long as we can.*
He let his arm slip around her waist, her cheek nestled in over the sharp angles that crossed his chest, her soft curves fitting into the crook of his arm as she leaned into him. Pressing warm into the taught lattice of sinew over his ribs.

Pressing. She pressed. Into him!

*Please, stay. Please want to stay. Just a lil’ longer. Maybe more than that. I can't lose ya.*

For now she did. She would.

He could feel it in the way she'd let herself settle into the shape of him. Like she'd allowed herself one last moment at the end of the night, at the start of the morning, to just be still. To not overthink things. To not hope where there wasn't, or wonder after hope, but just be here. Or, maybe that was him, and not her.

He was starting to not be able to tell.

He just needed it. He needed right now. He wanted to let every word begging to escape cross his lips. His lips. That she had touched, and that he wanted to touch to her. All over her. To place his inspired awe, his admiration, his love, onto her with his words between kisses.

*I wanna kiss her. I want to taste her.*

*To comfort her. To hold her.*

*To laugh with her. To let go with her.*

*With them. Both of um, and all this love.*

*They're the ones I want.*

---

Her heart buckled under the weight of its want. Mei Wanted.

She wanted them, she wanted to be with them, to be wanted in return. She wanted touch, affection, and maybe something more. Okay, definitely something more.

She wanted to confess. She wanted out from under the ambiguity.

Right?

Be careful what you wish for.

The fingers at her waist had become restless, and wandered. They trembled, and traveled. Needy, they kneaded at her side. They pulled.

The fingers on her head found their way softly down her cheek to her neck, and waited. They shivered, and surveyed. Curious, they caressed the slope. They teased.

She moaned.
Out loud.

Be careful what you wish for.

The sound of herself. The feel of fearless fingers. Touch, and affection. Something more. Something prurient.

All three of them had frozen, and she had no idea if it was just a moment, or a while. An hour, a day. Hadn't everything been out of time tonight? Or was it today now?

Who cares if it's what you want?

She arched into their touch.

Careful what you wish for!

She couldn't stop it now. Not any of it. And, boy did it sound cliche in her mind, but she didn't want to! She was diving in head first. Headlong! Let's do this, get a move on, caution to the wind! No turning back.

She wanted them to respond; to resonate with her in all their strange dichotomies. Just a little. Just a touch. Just a sound. Don't pull back, don't run away. Stay.

She closed her eyes, her breath held under aching ribs, she wished.

Can I hope they want the same thing as me?

Let this be what I wished for!

Then an answer came in movements, as they shifted, but into her instead of away. They poured over her like they had been overflowing just the same.

A little at first, hesitant, it dripped across her. Tender fingers finding their way back along their paths. She felt the tenseness in their chests, breaths bated too, waiting to find if they had read the right message in her needy noise.

Her body communicated. It begged into the hungry hands. Barriers eroded.

She could feel their response spill over her. An energy, a sensation, of pushing in, pushing forward. Pushing over the edge.

She pushed back

She wanted to fulfill a wish.

It was want, and it escalated. Pushing, spilling over, it overflowed. She was swept into it, and away with it, and it washed over her every logical thought. Every warning voice, or alarm. She was happy to let them drown.

It was everything she'd wished for.

In came the flood.

*Thief.*

A crooning stole across her lips once more, and was echoed. A warm syllable escaping slow near her
shoulder, a hum cutting across the air above her. Sounds in fog, haunting breaths, the noise became ghosts condensed in the cold. Hanging silently, a physicality once the illusion of stillness returned.

*Trespasser.*

Her movements intruded on the quiet, invading the space between her and them, and they rose to meet her. New feeling wound around her senses, like the arms, and hands, and fingers weaving over her body. Sensation in steps, pulsing touch, the movement spun over her skin prickling along its dance. Hardly shy, an openness that tumbled into itself once the clumsy explorations had begun.

*Betrayed*

Her heart had turned on her, like her lips, or the way her body had rebelled against her better judgments, and she felt it from them too in the erratic energy they returned. Pleading was no longer shrouded, touch had nearly abandoned propriety, and the pitch of it all sloped steeply into fevered. Want in waves, misty window, a heavy steam became sweat rolling down the glass. Needy urgency, a pressure that railed against the last laws that logic had laid.

*A new way to love?*

She needed it to be. The question brought resolve. To hope this was beyond an act of frotteurism she’d been unable to stop herself from committing. Beyond a sleep deprived loss of restraint. She wanted it to be a release of emotion, the physical manifestation of a shared hope. Desire, and longing. So she could give in. So it could be easy. To let go.

Not a thief, not a trespasser, not a betrayer. She wanted a new way to love. She longed so hard to give herself permission.

“Please,” she managed.

The sound of it brought more touch. Shifting bodies, breathy sounds, all twisting receptively.

“Don't stop,” her words whimpered out into a pant.

There was only a moment of pause, and through her heavy lidded gaze she could practically see the pull her words had created. A gravity that crushed through the last lingering doubts.

She let Hog haul her in, he leaned over, taking in her redolence. Strong fingers rested over her knee, as they leisurely drifted up her thigh. She took in a sighing breath, chin rising, exposing the extended length of her neck. Junkrat’s metal fingers ran cool over her throat, from the far side, and down to pull at the sleeve of her dress, exposing more shoulder.

On either side of her she felt a subtle touch glance over her. On her shoulder, and close to her neck. The sweep of lips ran over bare skin with a caressing endearment.

Hardly a kiss, though she wanted it, though she reached her hands up to find warm cheek, and tousled hair. To place a encouraging caress, a gentle request to remind them of her earlier words.

Don’t stop. I want this.

“Please.”

Then she felt the desire of their lips press into her at the urging gasp of her plea. Her right shoulder, and over the left side of her neck. Into her, through her, around her. Driving up the sides of her neck, working toward her own gasping lips. A low mewl whispered from her mouth at the contact, at the
idea of it’s destination.

The trembling fear at what it brought, what it meant. The part of her mind that groped for any reason to withdraw, any reason that made sense right now, and that wasn’t many. Wasn’t any.

Reckless abandon.

Her eyes found themselves open again as they’d nearly found their mark. Pressed lips, and dragged teeth, all the way up. Pushed past the precipice of her chin, her cheeks hot with anticipation.

She saw them as they looked back at her. They’d come so tantalizingly close. Her lips ached quietly for the warmth they had expected. Quivering at the fear of it all the same.

They wore it too, the same flighty fear, all frayed on the edges. Fragile. An eager elation, ready to take off, that threatened to rattle apart before it flew. Words like stones, heavy on dry tongues, behind flushed lips. Rosey red, and chapped from their zealous climb to the altitude of her waiting. Her jittering lips swollen from her anxious biting.

They all had the same questions. They all locked them tight behind the same clenched teeth. Who wants to ruin a moment?

But the shift came all the same.

No.

The yearning flinched, and the question got bigger. The weight of their words was heavier. It was behind their eyes. Over their expressions. It was on hers too. Even if she wanted to hide it. To deny it.

She tried to convey everything she’d ever felt, as if all the moments before this sunrise could be imparted through sheer will.

Please, don’t vanish. Don’t go. Don’t let this be the end. I’m too good at being alone. I don’t want it anymore. You’re the ones that I want.

All the poetry of the building fervor fell around her in fainting prose. The rhythm of their minds, and their bodies, and all the unspoken psalms they had strung together through touch, sound, and want. They all unwound. It all laid around their feet in shreds.

She felt defective. Her indiscretion blistered through her consciousness. Her choice. It wasn’t like her, and she’d extinguished more than a moment. She’d ravaged possibility. Ruined everything.

She just knew it.

“Snowflake,” Junkrat’s hand reached out, fingers running coolly over her cheek, “please…”

She followed his eyes as they turned down, and she scrambled to understand.

Broad fingers found their way to her hand, scooping it up, almost seeming to clutch at her. She found Hog’s expression equally unknowable, sad, or distant. Crestfallen?

Tell me. Please. Tell me before I shatter.

“Ya gotta understand…” Junkrat still couldn’t lift his eyes as his words trailed off again.

“Please, just,” she couldn’t help but let her eyes well up in the frustration, “tell me. Tell me what you
want!"

Her knuckles whitened in her lap.

She watched them cast their looks onto each other, an esoteric significance in each tiny flicker that crossed their faces. She wanted to see inside. Tried to understand. All in vain.

Then, their focus returned to her as if they had reached the same conclusion. Landed on the same thought. A solution, a resolution, a resolve. Or, maybe just an instinct.

A grin hit Junkrat’s face.

“Why on earth,” she quirked her head to the side in confusion, “are you smiling?”

“‘Caus...” he leaned in close.

So, so close. A breath away. Her eyes couldn’t even focus on him anymore. He liked being inside her personal space. She'd recently started to secretly enjoy it as well.

He picked up the hand that Hog hadn’t taken, and he put it on his bare chest. His flushed skin still felt cool in the dropping temperatures as his heart hummed.

“You're the one that we want,” his words whispered out.

She could still read the glint in his eye. Tricky. Teasing. He pulled his face back enough that she could see the glossy look illuminating through them was practically sinful.

He was also telling the truth, and it was ablaze, brighter than all the other lights that flashed through his expression. That resounded through his bounding pulse.

“I want you, Mei Ling Zhou,” Junkrat pressed her hand onto his heart, “Snowflake. You're the one that I want.”

She was overcome.

“Mei Ling Zhou, I want you,” Hog’s voice was bellowing but clear, “a Lil’ Snowflake, the one who I want.”

She was conquered.

*I'm the one that they want. They want me?*

“Look,” Junkrat took a deep breath, and words started to spill out from him, “I know it’s, uh, sudden. I know it’s a lot to take in. Ya know, we didn’t mean to just, sorta, drop it on you like that. Saddle ya up with all our mixed up feelings. So, I don't blame ya if you think we’re off our rocker, yeah. But, I mean it. I know he means it.”

She watched almost blankly as Rat scratched the back of his neck anxiously with his free hand, still looking down at the hand he was using to hold her gently over his heart.

When he started to speak again she swore the friction from his words were going to catch his hair on fire.

“Anyway, it’s not easy- all this,” he finally let her hand go free to gesticulate with his own, indicating the place she had just pulled away from, ‘these feelings. Ya get me? Havin’ ta say it all out loud, and such. Makes ya feel a bit unhinged. And I know it's gonna be, well shit. It's gonna be shit to figure
out how this goes. Wonderin’ what’ll come of it. Knowin’ it isn’t gonna be nothin’. No way you get
ta feel all this, an come out the other end all in one piece. Trust me, I know the score on that one.”

He held up his prosthetic to make the point, gave a toothy grin. Even if it didn’t really make much
sense to her in the context she let herself smile back at him. Even if she hadn’t caught up to the full
implication of the fountain of words he was spilling out.

“What he’s tryin’ to get at,” Hog waved him off before he could come out with anymore, “well,
what he means is…”

She had turned her head out of reflex to Hog. Intent as his eyes found hers. Her quiet gaze bared
witness to the last palisade staked against the answer to her question. To her hope. Her wish.

“I, uh... I fell in love with ya,” the words tripped out from Mako, and over her heart, “we both did.”

love..

“She too. Can’t stop a heart from fallin’ in love I guess, heh,” Jamison’s tone bounced through the
words, as if saying them made him giddy. Like they made her giddy.

love me?

And she wasn’t sure when it had shifted, but she hadn't realized before now about just how she
thought of them. The expectations she'd had, versus the complex reality of who they were. Who they
are.

The softer side, the quiet thoughtful moments. Concern, and worry. Enthusiastic in all the right ways,
but knowing when to back down. The side that had brushed tamed lips across bare skin, and the side
that had urged carnivorous kisses along her neck. They were different. Two demeanors fashioned
into one form.

And they...want me. They love me.

She was languid, flowing through the spillover of it all. Wishes fulfilled.

She was also spooked, and it shivered over her too.

“You, uh, you ok? You don’t gotta say anything,” Jamie’s voice flustered out, “ya know, you can
take yer time. Think on it.”

She didn't need to.

She already knew. Always thought she would do if she ever faced this. If it was real. She did what
she thought she had to.

I want them. I love them.

“I... can’t.”

Chapter End Notes
Phew, this chapter took a lot out of me, but I'm finally happy with it. Sorry it took a while to get it out. Life has been busy for me, and I haven't been able to reply to comments like I usually do- but I have read them, and I do plan on going back and replying soon- because all your kind words really helped make this chapter worth polishing up. Hopefully the next few will come quickly as we draw toward a conclusion to the story! :D

As always comments are like finding that candy you hid from yourself last week- a sweet surprise! Thanks for all the amazing ones you've left and I haven't gotten back to yet, and thank you for any your leave on this, they always motivate me to keep going! Also did an art for this chapter which you can find on my tumblr @IceyVoreadus under my art tag #icey does a thing!
When Lena Oxton woke up to morning light on an unfamiliar ceiling she remembered two things.

First, she'd called the couch- fair, and square. Junkrat had told her not to wait up when he'd woken her earlier, crunching over the broken glass on his way out after Mei, and if no one else was gonna use it there was no sense in not letting herself stretch out a little. She wasn't going to be made to feel guilty over it, either. No way!

Second, she recalled there had been no windows in the room when they'd arrived. She felt odd thinking of such a strange detail, and the significance didn't hit her until she squinted again at that blue light dappled above her. It made no sense if they were in an interior space.

When Lena Oxton sat up she remembered a third thing.

“Ow! Ow! Bloody,” she hissed quietly grabbing at her throbbing ankle, “of all the stupid, ow, ow!”

It was going to be another long day. That is, if it was actually morning yet.

She set to work scanning for the source of the light, which turned out to be a conference room at the end of the reception area, coming through the half opened door. She hadn't remembered it being open when they'd arrived, but to be fair her recollection of details got foggier the closer, and closer she had gotten to that couch.

She closed her eyes, and rubbed the heel of her palm across her persistently throbbing temples. Her damn skull was a barometer sometimes, and her head felt as shit as she was sure the low pressure system that must be moving in would be.

Ugh, a storm on top of everything?! Not my week!

She slid her legs gingerly off the couch, favoring the uninjured side, and surveyed the room. Two sleeping kids, an old timer, and Nadia that was keeping an eye on the two thugs who had mangled her poor ankle. Well, whose associates had at least.

The two... where are they?

“Oh, shit!!! What is…” A voice shrieked from the glowing room.

Great.

The two boys ran, tripping over themselves out of the doorway, waking up the rest of the room with their screaming.

“Hey! We gotta go,” they jet past everyone toward the halls, “somethin’ weird is goin’ down!”
“Whoa now, slow down there,” she almost stood but thought better of it, “what did you touch?”

“Nothing! Swear it, man!”

She cocked a skeptical eyebrow as the kids finally woke up enough to ask in unison, “what's going on?”

Nadia had already scoped them up, and headed to stand closer to the hallway exit as her and the guys put themselves between the light and the kids.

“Look,” Kyle put his hands up, “we were just looking, ya know, to check out the storm. Then this thing in the corner started making weird noises and glowin’. I didn't touch shit!”

“Glowing?” Her head swung around to the door.

“Storm?” Pappy was up now, stretching his joints.

“What, you can't hear it?” The mouthy punk pointed to the other room condescendingly, “it's like damn Jack Frost, and a cyclone had a colicky baby that shits snow. It's turning into a fucking winter hellscap[e] out there.”

“What, like a blizzard? Here?” She hadn't turned her head away from the glowing to ask; wishing she could talk to the only person who she knew might have a guess at what this all meant.

_Oh, dear! A blizzard...poor Mei! They had better be watching after her!_

Mei had told her enough about how things had gone down at the Ecopoint that she knew this was the first major snowstorm she'd be seeing since the incident. She didn't want her friend to be alone for that.

_What am I saying? Like they've been able to take their eyes off each other all night, heh!_

“Someone help me up, and...” she strained as she was cut off.

“Agents?! Are you here?” A familiar voice, that had no business coming from that room, called out to them.

Every head turned.

_Comms. It's gotta be...right?_

“Agent Mei, Tracer? Mr. Fawkes, Rutledge?” The voice had quieted a little, but it was definitely moving.

It wasn't a moment later that a pistol wielding angel stepped through the door, sights set true, instinctively targeting the biggest threat in the room.

“Angela? It's me! It's Tracer!”

The doc’s aim fell immediately, an exhausted sigh of relief.

“You got your equipment back!!” Tracer wanted to jump for joy. Soon it would be a bit easier with the Caduceus system back in Mercy’s capable hands!

“Yes, and I have some of your things as well, but right now time is of the essence,” Dr. Ziegler’s eyes scanned the room, “where are the other three?”
“Off snogging somewhere, probably!”

“They went to keep watch for the signal, but I’m worried about Mei, and…”

“Yes, I am as well,” Mercy cut her off, “that’s why we must retrieve them, and make use of our portal right away.”

“Portal? Like, teleport, portal? Isn’t that Vishkar…ohhhhh…”

She was reminded that they had been squatting in a Vishkar affiliated waiting room. Guess it shouldn’t be a surprise their tech was here. Mercy always did plan ten steps ahead.

Bet Lucio is pissed!

“I can explain when we are all safe,” Mercy had already made it to her side, pointing the mysterious staff at her leg, “for now- I’ll get the civilians through. You find the others. I know I can trust you to be quick, please!”

Please was an order coming from Mercy. Seeing as her real legs were now in working order, Tracer got to stretch her temporal ones again for the first time since the injury. She zipped just outside the doorway, catching the gaping looks of the others in time to give them a tiny salute before resuming her accelerated path to recover the others.

Man, she couldn’t say she liked the odd prickly foot asleep kinda feeling Mercy’s healing entailed, but it was nice to be up and moving again! Now, she just needed to find those three. She made it a point to not sneak around the hallways, calling out their names. Didn’t need to walk in on anything!

“Mei!! Come on! We gotta ticket out of here! Junkrat?? Roadhog?? Guys??” She felt like she had screamed for the fiftieth time when, finally, the sound of an opening door answered from down the hall.

“Tracer?” Mei’s voice sounded small.

“Hey! There you are! You got the other two with ya? We got a portal to catch!” She felt herself accelerating through the space between them, relatively twisting through time, to land right in front of Mei.

Her eyes looked vacant.

Woah… no funny business for them I guess. ‘Less they're all just that bad.

She tried to tilt the smile from her thought into something comforting, feeling ever so slightly guilty at the jibe even if it had only been to herself.

“Hey, I'm sorry,” she let her tone fall into a soothing lull, “I know things are a bit unruly at the moment, and I won't tell ya you'll be okay cause that's not my place, but if you want- ya got me…”

Her thought hiccuped as the Junkers emerged. The way they walked like they were about to fall to pieces, how they stole glances at Mei. Leaned in, but not too close.

Oh…

“…uh, us. Ya got us to help ya ‘till things blow over, luv.”

Mei nodded, but it felt like an automation.
“Alright, I know you're all exhausted, but we gotta book it back to Mercy- trains leaving the station!” She clapped her hands together enthusiastically.

She saw the understanding start to register, but the mood didn't shift. It sure felt like she'd walked in on something, and it wasn't like she could just close the door and pretend she hadn't seen it. This was gonna be awkward.

*Oh man, I sure hope everything's alright there.*

Not much changed between finding, and delivering them. She had only tried a few times to get them to snap out of it, they needed to function long enough to get through this, but it had failed miserably each time

Mercy spotted them through the glass as they approached.

“Mei, I'm glad to see you walking. How is your breathing?” Mercy had trotted up to meet them.

“Um, it's still sore,” Mei almost whispered, “still feels heavy.”

She watched as Mei indicated her chest, putting her hand over her heart.

“You two?” Mercy ordered them to report as she'd already sent a stream of light over Mei.

“It's fine,” Junkrat’s voice was curt, lacking his usual buzzing edges. Trading them for something more static, a soft shock.

Roadhog agreed in a hum, and Mercy seemed to accept the replies for now. She returned her attentions to Mei, “this is still temporary. I'll need to clean up the traditional surgical procedure in the lab. Don't want scar tissue causing lasting trauma.”

She watched a tear roll down Mei’s cheek, the golden light making her pallid complexion warm up.

*Lasting trauma...*

She looked over to the Junkers who now tried to clandestinely watch the Caduceus stream floss luminous threads across Mei’s torso. As the scientist’s features returned to a gentle softness instead of the tightness they wore from clenching back pain. As she started to glow as golden as her heart, from the light, and the restoration.

Still, a lingering pain persisted. Something Mercy could never heal. Something Lena hoped her offerings of friendship could start to mend.

She looked over at the Junkers.

*Something those lugs can help with, too.*

She guessed it would be as more than friends the way they all orbited around each other despite the upset.

Something had happened. Something had been rejected. It wasn't hard to guess. Usually that would be that. Lena agreed, pushing after a refusal was behavior for assholes.

Here, though, this was something else. This wasn't a, “no thank you”, after an invitation for a drink. This was the, “I'm confused. I'm scared. I'm unsure. Insecure. Broken”, that followed in the wake of something deeper.
“yes” that sounded like, “no”. That actually meant, “but I don’t know how.”

She knew the feeling; in her own way.

Lena also knew Mei well enough to see that she was devastated too. That she wasn't just sad to be refused. Or sad to do the refusing. In fact, Lena knew, if anything, Mei would expect rejection. Deal with it in her quiet manner, hide it behind friendly smiles.

Not that she agreed, mind you. Mei was great! Smart, fun, and lovely. Mei, however, seemed to be clueless to this fact. Like, she got it a bit, but she didn't really see it. Mei didn't get what it was like for others when they saw her.

For some reason there was something else in the mirror for her. Simple, boring, and plain- acceptable Mei. Friendly Mei, because she was mundane Mei. Who made up for it with congenial laughter. Kindhearted gestures. Not that how she carried herself counted any less, she just also possessed an intellect, and beauty she failed to give herself credit for.

*I wish she could, just for a second, see herself like we do. Why I look up to her.*

She knew Mei hadn't rejected them. She knew they hadn't rejected her. They were all too busy rejecting themselves.

She'd have to see if she needed to talk, but now wasn't the time.

Mercy interrupted her inner dialogue, almost startling her enough to make a temporal leap, but she gathered her nerves back.

“Alright, that's about all we have time for. The civilians are on the other side waiting. Let's move out.”

They all shuffled into the next room. Mercy pointed to the glowing oval that rippled waves of light over them like memories of the aquarium from her childhood.

She was to go first, standing in front nervously, “uh, heh, something...something never go into the light? Heh.”

Mercy tensed her jaw, and Lena held her breath.

Everyone watched as she felt herself slip into the stream of time that fell outside of their experience, and into the portal. She could sense the distance warp around her. Distorting between the pinhole openings of the blue irises that punctured it. It would have felt instant, in a way, had she not known better.

It was familiar- being out of sync with the linear world, even just for a moment. Becoming a ghost again. At the mercy of a cosmic force that has no scale insignificant enough to measure the impact of the mortal life struggling through its tangled threads. She floated through the in between. Mirrors reflecting mirrors. For just an instant. If she didn't know better. If she hadn't experienced eternity already.

Then, just like that, she was real once more.

She wondered how it felt for the others. Who had never drifted through time that flowed like dreaming. They remained stuck in the singular world marching inevitably forward. Those who didn't know the joy, and loneliness of a million lives lived forever, and all at once. Who'd never seen the beginning, and the end. Lived to remember it. In pieces.
Then it faded.

Her memories and the emotions, the ones that tied to the incident that had left her out of time, they always came back most vividly when she drifted across its borders. Strongest in flight, and then receding like g force when she eased back on the stick.

The same thrill. The same withdraw.

Apparently portals had a similar effect. Maybe, even stronger.

*Oh man! Brain- stop doing that pretentious spacey time thing where I'm all one with the universe! I need to focus!! Cut it out!*

She shook her head as the others came through the light, and Mercy’s voice authoritatively confirmed, “that's everyone. All clear!”

The portal shut down bringing the space they were in back into view as it's light faded. An Overwatch transport ship.

“Oh, yeah! Now this is what I’m talking about!” Lena was excited to see a place she knew so well.

It didn’t take long to find the other familiar faces as well, it looked like everyone had made it back from the ordeal more or less in working order. Mercy seemed to be immediately back to work with her staff as soon as the portal had closed, and those who were well had come to greet them upon their return.

The civilians were huddled together, frozen in awe at all the tech in this humble transport ship, still some advanced stuff onboard despite its now quickly advancing age. Lucio was busy staying as far away as he could from the helm of the ship, and had done his best to greet them, and make sure they felt at home. They’d all settled in over at the table in the corner.

She’d spotted Hanzo, and McCree happily reacquainting themselves with their munitions as Hana chatted them up while furiously typing on her phone all along.

“Oh, hey glad to see ya on the other side, Zarya!” She spotted the impressive silhouette of the woman from across the room as she leaned against the wall listening intently to something Pharah was explaining.

They had waved her over, and filled her in on the other half of what had happened that night in the tower across town.

Something about an emergency power beacon in the basement, being the central energy building and all. Then getting ahold of base long enough for Winston to explain the plan, and send over the portal. Some woman from Vishkar was helping them evacuate, and assess the situation.

There were a lot more details, but the important thing was, they were out of the city for now, and they had some of their equipment back.

“So why are we here instead of back at base?” The first question that popped into her mind upon the explanation.

The two women looked at each other, but it was Winston who broke in to explain, “The explosions took out our main power, and there was some kind of attack…”

His deep voice trailed off into thought as she raised a brow at his vagueness, “some kind?”
“I understand that you all felt it, like some sort of noise, but one you couldn't hear. A frequency that made you feel strangely unsettled. It happened right before you all evacuated into the tower,” Winston pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose.

She did remember, but she hadn’t really thought much about it after it had passed. Not to say it wasn’t really really out of the ordinary, but sometimes that was what life was like in Overwatch. She nodded to urge him to continue.

“Well, the origin of that feeling was somewhere very close, if not inside, the grounds of the Watchpoint. It killed all our communication, and fried our generators, but worst of all it, uh...affected the agents.”

“What do you mean?” She clutched her chin in thought, “was Overwatch their target in all this?”

If it had made them feel as strange as it did from that distance, maybe it had a proximity effect that was much worse on those close by. It made her shiver.

She noticed some of the other agents had started to gather in to listen to the updates as well, but Winston seemed to hesitate.

“I’ll be giving a briefing as soon as we're on course for our temporary base of operations. We need to rendezvous with the other transport carrying the remaining agents from the base,” Winston’s words came a bit louder as his posture turned more commanding so his announcement carried. “I'll be back shortly.”

He started to head up toward the bridge when he turned back to smile at her, and she was pleased to see the look on her old friend’s face, “Oh, and Lena- I’m glad you, Mei, and...well, those two are okay.”

They both gave a good natured laugh, knowing, ‘those two’ had been a thorn in their sides for so long- well, until they weren’t. It was almost funny to be relieved at their safe return, “ya got no idea how happy I am to see you too, Winston.”

They shared a fleeting smile before he slipped back up the stairs and left her with two of Overwatch’s finest once more.

“So, what about the civvies?” She pointed her thumb over her shoulder towards the table.

“Not like we could leave them,” Zarya said gravely, “they could not survive cold with how bad it's getting out there.”

“What?!” She was stunned at the statement, “What about the rest of the city, all those people?!”

*How many people were going to be affected...or die? Are things really that bad?*

Zarya nodded her chin toward the window, “not so good looking out there. Go, see for yourself.”

She went to the hatch, with its large window, that would usually be where they exited the ship if it wasn’t in flight. Currently above the city. Above the storm, and a massive one at that. She didn’t need Mei to tell her that as she got her first look. These kinds of cyclones didn’t happen in this part of the world. They weren't this violent looking in the parts of the world they did happen!

“They targeted infrastructure,” Hana’s voice was serious, her arms crossed over her chest gripping her phone white knuckled, as she walked up to file in with the other two women who had followed her to the window, “that's what I found when I scouted. Police stations, hospitals, the energy plants,
and at least two water treatment facilities. That's why help was so limited.”

“What is happening here?” She frowned at the view.

Taking out essential facilities was bad enough, but what were the city’s people going to do to weather the storm? No power for heat, so much destruction to property- how would they protect themselves? Where would they shelter? No warning, no clean water, or disaster relief to hold them through the aftermath. This rotating furious force of destruction would have been a tragic event as it was, but on top of the already crippled city structure, it couldn’t be worse timing.

“It’s like then…” Mei’s voice trailed off as she walked up to the group, and it caused her to flinch a bit, but she knew they were all still transfixed on the vision in front of them.

*Then? Wait....like then, then?*

She sucked in a sharp breath, and whipped her head around to Mei, causing the others to follow her line of sight. She felt a nervous energy sizzling around her core, warm and impatient.

“Then? Like, uh…” She didn’t know how to ask directly, so her thoughts just spilled out instead. Mei had never offered details, and it wasn’t her place to push for them, but it seemed important now.

Mei had ignored all the looks, walking past them toward the window, placing her delicate fingers over the cold glass. She wanted to reach out and scoop her up, but there was an aura around her- something that told her that Mei couldn’t handle the contact right now.

She noticed in the reflection of the glass that the two Junkers had come as close as they seemed to dare, wanting to hear Mei’s words, but afraid to make her uncomfortable. Lena knew she wasn’t the only one who could sense all the pain floating around the room right now.

“It developed out of nowhere,” Mei’s eyes squinted at the bleary morning light giving the massive destructive force below a gentle hue, “just like this. It made no sense.”

“Yeah, I was kind of curious on that myself. Not too often you see see cyclones in cold months. Much less here. Plus the snow. It doesn’t add up,” she joined Mei leaning her shoulder against the window, turning her head to look out along with her.

“Exactly,” Mei seemed to fall into a different energy, her voice sounded analytical and distant in a new way, she was working now, “and even if this kind of system could develop here, it wouldn’t rotate in that direction. Not with the currents from the sea, and the wind from the mountains. It’s an anomaly.”

“...Just like then,” Junkrat’s voice drew her head back around to look at him, nervously wringing his hands, as he stooped over near his looming body guard. Or, uh, boyfriend guard? She’d have to ask about that later too.

“An anomaly. That's what they redacted,” Roadhog’s voice boomed in even if he hadn’t intended to be loud, “that’s what they took out of your file. Anomaly.”

Mei nodded slowly in agreement, but never turned.

“You mean the storm that...um, happened at the Ecopoint, it wasn’t normal?” She stumbled over the wording, hoping not to upset Mei.

A dark sort of laugh huffed quietly from the climatologist as she continued to survey the view, “Imagine a storm, even a strong cyclone, taking out the Watchpoint. It would do damage, but
Overwatch built things to last. So, no, not normal.”

Lena wasn’t use to hearing Mei use the kind of sarcastic tone she was spitting back at the question she’d asked. It’s not that part of her didn’t understand, but it was just so out of character for her, it was concerning.

“Ah, I’m, uh, apologies,” it was if Mei read her thoughts.

Lena tried to give a glowing smile as she rubbed at the back of her own hair nervously.

She watched as Mei’s expression softened, “I...uh, this is all just a lot to process, I’m sorry.”

“No worries, luv!” She knew Mei still felt bad, but she’d never allow herself a moment of upset, so Lena knew it was better not to dwell, “So, why did those details get left out of the incident report?”

Mei slowly turned to look back over the eyes watching her. “No one ever figured it out, and so it was left out of the record. They lost communications with the Ecopoint, and when the storm passed the emergency beacon transmitting showed… It showed, no life signs left.”

_Because everyone she knew was gone._

Lena watched Mei’s eyes flick up with a flighty tremble when Junkrat had stepped subconsciously forward, but she also saw Hog’s hand gently stop him. Mei seemed to want to run away, and into their arms all at once, but she steeled herself.

“But...you,” Lena’s mind finally snapped back into the meaning behind Mei’s statement.

“But me,” Mei smiled the smallest smile, it hung onto her face like bittersweet memories, “a mistake. A malfunction, and so I wasn’t recorded in the signal.”

She watched as her friend swooned a bit at the memory, legs wobbly. Lena put a hand out to steady her.

“So, since they couldn’t recover any major data, and so much was going on in the organization that needed more attention- they retrieved all the files they could, and put aside investigations, and...um, retrieval for later. After all, as far as they could see, an unusually large storm had caused a power failure to the life support, and all agents had… “ she cleared her throat unable to finish the thought as the color drained from her face, “it was a tragedy, but not an immediate threat.”

“Hey, deep breath, alright?” She tried to let the words fall gently out to comfort her friend.

“I’ll be ok, I need to say it,” Mei gave her a strained look.

She knew the woman was strong. She may cry easily, especially at the sappy movies they liked to watch together. Sometimes, well, her creature comforts came off as a bit excessive as far as some of the more hardened field agents were concerned, but Mei was way tougher than a lot of people gave her credit for. She was a fighter, and a survivor, and she was gonna change the world.

_That’s why I love her!_

So she waited for her to be ready to finish.

Instead they were interrupted by Winston’s return to the main hold, followed by a slender woman with architectural lines. Beautiful curves, and sturdy features, she looked like someone who could slice through you with a glare. Everything in its place, and Lena didn’t know if she wanted to take
“Everyone, if I could have your attention?” Winston cleared his throat, standing near the strategy table, and initializing a holographic map of the region with weather data displayed.

It wasn’t long until all the agents had gathered around the projection with puffy tired eyes, and stern faces. Athena had connected them by comm to the second transport, and they were also suddenly joined by additional holographic projections of their fellow agents who had been back at base during the incident. Space was politely made for the newcomers.

“Thank you, Athena. Now that everyone is here, let me tell you what I know. Then we can share our intell from the ground,” Winston took a deep breath.

The man, or ape she supposed even if it never felt quite right to her, had a certain look about him when he was leading versus when he was researching. It was stiff, a bit nervous, but still commanding, because everyone trusted him. She sure did.

“Last night the city was attacked by an unknown group. No one has taken credit for the event as of yet, and the news is reporting little consistent information in the way of video of the attackers. Most of what we have analyzed shows the involvement of nearly all the local criminal organizations, but we don’t have any intelligence to suggest any of these syndicates have the numbers, funds, or desire to carry out this kind of act, especially not in tandem. Many of the identified participants have been from rival organizations. Thus it is assumed a large third party is funding the operation, and recruiting local people on the ground.”

“Yeah, like our boys.” Kyle broke in, eyes turning around the table to face the group of civilians who had hovered along the edge of the briefing.

“Um, yes,” Winston seemed startled by the interruption, “anyway, as I was saying. Our ground reconnaissance has confirmed this with information from people like this, uh, young man.”

Winston leaned over to input some information that displayed an overlay of the attacks on the map, “we’ve compiled this based on the accounts we’ve gathered from news media, and eyewitness accounts. Agent Song has recorded massive damages to critical civilian infrastructure, indicating an act of terrorism, but to what end we do not know. Athena, can you pull up the feeds from the organizations currently denying culpability.”

“Certainly,” the AI’s voice chirped out as the displays scrolled through various social media posting.

It seemed like both the pro and anti radical omnic organizations were all calling, ‘not it’. A few of the scummy bottom feeding terrorist groups were sending congratulations, but ‘regretfully’ denying responsibility.

Plenty of pointing toward Overwatch itself had popped up, but those kind of internet detectives usually meant, ‘dark overwatch’ as they called it. Blackwatch as it had been known to the old guard. Now it was Talon, and she knew everyone here had the name on the edge of their lips when it came to the blame game.

“Alright, I’m gunna just say it then,” McCree broke in after a few moments of silence as they all reviewed the information, “Talon. This has gotta be them, ain’t it?”

“Mm, they are the top of my list of suspects, I doubt anyone else has the means to pull off an operation on this scale,” Winston fell back into his nervous habit of adjusting his spectacles, “beyond this speculation, there is very little evidence, however. Plus, I can see no motivation to attack this city.
beyond placing the blame on us, which at this point would be a stretch. I just can’t see how they’d think they could pin something of this scale on such a fledgling regrouping of an officially dismantled organization.”

“Those nutszos with their conspiracy blogs would have a field day, but I think it would just be that to everyone at large,” 76 spoke up, his hologram shifting grumpily, “I know we didn’t leave with the best public approval rating, but even then, I know people still remember us mostly for the good. Massacring a city, and blowing up a bunch of hospitals isn’t exactly our M.O.”

“Wasn’t Reyes’ either, though,” McCree chimed in, almost defensively, eyes hidden behind his hat, “don’t get me wrong, he was a sonava bitch when he was doin’ his work, but he wasn’t the type to… I dunno, hurt regular folks, ya know?”

A few of the older agents nodded in solemn agreement, but 76 reminded them, “It wasn’t, but that doesn’t mean it’s not now. You know he’s capable of doing what he thinks he’s got to when it comes to gettin’ the job done.”

More nods, and it weighed heavy on her, as much as so many others around the table who didn't want to think it could be true of a ex comrade.

“We are considering the possibility, but let's stick to the facts as we know them for now,” Winston interrupted the spiraling train of thought they all knew would lead to a fight. “Beyond all of the deliberate attacks we have the storm to contend with. The news has name it, of all things...Gabriel.”

A few nervous laughs came, but it was all awkwardly uncomfortable, frayed by everyone's sleepless state. Winston gave them all a look that quieted the last of the rabble.

“I may not be an expert on weather, but what I know, along with the reports from the international monitoring stations say it’s an event that has never before been recorded. On top of that, it’s breaking records of comparable weather systems. Everyone is calling it an anomaly beyond coincidence. Honestly, I'm not sure what we're looking at here, and so I ask Agent Mei Ling Zhou to take the floor, and give her opinion.”

All eyes turned to Mei, including hers, which she hoped were projecting support. She was curious if she would finish what she had been saying earlier.

“Y...yes. Um, I have, well, quite a lot to add,” Mei mirrored Winston as she slid her glasses up her nose, “I was explaining a moment ago, that this anomaly is familiar to me. I was there.”

An unusual level of silence fell over the room, as if everyone had held their breath. They all knew tangentially about her ordeal, but there were no details. She was pretty sure no one person in the agency knew the whole story anymore.

She repeated what she had said earlier, and attention was sharply focused on her from all angles as she continued, “When I woke up, I had...well, a lot of alone time. I was able to route power from the solar energy banks, and reboot the systems enough to recover the data from prior to, and during the storms that was never broadcast. The information that had been unretrievable from the mainland once the emergency power had put all the computer systems on standby in the days after the mission had been declared a failure. The data that the outside world never saw when the recovery efforts were abandoned as Overwatch dissolved.”

There was a chill in the air among everyone. The realizations that no one had ever made. Yes, she had been frozen. Yes, by freak accident, no one knew she had survived. But, she was miraculously
recovered, and all was well! She'd gone from asleep to on her way back home as far as everyone imagined it.

Now the reality was more terrifying. No one wanted to think about how it felt to be alone, waking up to all your colleagues having died, then having to survive long enough to find a way to call for help when everyone had long since written you off.

*Oh, Mei.*

“Well, like I said, I had lots of time,” Mei smiled the way she always did, to make everyone else feel at ease when she was probably shredded inside, “I looked over the readings. I spent a lot of time looking at them…”

Mei trailed off for a moment, and Lena imagined how she had spent many quiet hours, days...weeks, alone pouring over the data for the storm that she knew should have been her end. Mei, her curious mind, slaving over the readings to see what had gone wrong. Why she had come out the other side of that error. How she must have tortured herself on what she could have, should have, would have done.

“...sorry, sorry,” Mei took a centering breath and her eyes seemed to return to the past, ”anyway, I could never make the data line up. It had been an anomaly on so many levels, it- well, it couldn’t be coincidence.”

Mei looked around the table at all of them, eyes bold, “sound familiar?”

“So...you think they are connected? How? It’s not like someone can create weather…” Winston’s voice trailed off as Mei looked on at him significantly.

“I thought so too. I thought I had lost my mind, staring at the patterns,” the girl who had been frozen in time dropped her eyes as if she was ashamed, “then I looked out the window...and I...felt the same way I had that day. I had that same feeling inside.”

She watched Mei’s glance quickly steal over to the two Junkers meaningfully, but what that meaning was had been lost on her. When they had leaned back toward her, pulled in by whatever force was surrounding them after last night, her eyes had snapped back to the map.

“I, well, I don’t mean to sound rude. Forgive, me, but is there anything more than a feeling. Did you find anything else that might be significant with fresh eyes?” Mercy piped in, pressing in her way that coated her need in kindness.

“I am a scientist you know,” Mei let herself smirk, and Mercy responded in kind, “but my data is limited, and I can’t actually prove my theories, as the facilities have degraded so much since the Cryostasis.”

“An abstract on the theory will suffice, I’m sure,” Mercy smiled on.

Mei took a deep breath and nodded before continuing on.

“Well, first- the Antarctic storm had a nearly identical structure. While this type of storm isn’t unusual for that region, it had come in an off time of year, and with a strength never before recorded. Not even with all the weather conditions changing due to the global pollution crisis,” Mei walked along the edge of the table looking closely at the projection of the current storm, “it was an anomaly among anomaly- just like this. When it first appeared, the research team was excited to gather data on one of the very systems we were trying to understand the origins of. Quickly though, unusual, and contradictory data started to pour in.”
Mei walked over to the console where Winston had been standing, and he had put his hand out to offer her the controls. She input some commands, “Athena, could you please display the map of the Ecopoint, along with these data points as I explain what I mean.”

Athena confirmed, and the display was changed. A small Ecopoint was marked on a satellite image of the system as it developed unusually fast over the ocean off the coast of the area where the facility was located. The animation of the storm’s genesis played on loop as she went up to the holo-table to continue her explanation. Her audience tied to the unfolding story.

“So, here it is as seen by the outside world, but no one pays any attention to stuff that happens in the Arctic beyond climate scientists. Thus why such a storm wasn’t widely reported outside of a quick mention. However,” Mei turned on two streams of weather data, “as you can see, the readings we were getting are not nearly as strong as the actual measurements of the storm being recorded by the global meteorological surveys. Data that wasn't relayed to us until it was too late.”

Lena watched as the storm displayed in two entirely different ways on each screen. What the scientists stationed at the Ecopoint saw, was nothing like what was physically being proven by satellite feed to be happening.

“How could something like that be overlooked? Surely the mainland mission control contact for the base had to have sent warnings?” Reinheardt’s voice boomed indignantly at the read outs.

“Well, we did finally get the warning, but the weather system had already started to move inland by this point. We thought the lack of message was due to a reported damage of a long range communication relay set up near the coast. The warning came just in time for us to begin on the cryostasis prep,” she showed the image hiccup, as the data refreshed, showing the actual storm trajectory on both screens.

“I see that some of the data points along the coasts continued to record through the whole event, here and here,” Winston pointed to the pinging dots on the map, “the wind speed and pressure read outs here show an accurate measure of the severity of the coming system. Why was such a discrepancy ignored?”

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“I see that some of the data points along the coasts continued to record through the whole event, here and here,” Winston pointed to the pinging dots on the map, “the wind speed and pressure read outs here show an accurate measure of the severity of the coming system. Why was such a discrepancy ignored?”

“Well, we did finally get the warning, but the weather system had already started to move inland by this point. We thought the lack of message was due to a reported damage of a long range communication relay set up near the coast. The warning came just in time for us to begin on the cryostasis prep,” she showed the image hiccup, as the data refreshed, showing the actual storm trajectory on both screens.

“I see that some of the data points along the coasts continued to record through the whole event, here and here,” Winston pointed to the pinging dots on the map, “the wind speed and pressure read outs here show an accurate measure of the severity of the coming system. Why was such a discrepancy ignored?”

“We always took all the precautions necessary, and our outside contact always confirmed the error. However the tech team could never isolate where the errors were originating from, and since our scientific instrumentation seemed to be functioning properly, the team leads decided to approach warnings with a double checking procedure,” Mei paused to show the various read outs from the day of the event, “so when we got the wind speed readings that morning, we reached out to mission control, and got radio silence. Since we couldn’t confirm we went on weather alert just to be safe. If you can see here, the readings you spoke of were high, but not out of the ordinary for a large system, even if it was a bit early in the season. So we treated it like our procedures called for.”

A video feed from the control center of the base started to play in fast forward, showing workers
securing it, and bringing in equipment, as procedures would call for at any Watchpoint or Ecopoint facing a major weather event.

“It wasn't until a bit after breakfast that the long range returned with updated information, and accurate readings as the storm made landfall.”

A full on scramble took over the screen, everyone’s face serious as new preparations jumped into action. A knot coiled in Lena’s throat as she watched all the faces, all the people, who had been lost. She even realized she had spotted Mei at one of the stations, next to a kind looking woman, after a few hours had passed in the video.

“With the data we had, and the errors that we’d been seeing, it never occurred data might not be reaching us at all. There was always a reading, it just wasn't always accurate. This time, we didn’t see the real numbers until it was too late. Honestly, I never connected it until now. Look…”

Mei input some new commands, and a large number of operational feeds from the base’s activity on that day popped up. Mei looked on grimly, as if something had fallen into place for her. Her demeanor became frantic, she moved around the images, and flicked through the data like she was about to fall over the edge of something.

“Right here!! Here it is!” Mei pointed excitedly to some charts and spreadsheets, which only Winston seemed to garner an instant understanding of, “Okay, look at this- the real time data from mission control shows the storm forming, moving over the base, and then quickly dissipating. Here,” she moved the video back to where the storm made landfall, “is where our data started to match the actual readings. At the very moment we also lose long range comms. I never noticed before, and neither would the operators for those stations. The two things barely had anything to do with each other. The timing would have been lost in the chaos.”

“The data was being manipulated purposefully…” Winston’s expression grew wide, and you could practically hear teeth grinding from Morrison and Mercy, “…from inside the operation…”

“Exactly!” Mei sounded like she had just found a cure for a long suffered ailment.

“Who? Why?” Morrison’s voice growled out, so many new questions about how things had ended up settled into the anger of it.

“I’m not sure, but it would explain some other strange things I found when I was looking over why...the life support systems had malfunctioned.”

A new series of numbers displayed. Medical team support readings, showing the system errors, and warnings, alongside the readings that slowly began to display the fatalities.

“As you can see, these life support readings exclude the bank of pods which I had been in. As they systems start to, uh..as they start to fail, you can see the power is being re-routed somewhere. I could never figure it out,” Mei brought up an independent data stream, for her own life support pod, “you can see my system nearly underwent the same failure, then…”

The display showed the draining power, but suddenly, a new source kicked in. An automated re-routing of the power no longer being supplied to the other pods.

“They didn’t fail…” Lena heard herself gasp at the realization she had made out loud, “someone made it look like they did. They had been turned off.”

A murmur of horror crossed the agents, and Lena couldn't take her eyes off the gentle steady blip of Mei’s vitals on the screen.
“Why weren't yours as well then,” Mercy pondered at the data?

“That's what I always wondered, even when I thought it had been an accident, or system error. Why just me? Now I understand. The systems had been tampered with from the mission control side, not in person. I came to this conclusion when I remembered we had to scramble emergency power to run all the pods when an accident with a crane destroyed our main generators. Which, I'm pretty sure, was actually an accident, but the solution changed their plans.”

Mei zoomed in on the console where she had been watching way back then, as a boom fell, barely visible.

“The generators to power the pods had to be manually turned on, and off. The last five emergency pods all relied entirely on that power source, but it was being repaired, and thus it was shut down when the storm had struck. So, those five pods hadn't been online when the system was sabotaged,” Mei held a hand over her mouth as the display flashed in the glare on her glasses.

“That's why your pod didn’t shut down. Why it was able to stay functioning for so many years beyond the allotted power requirement. Why it had opened, as theirs should have, when the power supply finally did fail. There was no error, your pod was functioning as it should. The system thought yours was the only active pod, and routed all emergency life support to you!” Winston had followed her to the same conclusion, and everyone was stunned at the implications.

“The main emergency system protocol controlled the pods and their timers, and that was centralized in the outside mission command. When the saboteur terminated the emergency program of the other pods to shut down as if they were empty, the local control which my pod was connected to when it rebooted, defaulted to a mode that required external manual input to stop the process. No direct signal had ever been sent to my pod from mission control, as it wasn't online when the command had been input into the system,” Mei’s realization came almost breathlessly.

Lena knew she had always bared a guilt for surviving, but hopefully now she could see it hadn’t been anything she had any control over. Anything she could have stopped.

“So, how does this explain the storm? Did the saboteurs know the storm was coming?” Hanzo weighed in on the proceedings.

“That's the other thing. I don’t think those other anomalous readings were errors,” Mei pulled the list back up onto the screen, “they all happened far enough away there could be no visual confirmation, and when I look over the data on base, and the data from the mission control satellite images I seeing two conflicting things again.”

Lena figured the details were too subtle for her to get, but a few of the more numbers oriented types seemed to be pretty convinced.

“Remember when I said mission control had sent us satellite of, 'clear skies' when those warnings had been show to be errors? Well, based on pressure readings, and wind direction from hand operated equipment on base- the satellite images don't add up either.”

“You're right!!” Winston input some of his own calculations.

“Could ya kindly explain for the rest of the class,” McCree intoned sarcastically.

“According to these readings at the Ecopoint, it would be scientifically impossible for the surrounding atmosphere to look like these satellite images. In fact if you consider the distance some of the warnings were coming from, our readings confirm the existence of large developing storms.
But they all dissipated so quickly that I think no one thought the readings could be accurate, and accepted the sabotaged information we were getting from mission control as the accurate data,” Mei looked grim, and Lena saw she wasn't the only one who was worried about her.

The two Junker’s hadn’t taken their eyes off of her as everyone else was glued to the display.

“Wait, so yer sayin’ someone was testin’ out their storm...machine or somthin’?” McCree’s statement sounded sarcastic, but he didn't necessarily seem to write off the idea completely.

“I think these were failed attempts. The distances from the base to the beacons transmitting the warnings that were supposed to be in error are very similar each time, just from a different location. It’s possible that whatever technology is capable of making such a system develop still requires some cooperation from nature for the genesis of such an event,” she pondered at the screen as if the data might speak.

“I can generate a hypothetical model based on the data as compared to the confirmed storm that hit the Ecopoint,” Athena chimed in, and with a nod went to work.

Storms swirled up on the screen, but never could fully materialize, as if they sputtered out before they could gain momentum. They each matched the signature of the storm that had succeeded.

Lena watched as they all evaporated, until the last had succeeded, plowing inland toward the base.

“This….seems impossible,” Torbjorn even sounded stunned at the existence of such a thing.

“You think the people we are dealing with now have this technology? They crippled the city, because they didn't just know the storm was coming- they created it?” It was Pharah who spoke this time, her tone hushed.

“A weapon beyond the destruction of explosives, beyond what any one munition could create, total devastation on a scale that even the most heavily sanctioned weapons of mass destruction could achieve,” Winston looked on in horror at the cruel genius of it, “no warning systems. No way to stop it, or mitigate damage, it creates a scenario that makes the outcome obvious, but rescue impossible without additional heavy loss. Especially when infrastructure is destroyed, and even more so in a city that has none for dealing with this type of natural disaster, or unnatural, as it were.”

“A uniquely sadistic tactic to create fear, terror, and hopelessness,” a tear rolled down Pharah’s cheek.

A startling sight to see such a stoic soldier, so sure of the potential for hope in the world, now knowing how utterly helpless she was to stop such a senseless act of violence. This injustice.

“It's a display,” Morrison’s hands gripped at the edge of the holo-table, “they’re showing off what they can do. They don’t even want anything from this besides to send a message. To create a stage. Fucking monsters.”

His fists slammed down on the display causing it to blink for a moment as the room went silent beyond the sobbing tears of one young girl in the back. Nadia, who held her hands over the ears of the children as she collapsed to the ground.

Lena noticed there weren’t many dry eyes in the room, knowing they had just escaped what might be one of the single most devastating attacks in recent history. Knowing so few would make it to the other side. Knowing none of them could change that.

Then Lena looked at Mei.
Mei who was the only person she knew who would have been involved in the development of a weather altering technology. Mei, who would always find a way to blame herself.

“I need to look over this data more, and speak to Agent Zhou, and some of the other senior officers. For now, we should be landing in about 4 hours, please get some rest, and we will update you when we know anything new. Thank you all.”

She can’t take much more Winston, can’t you see?!

Lena screamed inside, and zipped over to Winston for a word, “there is a lot more to this for her, please, let me be there for support while you go over all this mess.”

Winston’s thoughtful eyes darted over her begging face, “yes, of course, it’s not going to be easy, and I’m sure she wouldn't mind the extra energy you bring to everything.”

“I knew you’d see it my way!”

Lena put on the brightest smile she could manage in the situation, and gave a teasing fake punch on Winston's arm, which he had learned not to try and return as his restraint wasn't as...restrained.

“Thank you, Lena. I mean it,” Mei shuffled up to her, surely overhearing.

“Nothing to it, luv! You know I always got your back!”

Chapter End Notes

edit: I took out the preview for the next chapter as I have posted it!

Wow! Thanks for slogging through that one! Honestly doing long explanation heavy chapters like this isn't really my favorite way to handle things, but time is a factor, and I want to be able to get to the erm.. Happier bits sooner than dragging this part out over several chapters. Hopefully this part still holds interesting revelations, dispute everyone having to be in work mode. The actual progression bit was fun to write, and hopefully adds to what's going on!

I added in the bit of preview so my last cliff hanger is less completely teetering on the edge. She's not saying she doesn't have feelings... More on that in the next one!

Chapter title is a song by The National with the same title. All reviews and kind words have been an amazing motivation as always!!
A Weight to Bare

Chapter Notes

Warnings: some elements of the bullying and language seen in the previous chapter with similar themes.
(also, hurray for another long one- I hope?)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Hog took a look across the holomap that still rotated idly over the table, he could see Mei up the stairs in the helm as Tracer hovered nearby. Winston gesticulated towards some data on a screen, and it was hard to see through the cracked glass of his mask, but he knew it was all very grim and serious.

He took a deep breath. He wished it could be him there, helping Mei through this. Not that he thought Lena wasn’t a good comfort, it was more selfish than that. He wanted it to be him, and Rat, because that's what she wanted, not just what they wanted. After all, they had promised to have her back.

Now, he could only watch hers turned to him with heavy shoulders, but it wasn't their place if she needed space. Wasn't something she had asked. At least not right now. Right?

He caught Mei giving a quick glance over her shoulder, and her eyes met his through the blurred lights of the hologram. She gave him a smile, that smile. Her smile. A smile that reminded him why it was worth the wait for all the answers to all the questions that still hung in his mind after earlier.

How she could give him so much in a moment. That was the kinda thing that made it worth fighting for what comes next.

Right now though, he could barely process the state of things with all the information that had just been thrown out. More so after what had happened. After the last thing she’d said to them…

...“I can’t,” her voice rang in his head, “you don’t understand! I can’t say it!”

“Can't say it...say what? I...” Junkrat’s voice had been confused, but hopeful, and Hog felt it too.

A wound that you’d forgotten reopening all over. At the waiting. At the unknown. It stabbed through them both.

“You...you don’t gotta say nothin’ you don't feel,” Hog’s words choked out, “but now you know how we do.”

He hardly believed he was saying it even as it came out. He wanted her to love them, but they knew she might not. That it was so soon. He wasn’t surprised, but it didn’t seem to stop the hurt.

“I...I can’t, don’t you get it?” Her voice was turmoil, it trembled with the same chaos they both felt at hearing the words she formed with it, “everyone I ever cared about in that way- they're all gone. So, don't you see? I just...I can't because it's my fault. I loved them, and they're all...dead.”
She had made an awful noise at the end, as if that syllable, that word, had never formed before in her throat, and it had to carve its way out to produce the sound.

It hurt to hear.

Yet, there was something there. Something that hadn’t been a rejection.

Then, Tracer had called out to them in the hall, and they were all numb. Floating through a shit reality, with a shit feeling hanging over them.

Now, he knew that, “I can’t” wasn’t necessarily, “I couldn’t”. Better yet wasn’t, “I don’t”. That little spark that all this friction had released with one more smile. Something beautiful and warm for the long cold nights ahead.

There was still an unfolding disaster ahead of them, a radiant darkness. They still had to untangle the feeling behind all this hurt, to understand Mei, before all that pain came undone. Show her why it wasn’t hers to carry alone, it didn’t have to be.

He was still pulling himself through so much of what she’d said. What he was sure she was about to tell them before they’d been whisked away here. When they’d had a moment together and their guards were down, and their fears and worries set aside.

His train of thought was interrupted suddenly when Dani had come to pull at his sleeve with her little hands, and tired eyes, “come sit with us, okay?”

He looked over to where Junkrat had already followed them all in the aftermath of the debriefing. Pappy was sitting in the curve of the booth at the other end of the ship talking at Rat slowly, as if he could understand any better that way. Art was tucked under Nadia’s arm between her and Pappy doing his best to translate.

They looked like a fussy family sitting down for dinner. Hog smiled.

Dani finally dragged him back over to join them, letting go of his sleeve as she ducked under the table, and came up on the other side of Nadia along the long side of the bench, pushing Kyle to the very edge. She’d beckoned Hog to take a seat, and he finally joined Junkrat sitting on the other outside end of the L shaped booth, squeezing Junkrat toward Pappy with a grouchy protest from the both of them.

A few quiet moments passed around the table as everyone settled in against the immense unease surrounding the news they’d all received. Hog saw it all across the room as well, the other agents all finding their own place, and their own comforts in each other.

It reminded him so much of the past, when he had to see the fallout of a disaster he was much closer to the center of. He tried to find something else to pay attention to.

It was about then that Mercy had come across the room, and addressed Pappy, “Sir, I understand you are the current guardian of the young boy here?” She pointed toward Art with a gentle smile.

“I’m his brother,” Leo interrupted anyone else who was going to speak up, standing from where he had been sulking on the floor nearby.

Art almost spoke up to translate when she answered back in their native tongue, “I see. Well, I was hoping you’d give me leave to treat his wound before the temporary measures wear off.”
She wore a pinched look which Hog took to mean that letting the meds wear off was a bad idea. Junkrat had sat up at full attention, even before Hog had let him in on what was going on, at seeing Mercy address the kid.

“Mr. Fawkes, I’d like to see you too, your injuries were fairly serious,” she raised an eyebrow as Rat gave a huff, crossing his arms over his chest, and covering the weird bandage hiding the place where a damn syringe had been hanging out of him.

Rat wasn’t much for being doctored. Toughest man Hog knew who was afraid of needles on top of being tender headed.

“Put on a brave face Rats, little eyes are watching,” he did his best to whisper, pointing his chin at Art, who seemed a bit frightened at the prospect too.

Rat immediately straightened up again, and put on a toothy grin, “yeah, course. No biggie, I love gettin all patched up,” he looked over at Art, “the doc’s got a real knack for it too, quick and painless. Right Hoggie?”

He allowed himself a small laugh, but gave a firm nod of agreement at Rat’s redoubled morale efforts.

“You don’t gotta worry a bit, in fact- Leo, I can sit with him if ya want? Ya know, we can go together,” Junkrat put his hand up to pretend he was whispering to Art, “I hear she gives good kids candy. Wonder if they got any in this tin can?”

Art finally cracked a smile, and looked over hopefully at Leo who could only manage a response of, “yeah, whatever,” before plunking himself back onto the floor.

Hog got up to let Rat out, and Kyle lifted Art over his lap.

“Oh, yes, i almost forgot! It was you right?” Mercy turned back to address Pappy, “who lent us the lighter earlier. Thank you, sir.”

She dipped her head at the old timer, and he tilted an imaginary hat back to her in return- as suave as any old man Hog had ever seen.

“Oh, hey that’s right, never gave it back did I?” Rat dug into his pocket after Hog had filled him in, and produced the small silver lighter, sliding it across the table to Pappy.

The old man smiled at the tiny object as he intercepted it, “lots of stories in this thing, I’m glad it could help save another life, ha!” He held it up, and Rat nodded as if he understood before challenging Art to a race to the med bay. Or med corner as it were.

Silence returned to the table, and it wasn’t long before Dani had asked to go check on Art. Nadia agreed to take her, and Kyle had fallen asleep not long after they’d left.

A strange family, but it was hard to deny what this little group was going to be to each other. That's what it meant to survive together.

“So,” Pappy broke the silence, “you two told that pretty young lady how you feel about her yet?”

Pappy was nothing if not a sly, direct, cheeky old motherfucker.

“That's what's on your mind at a time like this, huh?” He let a single laugh rupture out at the statement. Hog found himself able to appreciate that kind of candidness at this hour.
The old man shrugged, “can’t imagine a much better time than this, wouldn't you say? To think about the things that matter.”

They had both fallen a bit at the seriousness in the reality of their situation, but Hog had hummed an agreement.

“You really got yourself into a mess, ay?” Pappy let himself have a roll of laughter at that, in his good natured sorta way.

He couldn't much disagree with that either, rubbing at his face with his hand where the mask felt heavy on his jaw.

They drifted into silence once again as Pappy spun his cane around in his grip, but not for long.

“You know, I was married once? Love of my life, she was,” Pappy’s hands came off the cane settled between his legs, and moved to rest in front of him on the table, “the one and only. Then she had to go and die on me!”

Hog furrowed his brow at the nonchalant way he said it.

“She gave me this,” Pappy unfolded his hand from around the lighter that Rat had returned to him, “I was just a pup then. When I met her. Or, I dunno, I guess survived a plane crash with her, if I'm bein’ accurate.”

His furrow quickly shifted to a raised brow at that last bit. Hog knew a good hook when he saw it, and If the old man had wanted to bait him into listening to his life story it had worked.

Pappy gave a knowing smile, and flipped the lighter around his hand in a surprisingly nimble motion, showing Hog the initials engraved along the side, and a single date carved at the bottom.

“We were running a big mission when the flak cut us down. We were the only two who made it out of the bunch, bailed out, and managed to find each other behind enemy lines in the dead of one of the harshest winters on record,” he smiled at the lighter like an old friend.

“Guess ya made it out in the end?” Hog laughed at Pappy’s intentional cliffhanger, leaving the story there while Hog floundered. A flare for the dramatic- like someone he knew.

“Har, har, but yes. I had a lighter on me, bad habits and all, but the fire kept us from turning into icicles that night. So she gifted me this on the day we got back- day we got married. Put the rest of the lighter fluid in it from the one I had on me that night.”

Hog knew the look the old man was wearing. Painful nostalgia, sweet memories of times that could never be again. And not that you'd want them.

Change happens for a reason, in Hog’s case change had to come, least that's how he let himself remember the ones he'd made. He's caused. Still, just caus something had to be done didn't make it easy. Didn't make you miss what used to be.

Hog knew a lot about those kinds of memories.

“So, you guys had a bunch of kids, lived happily ever after?” Hog knew it wasn't the case, something in the way he talked about her that was too distant, to long long ago.

“Ha, nah. You know anything that works out that way?” Pappy flipped the lighter around, “did make me quit smoking though. Couldn't carry any other lighter, but I also couldn't bring myself to
waste the flame from that night, ya know?”

“So ya meant it when you said it saved another life then? Your wife, and Mei?” Hog looked at him softly as Pappy snapped it shut.

“Shit, I thought you were about to get all preachy on me, and the smokin’. She sure never let me forget it,” Pappy laughed in a way that sounded as if it was meant for something else said in a distant memory.

They both let it hang there for a bit before Pappy started in again.

“You know, I only ever lit this thing...what, three times?” The old man breathed out after a long thought. Hog didn’t get it, but he had a feeling the old timer was reliving an adventure that’d eventually be his answer.

“You gonna lay some relationship guru advice on me, old man?” Hog laughed, but they both knew there wasn’t any real mocking.

“Ha! Hell no, I ain’t no relationship advice nothing! Rosi would tell ya that!” Pappy held the lighter back up, flipping it to the other side. Four new initials, and three dates, one scratched out.

“Oh, ho- another woman?” Hog shimmied his shoulders in a way that made Pappy burst out in laughter, “so what happened there?”

“What didn’t?” Pappy waved a hand dismissively.

“So why did Rat have that thing if it was so important to you?” Hog cut back in to try and get more of the story from his fellow insomniac.

“Needed a fire to save the life of a girl he loves,” Pappy smirked knowingly, “figured that was worth adding a fourth flame.”

Pappy shook it back and forth wiggling around the small bit of fluid still lingering inside, “looks like it has a few more left in it too.”

The old man suddenly seemed fatigued, setting the well worn keepsake upright on the table in front of him, and returning to his normal sitting position- hands on top of his cane.

“Glad it found your young man, seems it’s saved a few more precious people tonight, if I’m counting,” Pappy looked over where they had disappeared into the lower deck toward the med bay, “very glad.”

Hog felt a pang, knowing how hard it was to lose so much in one night. Happy to know how much they still had, at least.

Ugly memories flooded back. Hog knew what it was like to lose, and to survive. In his case, he knew what it meant, and why it had been done, and he’d do it again. It had been necessary. When it had been him, he knew what it was like to lose everything, but because you chose to. You made that choice for so many others, and it had to be done. To survive.

He pondered the storm below, the destructive force of thousands of exploding omniums. Maybe less radioactive fallout, but this, how this was happening, it would be just as devastating. He wondered if the people responsible thought it was something they had to do. That it was necessary. A choice they had made for so many. Something to survive.
He was sick to his stomach.

“You look a bit green, everything ok?” Pappy’s hand tapped gently on his arm snapping him out of the panic inducing cycle of thought.

“Oh, yeah. Just remembering some things. Rough shit, stuff I wanna not think on too much right this moment, thanks very much,” he was saying to his mind as much as making a statement, “nothing as interesting as old flames.”

“Rough shit, huh? Sounds like old flames to me!” Pappy patted his arm once more before returning to his pensive posture, but they both chuckled at his comment.

“So three times,” Hog tried to bring things back around, “tell me about it.”

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Junkrat watched patiently as the doc went to work on his arm. Tried not to let his gaze wander to the helm across the ship, where Mei was still talking things out with Winston. As Tracer stayed at her side for support.

I should be there for her!

Should or wanted to, he knew it was a bit of both. He knew it was selfish, and it was pushy to want more. To want to know what she’d meant. He was sure Hog had felt the same, though with all this mess they’d had no time to talk about any of what had happened earlier.

How much he wished he could have kissed her. How much he wished he could just march himself over there and do it right now. How utterly not out of the realm of expectation it would be for him to do something so rash, and clumsy. Damn them all! He didn’t care about how they looked at him like he had no sense.

He did however care about what she would think, and he knew that it wouldn't be very highly. So he sat patiently, and watched her shoulders tense as she explained something on a monitor to her small audience. Even though he told himself he should focus on his arm.

After a moment though, she must have felt his eyes on her, because it was as if she had looked straight at him when she turned around for a moment as Winston was distracted, pouring over some incoming transmission, while she waited. She smiled softly at him. That smile. Her smile.

He tried his best not to let the grin he returned be as dumb as he knew it looked hanging on his tired face. He held up a hand to wave, but was immediately called back to reality as Mercy cleared her throat following his gaze.

“Mr. Fawkes, please, you must stay still,” she chided, “it will go much faster that way.”

“Sorry bout that doc, just..uh,” he floundered for an excuse, but ended up just opening and closing his mouth a few times.

She gave a sideways grin down at his injury, making a tutting noise at his avoidance, “Checking on Agent Zhou?” She offered the simplest version of the answers he had running through his head.
“Uh, yup. Heh,” he went to scratch at the back of his head until Mercy cleared her throat again to remind him to stop fidgeting.

Man, were they that transparent about all this? He guessed he was never to good at hiding how he was feeling, he’d always been the enthusiastic sharer type, but he didn’t want to put that pressure on Mei.

Or that embarrassment…

He let his expression hang again when he noticed Mei’s attention had returned fully back to the debriefing on the helm.

“Does it hurt?” Art looked up at his face with worry as the strange gold lights weaved around Junkrat’s body.

“Oh, nah! No way. Easy peasy, ankle biter, got nothin’ to worry bout’,” he let his voice pitch up into something almost sing-songish, “fact, you're probably gonna feel better than ya have all night. This pretty lady is like a real life angel, ya know?”

Art looked up at her less skeptically than you’d think given the claim, although it wasn't hard to imagine with her glowing complexion, golden locks, and angelic looks. Wasn’t too much a stretch to say anyway with the healing powers. Plus, the damn wings, and halo didn't hurt the image.

“You are?” Art finally mused up at her breathlessly.

Mercy giggled in a way that could only be described as lilting, “I think Mr. Fawkes means to say my actual name is Angela.”

“Hey, I said what I mean, doc. What, with your getup, and the, ya know,” he motioned to the staff as it spilled out light, “heavenly healing beams, and such. Figured you're as close as it's gonna get.”

She pursed her lips, and he knew she was trying not to laugh at him.

“She is very pretty,” Art whispered to him, and Mercy worked harder to suppress her laughter at the situation.

“Thank you, but I am only a humble medical Doctor, and Mr. Fawkes is a world class flatterer I see,” Mercy smiled at them, reaching out to turn Junkrat’s arm over and inspect it, “in addition to being good as new, if I do say so myself!”

“In yer humble opinion,” Junkrat stuck his tongue out at her dismissal of his praise, so closely followed by her own self admiration, but upon giving his shoulder a good roll, added, “not that you're wrong, I guess. Feels pretty awesome actually.”

“Don’t strain yourself, part of the effect makes you feel like your strength has returned, but you still have plenty of healing left to do. You still need to rest while you can. Now, if you please,” she motioned for him to stand and he complied, “thank you. Could you give our young friend here a boost up for his turn, please Mr. Fawkes?”

He gave her a small glare, “if ya stop callin’ me that. It’s Junkrat, yeah? Junkrat. Haven't we been over this? Shouldn't be too hard to remember, what with that sciency brain you got,” he twirled a finger around closely toward her face before quickly turning to bend down, and pick up Art, “Alright, up ya go!”

Art let out a giggle as Junkrat gave him a twirl when he hoisted the kid into the air, and added sound
effects to the whole affair. Mercy held her fist over her mouth, but eventually let out a giggle anyway at the whole spectacle in the end.

“Thank you, Mr...Junkrat,” She smiled, and turned her attention to Art, “so what level of schooling are you in, Art?”

“I’m still in primary, but I’m a whole year ahead for my age,” he smiled brightly, as Mercy started to examine his bandages.

“Wow! So brave, and clever for your age,” Her praise seemed genuine as she turned to Junkrat, “can you please see if Lucio is available to assist me on something?”

He nodded, turning immediately to find the sparky DJ among the other agents. He could read between the lines of Mercy’s even tone- this was going to hurt. No one wanted that. Lucio was good at making you forget the pain.

He spotted the musical man talking with Hana, and the cowboy as Hanzo snoozed in one of the flight seats nearby. It didn’t take long to drag him back over to Mercy. Everyone felt for the kids, especially tonight.

When they got back, they were joined by Dani and Nadia, who had come over to check on Art, and probably him too. He caught the tail end of Mercy’s reply to the young woman holding Dani’s hand, “…good with children. It came as a surprise to me as well.”

“Who’s good with kids?” Lucio smiled, ‘caus I know you gotta be talkin’ about me?”

The musical man did a little spin on his skates, and flashed his winning smile at Art, who beamed in return.

“So you really are him, huh? The guy from the radio?” Art gave him an adoring look, and Junkrat tried not to roll his eyes, even though he earnestly had come to like Lucio just as much as everyone else.

“You know it! Want me to drop some beats while we get you all patched up?” Lucio had been fitted back into much of his gear, and he held up the impressive green glow of it to show a dazzled Art.

I am not jealous of who that lil’ punk likes best...caus I know it's me.

He forced himself to smile at his own exhausted pettiness as Art turned back to him, “Hey, Junkrat! You’re so cool- you work with angels, annnnd people from the radio! Wow, I hope I can have a cool job one day like you!”

“You aven’t seen nothin’ yet kid! Wait till I show you what I get up to in me off hours!” He gave a huge proud grin, straightening himself up, and tucking his thumbs into the part of his harness he wore under the long black coat he’d finally had returned to him.

“Oh, oh, tell us! Tell us!” Dani chimed in jumping away.

Lucio smiled at them, but Mercy seemed slightly unsure if it was a good idea to indulge grade school kids in tales of high explosives.

Not that Junkrat saw a problem with his favorite pastime. Kids gotta learn this stuff sometime, right?

“Blowin’ stuff up! Your pal Rat is the king of kaboom!” He made a big explosive gesture with his arms flailing about, and Lucio filled in an impressive sound effect as Mercy unwound the last of the
bandage from the boy’s arm.

“That’s badass!” Art yelled out as Nadia shot him a look that told him to watch his language, and he gave a little sly look continuing back to Rat, “I’m gonna be just like you when I grow up, okay?!”

The kiddo raised his uninjured arm into the air enthusiastically, and Dani joined him.

“Me too! Me too!” Dani jumped up and down, and the two kiddo’s high fived.

It was just about then a wince crumpled Art’s face, and he was sure everyone gathered around felt it on some level with him. Dani afraid it had been her fault.

“Almost done with this bit, you’re doing well Art,” Mercy soothed.

Junkrat could practically feel the raw air hitting Art’s nerves, the ugly reality of seeing the damage when he no longer had the benefit of shock.

“Art, hey man, tell me sometin’ about yourself, lil’ man!” Lucio immediately worked to divert his attention, and Nada tried to steer Dani away from seeing the gore even though she refused to leave him. Even more so now.

_They are good kids. Strong._

“Uh, like...what?” Art’s voice wavered. It was weak, and Rat could see the blood draining from his face.

He could remember what it felt like to really see it for the first time. A part of you just gone. Missing.

“Tell me about your favorite character from a show!” Junkrat butted in.

“Oh, um...I like the show, it's called...The City,” Art wobbled in his seat a little as Mercy gave him an injection around his shoulder.

“I like that one too!” Dani called out to him, trying to help as much as she could, “cept’, well...the hero is lame!”

“Yes! Totally,” Art perked up, he’d focused in on their shared fandom.

“Aww you really think so? I kinda like Inspector Justice, he’s a really nice dude!” Lucio protested, but two small faces of disapproval quickly turned his way.

Rat couldn’t keep up with the show much, it was only broadcast in Spanish here. Subtitles weren't his thing, but he got the gist- and he liked what he could puzzle out.

Some lame clumsy superhero goody goody saved the day from the villain of the week, but the only characters that were any good were some equally bumbling recurring gangster guys. They tended to just be comic relief, and destroy everything in their path. They would always barely get away with it too by blowing something up and….oooohhh.

_Okay, so I guess I see why I always liked them._

“Are you serious!” Art huffed out as Mercy worked around him moving his hand to admonish the ever optimistic, and sunny Lucio, “He’s so boring- like, he always wins, even against the really good villains! He's so one dimensional!”

“And everything comes so easy for him,” Nadia shrugged, adding to their agreement.
“I like the Briar Street Boys best, no matter how dumb their plans are, they always get away. Plus the cool explosions! Serves Inspector Justice right. Least they add a funny bit to the over serious parts where the overplay the Inspector's drama,” Dani concluded her analysis.

“I'm partial to Lady Lullaby myself,” Mercy had just gotten finished with some of her light treatment with the staff, gently manipulating the angry wound into something that would be suitable for prosthetic hookups to be integrated into.

“Well yeah,” Art gave a bit of a sarcastic huff, turning to look at her with his shoulder shrugged, “everyone loves her, that's a given. She’s basically an…..angel, HEY!”

The two kids suddenly turned to her with a bit of mischievous glee in their eyes, “oh my gosh, you are totally her aren't you!? Like in real life!!”

The two of them lit up as if they had just found out the biggest best secret to ever be held.

“No, no! Nothing like that,” she smiled, inspecting the healed part of Art’s arm, “though, I did meet the comic book author once, a long time ago.”

Another, “no way,” passed between the two kids, as Mercy seemed satisfied with her work.

“Well, there is still much that needs to be done here, but this will do until we can get you to a more advanced surgical facility,” she gently pat him on the shoulder after withdrawing a second injection to return sensation to the repaired upper limb.

“Woah! You seriously are her! I bet he based Lullaby on you, at least!!” Dani looked in amazement, as Art moved his limb now that it wasn’t painful to do so.

Junkrat watched him make circles with it, and then look at the floor, ready to hop off the table. He watched as the boy stopped anyone from offering him help, as he made a few clumsy attempts to get himself to the ground without falling. Junkrat gave them all a sharp eye as they each tried to offer help in turn.

He knew what it meant to find your own way to do things. To accept, and move forward with the reality of your body- even if it was tough. At least Art was proactive about it.

Junkrat hoped he could be there for him when the kid couldn’t be brave anymore, and eventually it would come. The day when it's just too hard, and this is just all such bullshit, and fuck the world for it. He hoped he could be there to agree, and smash something with him, and tell him it's okay to be angry, and it's okay to be okay eventually too.

He thought on how sick he had been of everyone telling him to push through it, or that he’d be stronger caus of what he faced, that he was brave, and a hero, and an inspiration. Fuck. Them. All. It sucks, and it was okay to think so. At the same time, he wasn't broken, or less than whole, or incapable, and it was okay to feel that too.

The good things were his, in the end. The things that did make him more clever. More resourceful. Not in some way that was a shining example for others, because they could shove his pointy metal finger right up that, but because he had earned his skills for himself. His accomplishments were for him, not someone else’s flimsy need to feel motivated or inspired.

He’d survived a lot since then. It made a lot of things harder. It made a lot of them easier to survive.

He hoped he could help this kid through all that, like he had help in his own way during his time of need.
“Junkrat is gonna teach me how to make my own arm, ya know?!” Art informed Mercy, as he smiled over at him.

“Is that so?” Her eyebrows raised at that, “well, Junkrat, you are full of surprises aren't you?”

----------

Mei shook involuntarily at the familiar loneliness she’d imposed on herself. Just when she thought she’d let go of it all, she'd leaned back into a touch. Too close, too familiar. Careless.

She shook at all the things she thought she'd let go, and everything that was left. She shook at the state of things, and how they all tied to her.

She drifted through the information in front of her. Explaining details, corroborating data to theory. Each point, each line, an arrow that shot back towards her. Right into the heart of her.

Careless.

Every part of her just wanted to lie down, back in the snow, where her heart had frozen. Or back into the new arms that had thawed her, but only a little, only for a moment. She wanted to know if she could stay there. Even if she'd already decided she couldn't. Or shouldn't. Or can't.

She had smiled at them still. Despite knowing, despite deciding, because she couldn't help it.

*They said...love, and I said that I can’t. That was my answer...*

Lena put a hand on Mei’s arm to draw her from the confinement of her solitary thoughts.

“You doin’ okay there?” Lenas voice carried a false chipperness, but Mei still appreciated the effort on her part to stay positive.

*Love. They said they love...me. Them. They. Both of them. And me.*

She wished they could be here right now, a different set of voices to pull her back from the edge of her feelings. How selfish was that? She knew it was so much to expect, to want, their comfort for the pain she’d caused herself. Even if she thought it was the right thing to do. It was...right?

*You're being careless!*

“Hey, earth to Mei? What’s gotcha all hung up?” Lena waved a hand in front of her eyes as Mei shook her head to clear the thoughts circling around her.

“I'm sorry! I'm just tired, so much so fast, where were we?” She straightened her glasses and pulled the little blanket she’d been given around her shoulders.

“Still apologizing for everything, I see,” Lena huffed out at her.

“I think we should be able to wrap this up by the time we land,” Winston broke in encouragingly, “I promise we can all get a little rest then. I'm sorry we have to push so hard.”

“Oh, not you too Winston!” Lena complained at their mutual need to atone for every action, good or bad.
“Well, hopefully we can…” Winston was cut off by a loud clanging on the main deck of the transport, and the rush of agents toward the table at the far corner. The table she remembered the Junkers had settled at after Mercy had finished treating Rat, and the little boy.

*Oh, no!*

They all swung around the stairs leading to the main deck as voices started to raise.

“Fuck off,” Leo spit out toward Kyle, “it ain’t like he’s your blood!”

“What the hell is wrong with you? How could you say somethin’ like that?,” Kyle seemed hurt as they squared off near the exit hatch, “we always said we was brothers, Leo!”

She could see Junkrat with Art, arm around his chest, holding him back from getting in the middle of whatever was going on. Hog had planted himself beside the two.

*Oh, no, no!*

“Kyle is my brother, just as much as you are Leo,” Art leaned against Rat’s grip, “you know-probably more than you ever were! He always made sure I had dinner, and he knows my favorite toys, and he’d bring me new books when I made good marks in school. You just ran away any time you could. Pushed me off. He was the only one of you three brothers that ever had time for me! So don’t say stuff like that!”

Mei found herself walking down the steps toward the argument. Toward the other agents ready to step in. The Junkers with their protective looks, Hanzo with his heavy one, Pharah with her fists clenched tight, and Tracer on her toes.

“Oh, what? So this is gonna be your family now?,” Leo bent forward, pointing a finger into Art’s face as he came to eye level. “This is what you want? A bunch of shitty vigilantes, that wannabe gangsta Kyle, some clingy bitch, and the old man...and that, whatever,” Leo gestured toward Dani with a distasteful tone, “guess you fit in with the weirdos huh? You gonna be the useless cripple?”

Junkrat pushed Art behind him, and puffed up toward the boy in front of him, “The fuck he just say? Caus I don’t like the tone. Tell him to change it, or I’m gonna toss him out the hatch.”

Mei almost stepped in, but she couldn’t say she would mind seeing Leo try and fly right about now. Not after everything they’d all been through. To say that, in that way, about two children, she couldn’t say she would lose sleep.

“You listen here, shit for brains, that's your name now by the way,” Hogs warning came in a growl, “you better fucking shut your trap right now, or I'm gonna let him.”

Dani wriggled free of Nadia’s grip, and went to hug Art before quickly swinging around in front of the Junkers, and walking straight for Leo, “The fuck he just say? Caus I don’t like the tone. Tell him to change it, or I’m gonna toss him out the hatch.”

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The young girl held back tears as Leo drew in on himself at being shamed by a child.

“Fine, you keep him then. Ain’t like I was planning on sticking around for some kid I didn’t ask to get saddled with, and the dumbest piece of shit Alex ever recruited,” Leo hissed back at her.

“You can hate yourself all you want, but what could possibly be so wrong with you that you would take it out on your kid brother, and his friend? They’re children,” Mei’s voice wavered with anger,
weighted down with ugly memories of her own tormentors.

She took a step back as Leo rounded on her, “fuck you too bitch, actin’ all high and mighty- you see this piece of shit right here,” he indicated Kyle, “we sent him over to you on the shuttle caus we hoped he’d get the dogshit kicked outta him, but none of ya had any self respect. Dumb bitch just let him talk about you like a whore, and apparently they didn’t have any respect for you either, that fat fuck and…”

Junkrat stopped Leo in his tracks, decking him full out in the jaw at the last bit, followed closely by Pappy swiping his cane into the side of the boy's legs, knocking him on his ass.

“Motherfucker, I think you broke it!!” Leo rubbed at his jaw as blood poured out of his nose.

Nadia held Kyle back from getting his own shot in, and Art was teary eyed, but his white knuckles said he wouldn’t mind getting his own chance.

“Call my boyfriend a fat fuck again, so much as look at Mei, call Dani anything but her name, fucking say a word to Art that isn’t, ‘I’m sorry I’m a sack of shit’, and you won’t have a jaw left,” Junkrat spat out, “enjoy eating through a straw for the next six weeks, ya asshole!”

Mei’s heart clenched at the way they’d all come together to stand for the civilians they’d adopted. How protective Hog, and Rat were of the kids. She wasn’t alone in the cold glare she cast down on the beaten Leo.

“You people are all fucked, crazy assholes!” Leo coward under their gaze as Hog’s hand came down to grip around his collar, dragging him backward along the floor until he hit the wall.

“Look here, shit for brains,” Hog hoisted him up, and slammed him into the seal along the edge of the hatch, putting his palm on the button that opened it, “I have killed better for less.”

Leo strained to turn his head as the hatch cracked open, sending the pressure in the cabin into a wild uproar. Hog let the air suck out the back of Leo’s shirt through the opening, “you gonna mind your manners?”

The boy nodded vigorously as Hog slammed back down onto the control, closing his shirt and some of his hair into the seal. A thud hit the floor as Hog dropped the struggling boy without any warning, his voice harsh, “you might think you were hot shit back home, but I’m sure you see the truth now?”

Leo nodded again, curling up on himself to hide the fact he’d wet himself.

Tracer zipped over to make sure the door had sealed shut as Winston finally interjected, “Do we have a problem here?”

Junkrat turned to scan the room full of approving nods as he grinned, finally letting his expression fall on her, and she couldn’t help but return it, “not anymore.”

Chapter End Notes

Whew! Returning to the main character's POV, hopefully a good little bit of fluff, and angst to balance the bomb of all the info dropped in the last chapter. They should be landing soon, getting some much needed rest, and seeing how things play out for them all. I'm so excited for the next few chapters, and finally tying up some of these threads!
I will also be editing the chapter preview out of the last chapter now that this one is up- just fyi!

As always thank you for the super kind words and encouragement you all give me with each new chapter. This is a super busy season for my work so I haven't, and will continue to lag quite a bit on replies- but I check every day for comments as they put the cheer in my holiday! Thank you all again so much, and if you wanna find a bit of my art, and update announcements for the fic you can follow me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus !!
I'll Tell You

Chapter Notes

Warning: (spoilers) abusive/alcoholic parent

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Things had escalated quickly, though Junkrat wasn't a stranger to violence, but hey- if it works, right?

He had to keep from cheering when Hog had settled things down real fast like, but now everyone had gone to their own corners to wait out the rest of the ride rattled, exhausted, and grumpy as hell.

He'd worn his usual goofy smile when Mei had come down from the bridge to check on them all, and she'd made it a point to chat with him, and Hog for a moment when Leo had finally sulked off to wherever. It was all small talk sure- How's the arm? Your breathing? Will the kid be okay? What's going to happen to the civvies? Is everything...okay, ya know...?

Okay enough...

Before long, too soon, she had to go back to her important work. To memories he could see behind her heavy lidded eyes. Tasks, and recollections he could neither help nor comfort her through. So, their conversation had been quick, and they all felt the empty space where the answers to hard questions didn't have time to fill in empty hearts.

She had given them a few words to keep them through the night, "don't give up on me," she'd smiled at the ground before she'd turned and left him standing there a little slack jawed. A little awed.

He could let himself hope.

It hadn't been long before they had all drifted back to the table. The kids had fallen asleep with damp eyelashes and puffy cheeks. Kyle watched over them, and that young woman Nadia, while they slept. Maybe one day that fuckwit could earn the new family that Junkrat was sure he wasn't even aware he had yet.

Watching them brought on a yawn, and he leaned into his Hoggie, who he knew wouldn't fall asleep until daylight was shining in earnest. Personally, he never took long to knock out, and now was no exception.

... 

"Mrs. Fawkes, we're going to need you to wait here, please mam," a strange voice came as Jamison looked up into the overly bright lights rushing past in the hallway above him.

"It's Miss, and please, that's my baby, ya gotta let me stay with him, please. My baby," his mum's voice was shrill, and frightened.

Sorry, mum...I'm sorry.

"Miss Fawkes, this is a sterile area. I assure you, your son is in good hands, but you have to let us do
our jobs,” the stranger was kind but firm, his white coat making Jamie tense up.

He became aware of the tight grip on his hand just as it started to loosen, as the pain finally caught up with him, and he blacked out.

When he came back around there was a new ceiling, and less pain. Less of any feeling.

"Hey, kiddo!" His mum held his hand once more, standing sharply as he regained consciousness, "how are ya feeling. Talk to me- ya lil' Rat, you!"

She'd let out a pained laugh through her playful tone, and the nickname she liked to use to tease him caught in her throat. Scrawny little scavenger he was, and his mum knew better than any what kind of trouble he liked to get into.

*Sorry. I'm so sorry, I shoulda' listened, mum.*

A heart monitor beeped irritingly in the silence.

He put his effort into regaining control over himself, fighting away the muted feeling the pain meds had left thick over his limbs, as he finally wiggled his toes. His fingers.

Except, one side wouldn't.

"It feels...weird," he lifted his arm looking down at the white sheet covering him.

He hated the way his mum's face got all twisted up, and teary eyed at the empty space. How guilty she looked when he realized what it meant. Like it was her fault, and not his.

"Honey, I love you...I'm so sorry, but your arm..."

...Junkrat felt himself shock back into consciousness, gulping in air, as his hand found itself over his racing heart.

"The nightmare again?" Hog watched him as his chest heaved.

"Just a bit of the hospital," he held up his prosthetic, "one down, heh."

He wiped at the sweat on his forehead, and tried to be aware of his breathing.

"No surprise," Hog looked pointedly at Art, snoozing away after the good doc gave him the once over- and his own numbing pain relievers.

"So, uh" Kyle spoke up, having been listening to them, "you blow it off or something?"

Well, there was everyone's favorite dumb shit question.

"Sorry, know it ain't none of my business," Kyle noticed the displeased eyes that had fallen on him, "uh, just, forget it."

"You're right," Hog huffed, ever the protective one, "none of your business."

Junkrat watched the idiot fidget nervously, and maybe it was exhaustion but he answered in his own way, "I did somethin' that I'd been told not to do. The kinda shit you lose an arm over."
"Oh," was all the kid could manage, looking down at his lap.

"So someone older n' smarter than ya says your an idiot, do yourself a favor, and listen," Hog barked in.

Rat sighed, settling back into his seat while the idiot kid tried to figure out what he was tryin' to say.

"Yeah, I getcha, I guess," Kyle piped back up after a bit, "I just wanna be better for Art, ya know, he's gotta be the toughest person I know- takin' all this without having a meltdown. I got a lot to learn from him, bout bein' a strong person."

"Don't forget it, fuckwit," Hog wheezed out a laugh he was trying to hold back.

Kyle shuffled nervously, but smiled in return.

They all ended up turning back to watch the kids sleep. Hog even seemed to finally drift off after a while, soaking in the comfort of the scene.

Watching them, it provided a firm anchor to the fact that there were still happy, and gentle things in the world. Things worth making a brighter future for.

_Wes, wantin' a better future, huh?

He'd never really dwelled much on it before, but he found his eyes wandering back over to Mei at the thought. The future still had her. Still had heroes.

Maybe he had someone else to learn from too. To be strong beside. To have a better future for. A future with.

--------

Hog was hazy, and then in came the distinct feeling he was about to fall into something he'd tried to forget. Stress had a way of working its way into his dreams.

...

"Charming," the old crow's voice intoned sarcastically as she looked up at Mako with her permanent judgmental glare after Vera had told her the happy news.

Karla was a piece of work, and Mako had already been done with her shit before they'd even gotten here, but he found his eyes wandering back over to Mei at the thought. The future still had her. A fact he'd reminded himself of several times in his head since arriving at this gilded fortress.

"You're even fatter than I remember, Rutledge," Karla observed dismissively while taking another deep swig from the gallon jug sized wineglass clutched in her garish talons, "any luck with that little pet project? Heard you were fired over all that noise you've been making about the treaty."

He felt a low growl in his chest, but Karla's raised eyebrow stopped him short. He wouldn't give her the satisfaction of seeing that she got to him.

"Or did they have to finally let you go, because they couldn't afford to replace all the chairs you sat
in anymore?" Karla let a cruel smile curl up on the edge of her artificially plumped up lips.

"Mother," Vera broke in, fists at her side, voice shaking, "do not talk to him like that. He's the biological father of this baby, and you better get used to treating him with some respect, or, I swear to you, that you'll never know your grandchild."

Vera had never snapped at her mother before. Mako was sure that no one had.

"Child, you will never take that tone with me again..." Karla stepped forward, hand raised, but Mako was quickly between them catching the aging woman's delicate wrist in his hand.

"No, I think she can take whatever tone she likes with whomever she pleases," Mako could hear his angry words bounce around the luxurious entryway, "and if you ever raise a hand to her, I'll make sure it will be the last time you can ever lift that limb again."

Karla glared, but she was in no position to dispute his ability to carry out the threat. Hog was more than happy to let her try him.

"Abel was right! She said this would happen, and she was right," Vera looked on with anger and shock, "I just wanted to try one last time, to be a family, ya know. I should have known better."

Karla sneered, "as if I would care about some bastard whelped out from my disappointment of a daughter, and her harpy girlfriend. Worse yet, you couldn't even find a respectable donor, you had to go wallow around in the pig sty."

"Her wife. Abel is her wife," Mako had finally lost it, Vera had always held her tongue, but he couldn't stand it anymore, "you were invited to the wedding. You'd know if you had ever bothered to be a mother yourself."

Abel loved Vera with all her heart, and Mako loved them both like family. Karla had been out of their life for so long, and she'd never deserved a second chance, and Hog was going to protect his family.

Vera had tears in her eyes, but she was resolute, "we're leaving."

And they had. Abel pulled out of the driveway after they both got back in.

There was no, "I told you so," from his best friend's partner. Just a reassuring hand squeezing hers across the center console, and gentle knowing smiles between the two.

Mako felt warm around their love. His greatest hope was to one day feel that kind of warmth from himself to his partner. To add his own love to the growing family they were making for themselves.

Somewhere inside he felt like he'd already found it, felt it, and his whole life was rushing toward it. Some happy distant future he was working for.

"I'm, uh, so sorry Hogs. Really, I should have listened. I knew she was a bad woman, always would be, but I still put you through that," Vera shifted around in her seat to face him, squished into the back, as she rubbed idly at her belly. Barely showing yet.

"Nah, you did what you needed to do, what you thought was right," he gave her a smile, hopefully a reassuring one as they'd finally pulled back in front of the small ramshackle ALF compound, "but you always have a family, you know. I'll always have your backs."

"I know," Vera beamed at him before turning back into her seat.
Abel rolled down the window to her junked up old beater car to greet her brother Carlos, but he couldn't pick up enough to understand what they were saying.

"Hola, Mako!" Carlos leaned in to greet him, and Mako returned the greeting in his clumsy accent.

"You're gonna have to polish up that vocabulary, man, if you don't want your god baby makin' fun of you behind your back like we do," Carlos laughed as his sister gave him a scolding tap on the arm, but they'd all joined when Vera had finally cracked up.

"I still have, what," He turned to give Vera an assessing look, "five, six months maybe? I got this." Carlos put a fist up, and Hog tapped it with his.

"She better hope it's five if that kiddo inherits your hands," Abel teased as they all looked at the size difference between the two fists.

"Oh, thanks, as if I'm not nervous enough!" Vera whined.

"You got this," Carlos smiled at her, and Hog nodded.

"Kids got a lot of people waiting to meet um, so I'm okay with sooner than later," Hog felt something inside him flutter happily, "and we're gonna shape a future just for them."

... Hog blinked his eyes open. It had been a long time since he had thought about that past. Of Vera, and Abel, and Carlos. Of the...

Junkrat crossed into his mind, the things he'd never said, not completely.

*One day. I promise. I'll tell you. When I can, one day, all of it.*

"Hog?! Mr. Hog," Dani's voice brought him smack dab back into right now, "the big hairy man says we are almost there. Is he really a gorilla?"

"Who, Reinhard?" Hog teased, but Dani just put her hands on her hips.

He smiled at her. All fire, and smarts, cute as a button. He could see why being around her had brought back such bittersweet memories in his dreams.

"Okay, alright," he grumbled at her as she pulled him up from the seat, and over to where Junkrat was sitting with Art watching Hana stomp McCree in the game they were playing.

"Welcome back," Pappy smiled at him, sitting on one of the flight seats watching the proceedings, "you sure sleep like a rock when you're out. Dream of an old flame?"

"Hmm, kinda, but not one that burned me," he admitted, surprising himself.

He felt his joints pop as he rolled his shoulders, getting Rat's attention, "mornin' Hogs, wanna get in on this?"

"No newcomers until we finish this division!" Hana hissed as her hands danced nimbly over the controls, "we stick to the brackets....HA! EAT IT! G frickin' G!"

McCree scowled, and nearly tossed the controller down before Hanzo put his hand on the man's shoulder, "yeah, yeah, you win this one youngin', but I ain't gonna go easy next time!"
"In your dreams, old man," Hana smirked and held out her hand for his controller, "looks like up next we got Pharah vs. Junkrat!"

"I'm gonna kick your ass Junkboy!" Her voice came from across the way where she'd been packing up, and inventorying the ship's supplies.

"Bring it, lady! Junkrat is gonna win for sure!" Art cheered from behind Rat as he took the controller.

Hog couldn't help but laugh at how much it felt like a Saturday morning should, just a little more complicated.

The screen lit up as the two combatants locked into battle, good natured insults ricocheting around the hull, as the audience leaned into the action.

"What's the score," Winston peeked around the corner musing softly.

"Eh, Pharah is up, but it's only the first map," Hana whispered her analysis with a touch of snark, adding in a raised voice, "too bad neither of them can stay on the damn flag, and defend it!"

Hog shook his head.

"Looks like it won't be long now, so you'll have to finish the qualifiers later," the gargantuan scientist sighed, "after this match of course." Winston had added that last bit at Hana's sour look.

They were cut short by an eruption of cheers, Art's especially loud, "YOU DID IT! Team Junker for the win!!"

Hog glanced over at the hastily scribbled competitive brackets Hana had drawn out, noticing Junkrat and Art made up the only team. He watched the pair high five, realizing with Art's injury it would be awfully hard to participate otherwise.

*Rat, ya sofie...*

Pharah turned to them with a grimace to shake their hands, she'd been surprisingly competitive given her usual even temper, but still she attempted sportsmanship with a congratulatory, "Good game, well played."

"Easy!" Art yelled out, and Rat gave him another high five before hoisting the kid onto his shoulders, and taking a lap around the ship.

"They shouldn't get too excited," Hana turned to him as he watched Rat being chased by Dani as he and Art flew around the room all giggles, and chaos, "his next qualifier is against me."

Hog crossed his arms, realizing he'd been smiling like an idiot the whole time.

"I have got to see that," Mei chirped from the top of the stairs, leaning against the doorframe, and Hog's smile grew big enough to hurt.

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Mei was exhausted by the time they had landed in the ruins deep inside the ancient Black Forest.
Eichenwald had been Reinhardt's suggestion, and she thought it a clever one. Plenty of space, no one left in the little abandoned town to keep them from regrouping.

She suspected Reinhardt had a secondary motivation for his choice in retrieving the remains of his one time commander, and finally putting them to rest. The battle that had taken place here certainly hadn't left many survivors, but the solemn quiet did offer a much needed respite.

Winston had insisted she be the first to take her rest in the temporary quarters the castle had afforded them, and she could hardly fight him on it. As far as she knew, Winston and herself were the only two who hadn't slept through the whole ordeal.

Though, she had taken a detour to look around for two certain Junkers before Lena had caught her wandering, and steered her right back to the rooms. Tempting her with the thought of a bedroll, and a trunk full of some of her personal effects that each agent had in case of such emergency evacuations.

She stumbled into the sparse halls off the main room of the castle where the once handsomely furnished apartments had held influential guests from around the world, but now laid bare. The stone walls rose cold into the lofty ceilings with intimidating historical grandeur, but the rooms did have one charming, almost welcoming, feature. Fireplaces.

It hardly mattered to her that it wasn't lit yet. Just looking at it made her feel somewhat warmer. She felt her heartbeat in her swollen feet. She felt her legs wobble unsteady as her personal anxieties pounded against her fading consciousness. Yet here was this place, darkly windowless in the interior of the complex, and it was somehow inviting in this moment.

She thought about getting kindling, and laying out her bedroll, and seeing which of her belongings had been packed into the trunk she now sat on top of as she stared into the dark hearth. She'd managed to bring herself to the ground in front of it, hands on the latches, before she'd sunk her head onto the metal lid.

Her hands twitched over the cold surface of the trunk as it suddenly seemed to become alive with warmth. Soft. Like she was back in the tower, and she felt herself wrapped in the arms she was too tired to pretend she didn't want to wind herself back into. She smiled.

*If only I wasn't dreaming...*

**Chapter End Notes**

I'm baaaaaccckkk! Sorry for the lack of updates, the holiday is a hard time of year for me in my professional life, thus lack of updates. I should be back to my regular updating pace again now, though I'm sorry if my edits/formatting are a little rougher due to time. I hope you enjoyed the little backstory ideas I have for the Junkers, and small hints on some of their actions and feelings in this story.

Expect a bit of fluff, and cute/sweet times ahead. Maybe a bit more of something else too, of course. ;p

Thank you all so much for your continued support of this story! I can't describe how each new review, kudos, message, and follow brightens my days between updates! As always, your words are like getting a beloved shiny Pokemon from a wonder trade, joyously uplifting! Find me on tumblr @IceyVreadus!
Hog creaked. His elbows, his knees, his shoulders. His bloody mind. He was pretty much done with
everything by the time he dropped the last of the huge crates from the ship’s cargo among the others.

He saw Winston flinch at the sound, pushing his glasses up, and pursing his lips, finding it better to
just ignore the carelessness with a sigh.

“All done over here,” Lena zipped up beside them, breaking off his question, as she fidgeted with an
energy he didn’t know where she’d found after this whole ordeal, “you already got all the agent’s
trunks to their rooms, yeah? Anything else I can help with?"  

Hog almost broke off from the two as they started to discuss the logistics of setting up the rest of their
space, who was setting up comms, and what was gonna happen to that Vishkar woman, when Lena
suddenly cut the conversation short to turn to him.

“All done over here,” Lena smiled in a way that could only be described as gleefully wicked, “she was tuckered though, so I sent her straight on to bed, but maybe you could check in on
her later? She’s been working herself to the bone- I worry about her!”

Hog felt like he’d just driven full tilt down a hill, his stomach flying up into his heart, and he was
more grateful than usual that his expression was hidden from them.

She’d been looking for us, huh?

“That right, then?” He tried his best to feign an even tone.

He knew from the way Lena’s body language bounced that she could see through him, confident
enough in her assessment of the situation to enjoy teasing him about it. She gave an animated shrug,
“yeah, she was practically a zombie, but all she could think about was finding you two for some
reason. Strange, innit?”

Winston, who had been examining the inventory logs, snorted out a laugh he was desperately trying
to hold in. The other two swung their heads around to catch him choking back the expression,
waving his massive hand dismissively, “something in my throat, apologies. Do carry on.”

“Anyhow, you, and Junkrat are right down the way from her, just like back home...” Lena sucked in
a little breath at the last word. The realization of what they’d just escaped rushing over them all fresh
again, but she was nothing if not quick, even at brining back up the mood. “Bet Snowball is totally
happy to be back to fussing over her. Especially since she’s totally got to be passed out snoring by
now!”
Hog hummed in his usual non-committal way, and Lena ran her hand over the back of her short cropped hair with a new measure of awkwardness.

“You, and Agent Fawkes get some rest while you can, tonight we will reconvene for another debriefing on the situation, and formulate a plan,” Winston’s voice couldn’t even push past the overworked timbre it had taken on now.

“And you should too, yeah?” Lena smiled at Winston as he finally nodded, handing her the clipboard, “tonight then, gentlemen?”

“Hmm,” Hog nodded, and quickly turned to retreat. He didn’t need to be told twice to sleep.

Or to, maybe, if it was okay, check on a certain Snowflake.

He found Junkrat first. Tearing through a metal trunk full of clothes, gear, and high explosives, inside their room behind its heavy wooden door, but Rat didn’t seem to notice him as he stepped in. So, he took a moment to examine the room. The spread bedrolls, the musty smell, the crumbling stone. There was a fireplace too, and it didn’t surprise him that Rat already had it roaring with some bits of, surely priceless, shattered antique furniture he’d arranged inside.

Hmm, she must be further down.

“Hoggie!” Rat’s head popped out from inside the storage trunk as he twisted around to give a satisfied grin, “looks like they packed up most of the good stuff- them bots got their moments I suppose.”

The bots that helped maintain the watchpoint weren’t like the ones that came from the omniums, not the thinking sort, but the working sort. Apparently they knew how to pack in a pinch though as it looked like most of what he’d have put in the trunk himself was waiting, neatly packed, when he lifted the lid to his own. Even a familiar smiling face.

“I’m gonna sleep a whole year after this, Hog, a whole damn year. Don’tcha dare try and talk me out of it neither,” Rat plopped onto a hastily spread bedroll, leaning against the trunk of his belongings-themselves now scattered about the room.

“I might just join ya,” he meant it. His aching back, and the tender spots where his wounds had been patched up all agreed.

But...I should check on her. Right? Well, but what if she’s asleep already?

He looked down into his own trunk, his weapon laid next to the newly brightened fabric of his Pachimari, “I, uh…”

His mind bounced around, interrupting his train of thought, as he stole a look at the lounging Junkrat. The events they’d escaped, the words they’d finally exchanged between each other, the new feelings they shared for the person now occupying his thoughts. The dream he had, and the memories just beyond it. The ones that still clung to the plushy smile he was reaching down to retrieve.

“Earth to Hogs! You there?” Junkrat peeped an eye open as his voice pitched up shrilly to snap Hog back to attention.

If she’s asleep, he’ll definitely wake her. I’ll just take a quick peek by myself, and come right back...

“Yeah, uh, I’ll be back in a tic,” the words rattled a bit in his throat.
Rat quirked a brow at him, but his eye slid back shut, “the toilets down thataway,” he motioned his chin further down the hall, “well, least the bucket where the toilet used to be, ahaahaha!”

“Hmm,” he hummed affirmatively as he headed to the door, pausing for a moment when he was overcome with a strange urge to not leave without saying, “I love ya, Rats.”

He could see his partner tense up, unused to the words, but not displeased by them. Just unexpected, in fact, the smile over his face said maybe even pleasantly surprised, “ya big ole’ sappy pig, I love ya too! Now get gone, so you can come back, and help keep me from shiverin’ off my last few ounces.”

Hog gave the edge of the door a tap before swinging it closed behind him, and heading down the hall. He found his palms a bit clammy, and he felt all twitchy inside, the kinda feeling he got before a big job. Excited, but… nervous?

He was nervous. Him.

*I’m a grown ass man. This is ridiculous, body. I am not some teenager sneaking into the girls dorms again! This is not a thing.*

His inner pep talk didn’t do much to alleviate the symptoms though, and by the time he passed the wide open door with a faintly snoring Snowflake inside, it had probably gotten worse.

He stopped short, and turned on his heels to creep back up to the doorway he’d just passed, wondering if he was seeing things, but he hadn’t imagined it. She was right there, curled up next to her bedroll. Next to it!

She was using her arm as a pillow, sitting nearly upright, as she draped over the lid of her trunk with its latches still in place, and she was snoring. Softly, nothing like Rat, or himself, if Rat was to be believed, but something about it made him want to laugh. The proper scientist, sprawled out asleep next to her bed, a glimmer of drool dripping down the corner of her mouth as the little sound escaped her with each breath. She looked so tiny to him there in the dark, all curled in on herself, and shivering.

*Shivering. Not good!*

She’d never lit the hearth! Silly, adorable, exhausted Snowflake, who was sensitive to the cold, hadn’t made a fire to keep herself warm. Hell, she hadn’t even changed into warmer clothes. His shirt, well hers now- he smiled, was torn, frayed, and covered in a fine dust of the city he hoped they could return to when this was all over. Not so much because he cared where he was, but because he knew she would. That she already did care. That she’d finally found a home again, and now it might be gone. Just like it had been taken away from her before.

Just like he’d been part of taking away the homes of so many, the invasive thought worked into him. Even if, at the time, he was trying to save their land. Even if there was still a nationalistic pride in what was left over when his attempt, when the attempt of the whole of the ALF, had created a barren fruitless wasteland. A reflection of the failure he felt even if their goal had been reached.

It had taken so much. Changed so much. The land, the culture, the people. Him. He knew it had changed him, but he couldn’t attone for a success he had hoped for. He could only accept the outcome of what that really looked like, and wear it as an armor to protect what he had left afterward. Until that was gone too.

Then he had met Junkrat, and later her, and at least part of who he was before became less of a memory, and more of a reality again. Slowly.
Now he stood watching her. How, if all this stuff about her tech was true, she surely blamed herself from start to finish, for all her tragedies. As if all the good her inventions had done, and would continue to do, didn’t mean anything because someone decided it was okay to manipulate that power into something twisted.

He felt sick.

Even before she had seen him that night in the kitchen, he could feel the relentless optimism behind the reserved demeanor she wore. It was apparent well before she’d warmed up to them.

Then he’d found little clues about her past, having read up on all the agents. About the tragedies he could see she’d endured, condensed to a few paragraphs, in her file under, ‘history’. Yet, there she was, always working toward a positive future. A future that didn’t have anyone left that she was attached to beyond the Overwatch crew themselves. No family, no friends, no lover. She wanted to be a hero for the world, because the world was worth it for her. Even with all its cruelty.

And, he felt sick for her.

He saw she was fitful in her sleep as he finally drew closer. Her skin was pale, and her eyes were ringed in raw red from crying while she slept, and it made his heart feel like it was squirming through his ribs.

He wanted to take the cruel parts of the world away from her. To crush them before they smothered out her joy. So it couldn’t change her like it had him. He couldn’t bare for her to take this on herself, not after what he’d seen; how he had hardly survived having to face his own self made cataclysm. This hurt wasn't hers to bear, even if she'd take it into her heart like it is, and he couldn't stand the idea of some evil assholes murdering her light. The brightness she brings to the world that they would rather make dark.

He found himself trying to be as quiet as he could manage setting down the happy little Pachimari next to her on the lid of the trunk. Then, working his way to her bedding, he laid it out a bit closer to the fireplace. He smoothed his hand over the fabric, and surveyed the room for kindling. Luckily it was in no short supply among the ruined bits of the castle. He grunted as his body protested the bending he was doing to gather up any flammable bits within his reach. It wasn't long before he’d arranged them over the charred stones, and located a starting flint nearby.

He thought of the old man, with his precious lighter, and it made him smile when the sparks jumped from the stone and found themselves well fed among the scraps he offered. The cracking of the fire always felt satisfying when he’d created it with his own two hands in the wastes, and it now brought the familiar feeling of a strange primal pride.

Hog make fire. Fire cook food. Hog feed, and warm family.

With his internal voice crowing, like the first men to live under the stars, from the sacred ritual of creating fire he turned back to Mei where she was still sleeping. Scooping her up into his arms, with as much grace as he could manage, he held her close to him once again.

She felt like such a good weight in his arms, as she rolled into his warmth instinctively, and he wished he could stand there with her just like this. He did, as long as he dared. A little longer, maybe, than he should have.

I’ll help start to warm ya up while the fire gets going, okay Snowflake?

He watched her face fall into a more even, almost calm, expression as her breathing synced with his.
As she rose, and fell when his stomach inflated. He could see how it lulled her, and how it had the opposite effect on him. How his heart sped up watching her smile softly in her sleep.

*She’s so fucking good.*

She was. Good, and smart, and lovely, and he had to put her down, because it wasn’t right to think of her this way, and hold her this way, when she was asleep. Helping keep her from getting sick was one thing. Cradling her selfishly, because she was soft, and kind, and beautiful—nope, no more of that. He had to put her down, and leave.

Bending down steady, and slow, he pulled his arms from under her as he sat her into the bedding. A low moan made her lips fall open as she snuggled into the soft down. He folded the upper section over her as a blanket trying not to stare at the way she wriggled into the warmth.

*Stop. Stop. Don’t think about it. You can do this Hog...*

Suddenly, a thumping sound came from nowhere, making him jump, and then another, almost a knocking. Hog spun around to find the source of the sound before it woke her, but nothing made sense as its origin. Even as it grew louder.

Just as he was becoming frantic he spotted it, the trunk, its lid vibrating against the internal assault.

“‘Ello?” His whisper was cautious, and he’d started to move back toward the eerie box.

“Beep, beep beeeep!?” The knocking stopped long enough for the beeping of an increasingly upset little omnic to be heard muffled through the trunk.

*Her pet bot! It’s still in the box.*

He opened it up, and the little creature zoomed out, it’s beeps vocally distraught as it swooped down at him, tapping at his chest as if to chase him away. Questioning why he was here, alone, while she slept.

*Yeah, I get it, I get it! It's not what it looks like!*

“Ey, ‘nuff with that, bot!” He batted his hand at the thing as it spun around him loudly chirping out its demands, none of which he understood, “be quiet, would ya? She’s sleepin’!”

His plea caught the little things attention, and it stopped abruptly to turn to where Mei was starting to stir a bit from all the commotion. He watched as the bot whizzed silently over to her, adjusting the bedding, scooting a pillow over to her, monitoring the temperature of the fire and pulling a screen in front to catch the embers floating out.

*Impressive lil’ thing... for a bot.*

At the thought, it had turned sharply to now beep more quietly, but in the same angry tone right in his face.

“Hey, who’d you think lit the fire, hmm? Put her to bed?” He pointed at the thing as it flew against his finger with all its force before letting the words settle in.

A skeptical beep toned out, and then the screen that made up its face gave him a quick once over. It must have decided he was telling the truth, because the little guy finally backed up; even if it stayed between her, and him.
He honestly couldn’t be upset at it’s protective programming. He was happy she had such a useful
device at her disposal, and honestly, he’d done as much as he could now. After he’d let his thoughts
wander to, uh... admiration, maybe it was best to have a chaperone to keep him from accidentally
overstaying his welcome.

“Hey, psst, Hoggie,” Junkrat hissed from the doorway, as he shoved his head inside, “you sneakin’
into ladies rooms at night now, ya creeper? Come to bed!”

_Shit. Caught red handed._

Or red faced if the warmth in his cheeks meant he was blushing as hard as he felt he must be.

Snowball zoomed over to the door to push it shut, but Rat, not being much for takin’ orders from a
bag o’ bolts, just shoved the angry thing away with the weight of the door. Giving it a little scowl,
Junkrat ignored its pesky circling to step in, and join him at his side.

“She okay?” Rat mused as a blue streak flashed back through the air to keep guard between the two
of them and her, a determined face flashing on the display.

“Yeah, found her sleepin’ on the trunk, no fire,” he gestured back at the metal container.

“Thought bout commin’ earlier myself, but, well… I dunno,” Rat trailed off, arms crossed tight over
his chest.

They were both worried for her. She had her bot, but they both still felt like she was alone. If he
knew anything about dark, cold, frightening nights far from the home you once knew, it was that
being alone on top of it all just amplified the terrors that come with unfamiliarity.

So, he went to take a step toward Mei, who seemed to be sleeping soundly now at least, only to be
cut off by Snowball’s angry muted chirp.

“Oh, no you don’t mister,” it said in his mind. Hog was sure he had snapped to be speaking bot
beeps, but the tone was clear enough that the meaning had come through.

“Gonna give her this,” he held up the stuffed creature, and Snowball surveyed it once more.

Hog hadn’t realized until he saw it now just how much understanding seemed to follow the false
eyes displayed on the black mirrored screen along their face. They seemed to see the stitches that had
been added by a hand whose style they had seen many times before, and when they were done
looking it over they moved aside with a, “I’ve got my eye on you,” kinda beep.

He nodded, crouching down next to Mei, and tucking the overstuffed plush into the crook of her
elbow. She quickly snaked her arms around it, and drew it into herself, cuddling her head into it as
her deep brown hair fell in swirls across it’s face.

Damn. _She’s so beautiful._
Mako hadn't realized it till he stood back up, but a tear was running down his face, and he was smiling so big his mask was sitting higher on his cheeks.

Jamie noticed though, he always did, and silently a hand went up as Jamie’s fingers slid delicately under the edge of the mask that sat along his jaw. Slender, rough, but genius hands. Hands that created, even if their work was from a somewhat mad mind, now working up his cheek to wipe away the trail of wetness there.

One day. You’ll hear all there is to hear, and I’ll saddle you with all this grief. Maybe though, if I can hope, it won’t be something either of us have to carry alone. Caus you’ll have her, and I’ll have her, and she’ll have us- like we have each other now.

He smiled so that Jamie could feel it as his hand withdrew, and Mako tilted his head to indicate the door. Snowball followed them out, and was more then happy to assist in shutting it closed behind them as they were ushered into the hall.

When the dark of the stone corridor settled into his eyes, and he could see the cuts and curves of Jamie's face again, he lifted his mask just enough, and leaned in to kiss him. All bright, and proud like starting the fire, the feeling spread warmth through him just the same; even as the contact broke off.

“You think she’ll freak out when she finds herself all cuddled up to that thing without knowing how it got there? Wish I could see it! Hahaha,” Junkrat hunched a bit in his laughter, and Hog smiled at the thought.

“I imagine there'll be questions,” he gave a grunting laugh to join Rat's.

“Maybe she’ll take it as a invitation, and come cuddle up with the real deal, heh!” Rat grinned as they worked their way back to their room, “I know for a fact you make a better pillow than some stuffie! Can’t beat the ole’ Junkpile on a cold night. She’d never be able to sleep alone again!”

“Heh, well, wouldn’t that be somethin’?” Hog smirked.

Then they’d settled down.

His thoughts swirled idly, just like his fingers were over Rats shoulder, as they cuddled close by the fire. It seemed like the first peaceful moment of the long eternity which comprised of the last forty eight hours, and he was ready to sleep away the current dreary day just like this.

Quiet, happy, together, and wistfully imagining another weight draped over the barren side of him, opposite Junkrat’s sprawl, he smiled. The man he loved burrowed into him as he snored into his side. Perfect, and yet still just almost perfect all at once.

Then their door swung open.

Chapter End Notes

Phew! A little later then I had hoped to get this one out, but I'm happy with it, and I think yall are gonna really like the next few, mawhwahaha. Im sorry Im a cliffhanger junkie, but I gotta give you guys a reason to keep coming back for more of my self indulgent love sick tale! :D
Thank you all for continuing to support me with such kind kudos, comments, and follows despite my brief hiatus, and all the kind words you continue to leave always mean the absolute world to me- from the bottom of my trash loving little heart! Getting new comments is like the feeling you get putting on your favorite outfit, it never ceases to make you feel like you're on top of the world! So thank you! Follow me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus for update announcements for this fic, tons of overwatch ship art, and sometimes stuff I draw! :D
For what felt like the first time in forever, Mei was warm. Swaddled in her battle worn clothes, she was warm, and she felt somehow a little more safe. Stable, like she was on solid ground. Her arms wrapped around something soft, something that smelled foreign, but felt familiar. She vaguely recalled a pleasant dream.

She nestled herself into her den of blankets, squeezing tightly to the comforting softness in her arms, and listening to the sounds of the fire crackling in the hearth. It was comforting to feel herself bathed in its heat until something hit her. Sitting up with a gasp, she'd finally realized what was off about her current surroundings.

*I didn’t start a fire!*

Her abrupt motion had disturbed something else in the room as she heard a frantic beeping flitter away from where she’d been sprawled out moments ago.

“Snowball?” Her question was muffled in the blankets that still clung around her, but an enthusiastic beep still answered.

“Snowball!” She had been worried about her small companion, not that they weren’t built to withstand intense weather phenomenon, but instead about leaving them all alone at base. “I’m so happy to see you!”

She delighted in the little circles her companion took around her, careful to not rain down a chilly frost from their exhaust, as they made a final pass before looking to land.

“Thank you for making sure I stayed warm,” she motioned to the fire as she smiled down at the small omnic floating above her lap.

“Beep, bep bee,” they returned in a somewhat apologetic tone that Mei wasn’t sure how to interpret.

“Something wrong?” She tilted her head toward the little blurry blue spot, and another flood of beeps came out in tones that shifted quickly enough to give her tired brain whiplash, “slow down! It’s okay. No need to worry! I’m just glad you’re here!”

A few more vocal beeps slowly faded into what could only be described as mechanical huffing when Snowball ascended once more to circle above where she’d left her glasses. She leaned over and slid them off the storage trunk to put them on, bringing the world back into focus, just in time to see Snowball speed straight at her.

“What are you…” She scrambled to move back as Snowball dove into the covers, nudging them back away from her lap. “Hey, that tickles!”

She giggled as her companion floated above her now waiting for her to figure out what they were
trying to tell her. She hugged her arms into herself again, squeezing the giant stuffed animal in her grasp, as she tried to figure out what had Snowball so up in arms.

“Hey, where were you when I came in to go to bed?” She furrowed her brow at the omnic who breezed over to float above the chest once more.

“I don’t remember letting you out,” she shot another confused look their way as Snowball’s vocalizations became increasingly frustrated.

They flew another lap around her head, but finally set down right in front of her again, softly bumping into her hands where they were locked together around the fluffy thing anchoring her to this happy gentle moment. She dipped her head down to finally take a good look, immediately feeling silly.

Pachimari!

“Oh!” She couldn't help but beam down at the thing, “They came by then, huh?”

She took a moment to look around herself, realizing she’d definitely not fallen asleep here, and finally coming to the only logical conclusion, “did they do all this?”

Snowball’s response was an affirmative that also sounded very much like a, “finally, geez!” in her mind. They flew up to the trunk, and then the fire, and finally to the door miming out the story of what had happened while she had been asleep as best they could.

*Those two made sure I was safe, and warm. They checked up on me.*

Her cheeks reddened, eliciting another beep from Snowball, and an eye roll emoji on their screen as her hand went up to her face, “oh, leave me alone! It’s sweet!”

“Suuurree,” Snowball’s vocalizations implied.

“I should get dressed in something warm, I guess. What time is it?” She stretched out as Snowball’s screen flashed the time, “already late afternoon! Oh, I hope I haven’t missed much!”

She scrambled to peel off her dirty clothes, and found some things to help her clean herself up in her toiletries kit, “I can’t imagine that there are working showers here.”

Snowball concurred as she tossed her dirty clothes aside, and danced around on one leg to slide her fresh tights back on. It wasn’t long till she was completely redressed in her familiar gear, coat and all, significantly warmer than the outfit she’d been sporting for the latest ordeal.

Ugh, all of that. It started to all crumple back into her. The last forty eight hours, and everything that it had brought. How it was so cold even this far inland, away from the unnatural storm they’d just fled, and what this all meant. For everything. For her.

*What have I done?*

Her legs felt heavy, and she plopped herself onto the the top of the trunk to sit. Rubbing her palms into her eyelids as she tried to push it all away. It wasn’t productive to think about her role in creating weather altering technology, or how it could have been used...tested even, on her. On all those people at the base. All those people in the city.

Salty puddles pooled into her palms before she’d even realized she was crying again. It was the first time she’d been alone with her thoughts, and not steeped in the work of untangling them. Or running
from their consequences. She’d slid from safe and warm to frightened, and alone, and guilty, and horrified all at once. Terrified that every second she spent unable to figure this out—the how, or why, or when of it all, that people were suffering. People were going to die. More people.

*Because of something I made. Because of me...*

She let a sound croak out of her throat in hopes of holding back this strange flood of feelings, but instead it broke the dam. Her heartbeat felt distinct in her chest, every beat defined against her throbbing senses, and the rhythm seemed almost cruel at the moment. It made what felt like a noose around her neck even tighter, choking out new strangled sounds into the unfamiliar room.

Snowball chirped softly nearby, worried about her sudden change of state, and she tried to send them a comforting glance. A feat she could hardly manage with her guts all twisted up, and the pressure of her crying erupting up from behind her expression.

Still, she couldn’t find guilt in her sadness, and for a while she just let it out. Just cried for all the people, and her helplessness to stop what was happening to them. Especially since the tech that now terrorized them, and long ago the Ecopoint, had its origin in her mind. To know she’d been the genesis of all her own worst days.

It was all just so much for her now that she was alone with it.

*Alone again. I wish I was used to it.*

Her whole consciousness felt far away, like she was outside herself, to escape the pain of her own thoughts. Her own memories. She didn’t want to belong to them right now. She wanted to be somewhere else, someone else.

So, she let herself not be real. Let everything around her fade away from the sharp edges of time, and the distress that she’d woven through her current reality. She let the way those ideas prickled over her skin fade into a tingle, a sleep, and everything went numb. She wanted to think less of herself.

She wanted to be nothing.

*Like they were. Like they will be.*

Her conscious mind struggled against her.

It hurt distantly. In the way that it hurts to go to sleep, or wake up. In the way it hurts to remember pain. It lingered around the sensations inside her that had built up. The feelings she was pushing away. Tucked into the quivering of her breaths, and the way her pulse whirred in her neck. A pain that was all of her, and none of her—because she’d let herself go back to nothing.

*I’m asleep in the ice. I’m alone, and there is no one to hurt, and no one to hurt me.*

A nudging push into her side brought her back around. Snowball had seen her like this before on rare occasion, when the memories got too heavy, and her mind checked out. They recognized her self-destructive impulses within those states, stuck in the loops of her worst thoughts, and was now desperately trying to shake her out of it.

“Hey, I’m… it’s okay,” she suppressed her impulse to lie about her feelings.

She’d promised them, after all.

Snowball made a stern sound, flying around her a few times, and then floating over to the door that
led back to the main hallway. They beeped rapidfire sounds, a pleading for her to follow, to open the door. So she did.

Even in her dazed state she knew Snowball wouldn’t be so insistent if it wasn’t for her own good- whatever was up their robotic sleeve, it was for the best. She followed dutifully down the hall as Snowball paused to let her catch up every few yards, until they reached a door much like the one to her room.

She squeezed her arms around the Pachimari she still clung to, and somewhere in the back of her mind she knew whose door she stood in front of. She thought about knocking, but she ended up just giving her thoughtful companion a lost look, unable to raise her hand to follow through.

Snowball, possessing no chill, flew full force into the door- knocking it wide open.

She did what pretty much anyone in that situation might, and let out a drawn out, “eep!” followed by a dumb stare at the equally startled faces looking back at her.

“Oi! What’s yer problem bot?! We was just gettin’ to sleep,” Junkrat had drawn up into himself, ready to scramble away from the intruder until he’d seen her, “gotta kick the door down, do ya? Can’t just knock? Thought you was more civilized then all that!”

Snowball descended on the two men, buzzing angrily around their faces, and indicating Mei still standing dumbfounded in the door.

“So...sorry,” she managed, “I...it’s just that...”

A bazillion things popped into her head. Turn back, and just flee the scene! Apologize, and make something up. Blame Snowball? She wasn’t sure, yet something was keeping her standing there beyond just utter mortification.

Somehow, she’d already completely forgotten about the dark intrusive feelings she’d just been cycling through. In fact, she was nearly smiling at how ridiculous the whole situation really was. How happy she suddenly felt. How all the safe, warm, comforting feelings she’d woken up to had returned. How Snowball had known what she needed before she had.

Because this is where I want to be. I need to be here. Right here...with them.

It all came to rest inside her. Her churning feelings of pain, her dread for the future, and over the past. Her flighty uncertainty over them. They’d all come home to roost. If she wasn’t so sure over how she felt in this moment, she’d be sure she was deranged in her certainty.

“You okay?” Hog sat up a bit, shooing Snowball away as her invasive little friend finally relented.

I’m so okay. Wow.

She smiled nervously. Knowingly.

“I love you too,” the words fell out of her, projected louder than she’d intended, “both of you!”

Okay. There it is. Yeah, wow.

Somehow, both Junkers managed to stand up at once, not seeming to be able to find any better reaction to her words as they stared with a nearly catatonic shock. Snowball floated nearby, looking as surprised as any of them.
"I'm sorry," she squeaked out, "to say it like this, but I do. I love you."

She panicked inside, she'd really said it, and she'd really meant it. She did. Well, she does, but also, she could...maybe that was the better way to put it. She loved them, and yet she wasn’t yet in love with them. Not that she couldn’t see herself growing into that deepness- if that made sense. Not that any of this did.

So fast, and so intense, and just perfect. Just joy. So, right now that one truth was enough. She loves them.

When she’d let out the breath she was holding time had sped up. Roadhog was in front of her, scooping her into his arms. Bringing her in close. So fast, and so intense, and she couldn’t help but giggle at the headrush of how just perfect it all felt. Held into his chest as his lips pressed into hers.

She locked up, every muscle tense with the cascade of all these new intensities coalescing around her. Unsure, as she froze, Hog moved to pull his head back. She couldn’t let him. Her hands found the sides of his jaw, holding him still as her smile chased after his, returning his affections enthusiastically.

She’d barely paused at hearing the door slam shut behind them, and he’d carried her back over to where their bedrolls had been set side by side near the fire.

She felt sedated, like a swath of sunshine, and warmth had bathed her senses in something exactly opposite of the feelings she’d shown up to their room with. She saw it in Hog’s eyes too, like his emotions were a thick syrup of delight, and contentment sticking to his every action. Slow, and deliberate. Sweet.

She hadn’t been surprised it was Hog who had made the first move at her words. He had never seemed unsure about his feelings once they’d developed. Never pushy, never loud. He didn’t speak often, but his actions had. Always deliberate, and sure, but in such a subtle understated way that she’d nearly overlooked it despite her own growing feelings. The way he looked at her, that she realized he had been looking for quite some time now, it made her insides dance.

Hog sat her back down, where Junkrat stood, and she blushed because Rat was too. He fidgeted, seeming as if he wanted to approach, but was almost skittish. Fearful that she’d pull away when he finally felt bold enough to move close.

She’d thought he was being sarcastic when he’d first started saying things about her, teasing her, making fun in his lighthearted way. Then she’d realized his words, these jests, were how he tested the water. How he made sure he wasn’t jumping into new hurt, new rejection, and her heart clenched for having judged him so poorly when they’d first met. Knowing how he must see everyone's assumptions, and knowing she'd thrust the same judgment onto him.

“I’m sorry,” their eyes found each others at her words, as they both looked on with something fierce behind their expressions, “I’m sorry that I misjudged you when we first met. I was so wrong. So, so wrong. I'm sorry if I hurt you. If it hurts you still, because you don’t deserve that. How could I do that to you? What others had always done to me? To hurt me. And I did it to you, and yet you still said it. That you love me. So, please, forgive me. I'm sorry. I love you.”

It took a moment to be able to read him, as he stood, leaving them in the silence. The space between forgiveness, and rejection. She felt like she was gonna burn up inside, and yet she knew she deserved it. For how she’d been. That she deserved his hesitation.

“You...ya really mean it?” His question hung there as his face held back his true feelings, “someone
like you is askin’ someone like me to forgive um’, again, caus you love...me?”

She found his awkwardness, his surprise, endearing, and familiar. It made her need to put her arms
around him, and she did. Clinging around his waist as he stood limply in renewed bewilderment, she
whispered, “of course you. I love you, Junkrat Jamison Fawkes, because you are someone like you.”

His arms sprang to life, snaking their way around her, and he leaned his whole weight into the
embrace. It was a tipping point, aggressively affectionate, knocking them both to the ground. He
cradled her back, catching her, and bracing them both before they’d hit. She only got a moment to
see the sunrise in his eyes before he’d set her against the floor, and followed close behind to press her
against it with his kiss.

Rat’s energy was so different from Hog’s whose kiss had been firm, and sure. Feeling like the
fulfillment of a long awaited wish. Drawing her into a dazed euphoria with the way he seemed to
know just what to do.

Junkrat, in contrast, was pleading, and needy. His jaw tensing under her fingers as his lips tumbled
across hers as if their physicality was the only thing that could keep her from evaporating away. She
let herself yield under his frenzied searching, and the gravity of his body on top of hers.

She felt herself gulp in a breath as Rat withdrew, and he’d pushed himself to sit back up as not to
smother her. Both wearing the grin of someone who’d thought they’d gotten away with something as
Hog joined them sitting on the floor.

Hog’s hand came over her vision as she had been transfixed by the ceiling for some time now, and
she reached out for it as he indicated his offer to help her up. Sitting all in a row, none of them knew
what to do next, as she looked from one to the other.

The symptoms of their fatigue were obvious, she was sure hers were as well, but she knew they were
all wired after the electricity they’d just shared. She couldn’t stop the content sigh at the whole
situation, nor the splitting smile that came after. Especially when Junkrat broke the silence with a
rolling laugh, his arms wrapped around his slender torso.

It didn’t take long for Hog, and herself to join in. It seemed like the appropriate reaction in their
collective sleep deprivation. The only physical release any of them had the energy for at this point.

Hog shook his head, “glad that's out of the way now.”

Junkrat, and herself returned the statement with confused looks.

“Oh, did you not enjoy it?” Her voice fell a little at the thought, but it only sent Hog laughing more.

“'Course I enjoyed it,” Hog leaned in to be face to face with her, “now I just know you do too.”

Hog’s lips found hers again, and she returned his energy as they parted a bit to explore a deeper
connection. His massive hand rested over her shoulder, a finger stroking at her neck, and she
hummed into his kiss. At how good it all felt.

Then a warmth met her back, pressing into her, as Junkrat surrounded her other side. He placed
kisses along her shoulder like he had back in the tower when they’d ignored the monster just outside
their window to steal a moment for themselves. This time she pushed back against him, rolling her
body into his with a new need that ignored both common sense, and current energy reserves.

His answer came in teeth raking softly over her shoulder, and another sound escaped from deep in
her chest as they all shifted to find themselves closer. She took a breath for a moment, her eyes
watching Hog’s lips all flushed from his eager pressure against their kiss. As he leaned over her shoulder in her respite to share a kiss with Junkrat. They squeezed her between them, and the sound of their breathiness left her without her own.

They all kissed, and touched, grabbed, ached, and arched into each other. Trying to find a hold on something, to leave their name on the moment, and cling onto the face of what it was forever. Huffing, and breathless they ascended through their mutual want.

Her heart lit up, her mind had gone out the door, and she finally let herself just free fall through it all. Down, down, down into the excitement of every motion, just carried away by the primal rush. And, damn it feel good to just let go as hands pushed into her skin, and up her body, taking it all in. Feeling them feel her, and her hands blazing their own trials in return.

They writhed, and with wanting, their layers peeled away from them until they were nearly bare. An exposure that just drove them to fan the last embers of their energy, the last desperate singe of every fiber inside them worn, and weary begging to stop as they begged to keep moving. Until they had each collapsed with twitching limbs, reaching toward that yearning need that called out in the language of touch, and sweat, and physical connection.

“Your so fuckin’ beautiful, Snowflake,” Rat reached out to remove a strand of hair clinging to her damp cheeks, and she smiled at him through bleary eyes. They both leaned against Hog’s belly as he laid on his side next to them.

The back of Hog’s knuckles brushed gently up and down the small of her back, and she shivered as he made a sound of agreement at Rat’s statement. All of them just collapsed into one another in the firelight, she tried not to let her eyes linger too long over them- even if she knew it was silly to be embarrassed at this point.

“Thank you,” she blushed, looking down into her lap, and smiling, “you two are each so different, yet equally, erm...wonderful in your uniqueness.” She crossed her arms over her bare chest in a sudden rush of modesty, “I mean to say...I like the way...you feel.”

Junkrat let out a subdued laugh, and Hog’s belly jostled with the same mirth, “pretty sure the feelin’ is mutual. You bein’ all soft, and curvy, and warm, ya know. Gotta say, I like the way ya feel pressin’ against me too.”

Junkrat’s voice teased the last few words out slow as he slid himself back in front of her, and against her. Pushing her back into Hog as he let himself take her in. She’d never remembered being looked at like that, like she was too bright, but irresistible all at once.

She squirmed under his piercing gaze as his hands found her arms, pushing them back, and running his hands up their length until he could tangle his fingers into hers. He put a knee on each side of her legs as he hunched over her, and she had to push her head back into Hog’s chest to look up at Junkrat.

Rat leaned in, and she could see Hog’s eyes watching them both with a palpable curiosity, almost pushing them to see what was coming next. Junkrat’s mouth found her shoulder again, and then her neck, and the tender lobes of her ears as she arched into Hog at the overwhelming sensation. A deep growl worked through Hog’s chest, and the vibration of it purred against her back, as she let out little huffing groans of her own.

Please, please, please!

Every part of her begged, even if she didn’t understand for what. Just more. Now, “please! Oh,
“Oh, lookie there, Rat,” Hog’s voice turned Junkrat’s head away from his work to look down where the man’s head leaned on this hand watching them, “she knows how to ask nice.”

She rolled her lips into her teeth at the tone, and closed her eyes. The words seemed to promise more, but she was impatient. More so as Junkrat backed away, and off of her. As Hog pulled away to sit behind her. Yet their expressions had an edge of wickedness painted into them, a grin that was sharp around the edges, and she wanted it. She wanted whatever laid behind that smile.

“She knows how to ask nice,” she ventured again, allowing the edge of her neediness to fold into the sound.

Hog smiled, and pulled her into him, her back against him once more. His strength made her swoon as she settled into his broad frame, and each of his hands held her tight around her upper arms as he leaned his head down next to hers. Forcing her to look forward as his cheek pressed side by side with hers. To look at Rat who stood waiting in front of them, a smirk she tried to focus on in vain as her eyes wondered down his frame.

“So, please, she asks,” she could feel Hog’s words in his throat as Junkrat’s eyes brightened mischievously, “but nothing else.”

She felt him smile, and in the way he’d positioned her she could see the two Junkers communicate without speaking as to what her fate would be. It was a game she’d never known how much she’d wanted to play.

Hog drew back a bit, and she realized his lips were near her ear as his breath through her hair, and how the feeling cascaded through her whole body.

“So,” Hog’s voice rasped quietly against her, “please what, little Snowflake?”

Her nerves crackled, igniting all the way through her from where his words had touched her skin. She no longer seemed to have conscious control over the sounds she made, or the way she moved, but her body seemed to be speaking the right language because he had translated well what she was wanting.

“Oh, so like this,” Hog answered at her needy little sounds, and his tongue ran along the length of her neck until it had reached her shoulder once more, and the edges of his sharp teeth found the pale skin there. Just a little, pushing just a bit, testing.

While she pulled away, part of her pushed back in a paradox of preservation, and want. All of which brought the word to her lips once more, as nearly a command, “please!”

“Tell me,” Hog put his mouth onto her, resting his teeth tantalizingly over her, and she somehow wanted nothing more than to be devoured, “please, what?”

Her mind chased the answer, something that would convey everything she wanted to say, “please…”

His tongue flicked over her, the pressure of his jaw tightening ever so subtly, distracting her. Junkrat had come closer now, kneeling in front of them, poised with the same coiled waiting that she had twisting inside her, that begged for something to strike out. Yet he waited, and what was it that she wanted?

Oh, right.

“She begged, she demanded, “more!”
His response was immediate, and he bit into her—lightly at first, as her head rolled to the side. Then with more vigor as her hand found the top of his head, pushing him into her insistently. She heard Junkrat give out a moan at the sight, but she couldn’t open her eyes against the way it felt as Hog worked his way up her neck.

Then Hog stopped abruptly, and she leaned into him to chase the feeling, but he only left her wanting. He turned to Junkrat who was chewing on his bottom lip, “like the way she feels, huh?”

Her eyes turned to Rat’s whose attention was sharply focused on Hog as if he was what had been holding him back from joining them. Maybe he was, and she shivered at how much she enjoyed letting Hog take control.

Rat seemed uncharacteristically speechless, nodding his affirmation briskly. Hog hummed as his mouth pressed back into her neck, Junkrat intent on the gesture, and she gave way freely to his attentions. He sucked at her skin there, and then ran his tongue over the swollen flesh as her breath squeezed out of her with a gasp.

“You should taste her then,” and Hog smiled into her shoulder as the words melted her.

She felt a larger meaning to them, as Rat finally joined them once more, clamoring to be close as his eyes asked permission, first from her, and then Hog. His lips left a quick kiss on hers, but found their way soonafter to her clavicle where he dragged them across the angle there. Slow, and almost soft as they sloped down her, and his hands steadied himself by clinging to her sides. She could smell the soot in his hair, and feel the way his breaths chilled along the places his mouth had already left wet.

Hog joined in too, and she felt the way his lips almost tickled along the arch of her neck, over her thumping pulse. The way Rat’s mouth was finding its way lower, and his hands higher, as he worked his way down her body. Tasting her.

It was so much, and she couldn’t help but whisper, “oh, please. Please. I can’t take it anymore!”

Immediately they both stopped, drawing back as far as they could, and her face fell into a panicked confusion at their sudden absence.

“Are ya okay, Snowflake?” Junkrat’s tone was serious, and as she turned over her shoulder she could see concern in Hog’s eyes as well, “we go too far?”

“Huh?” Her question was dazed, she wanted to return to the overwhelming feeling she’d just been lost in.

Oh! They thought I meant it.

“No, um...no,” she took a deep breath, trying not to seem as inexperienced and nervous as she was, “I, well, it was a lot to take in all at once, sure. But, I, uh...I enjoyed it. With you two at least. It’s nice to let someone else take charge, especially since I’m a bit nervous to be honest. Kinda new to all this, you see.”

She tucked her hair behind her ears more times then was necessary, and failed at making eye contact. Hog’s hand found hers at her side, squeezing reassuringly, and Rat rested his on top of theirs as he spoke, “it’s ok. We’re nervous too. It’s been just the two of us for a long while. Wanna make sure you feel good, ya know, safe and such, too.”

Something about that made all her nerves fall away. She did feel safe, and it had felt good. She was going into uncharted territory, but without fear, and she trusted them. Enough to feel like she could relinquish control, and just ride the feeling, “I do, and I am, and thank you. For asking, and for...the
She let out a little giggle, and Rat joined her, but as the laughter died down she felt the mood shift-ready to return to where it had been before.

“Please,” She couldn’t help but smirk.

They edged back toward her, hands gliding across her body, and lips returning to their work. She begged out one more command.

“Please, more!”

And they obliged.

Chapter End Notes

Whew, *fans self*, okay- so these chapters are the hardest caus I want them to be just right. The frantic, needy, release they've (and I'd guess you've) been waiting to happen. Mei's whirlwind of emotion as she finds one solid feeling within the storm- love, and she's done denying herself. I know my chapters are a little less polished, and a little more delayed, but hopefully they're still enjoyable. Anyhow, I think it's safe to say next week there may be a bit more of all this!

Thanks as always for the continuing feedback, new subscriptions, and kudos! They mean so much, and motivate me to keep going! Your comments are like finding the right size on the sales rack when your shopping at your favorite store, the victories that make you feel fabulous! :D You can find my massive amount of reblogs, updates on the story, and occasionally my MeiHam art, on my tumblr @IceyVoreadus!

*edit to beginning warning to add a note upon realizing my discription of Mei's somewhat dissociative episode may be distressing to others who may experience them.
Sometimes ya just know, right? That everything is just where it should be, and how it should be, and all that. Like the best thing that's happened to you in a long while walked through the door, and now you’re just kinda burning alive caus there’s nothing to hold ya back anymore. Not after she’d said those words.

*Please more. Yes, ma'am!*

Now all that Junkrat could taste was her, and the texture of her skin on his lips made him want to sink his teeth in. Some overwhelming thing stumbled through him, like a clumsy animal, and he felt a frenzy that pushed against his better judgement. The urgency of it buzzed through his skull louder than usual. And who the fuck cared to chase it away now?

So, he let the beast inside leap into the fire to seize its prize, heat be damned, because he’d have his feast even if it burnt him up. Lower, and lower his lips traveled all down her body, and around her body, and feast he’d have.

The way she squirmed under his attentions made him all the more frantic to find his way to his destination. When his hands found themselves at the waistband of her leggings she still hadn’t used the word they’d agreed upon. The one so they didn’t have to worry about any more misunderstandings.

She hadn’t stopped him. She’d begged him. To keep going. Don’t stop.

He felt her hips maneuver up, and Hog lifted her as they all worked together to help her wriggle out of her tights. Out of the lacy bit of frill under that. Rat pulled back to sit on his heels, and watch as she struggled to kick the last clinging bit of the garment off from where it had bunched around her ankle.

The cute little huff she made, and the way she drew back into herself, and the way she shivered to be naked. The way she still blushed, and how she nestled against Hog’s touch. How he enjoyed watching those big hands, the ones which he had always wanted on himself, winding around her curves. And it made him so happy. Those hands on her, because they were the hands that made him feel safe, and wanted, and small. In the best way.

She looked tiny too, in those hands, but never fragile. He smiled at how tough she was, and yet how soft she felt.

Without thinking he’d reached back out to run his hand up the side of her legs. All drawn up into her, knees locked together, and closed off. She rolled her lips into her mouth over her teeth, sucking in a breath through her nose. Her head leaned into Hog’s hand as he rested it over her shoulder, and across her cheek. Her back arched into Hog’s belly, but she’d stayed all bundled into herself.

Drawing himself back into her, Rat leaned in, and his lips met the tops of her knees as his hands fell
softly down her thighs. She shivered, and goosebumps lit up the top of her arms. She’d reached up to find a hold on Hog’s hand, and he’d let her grasp onto him as he leaned down to whisper into her ear.

“More?” Hog’s voice rumbled out over her as he gently brushed the hair away from the side of her face, and all she could do is shut her eyes, and nod.

Rat waited, nestling his cheek to lean on her knees, eyes wide to wait for Hog’s game to play out. Anticipation was a challenge, but he always enjoyed the way waiting, and wanting, prickled through him. He could see it on her too. Wiping away the nerves, and replacing them with an almost eager impatience.

“Was that a yes?” Hog’s question was thick with a teasing threat.

Hog’s free hand found its way in front of her as his thumb rested on her bottom lip, pulling it down as the fingers found their way to her throat. Down her chest, circling over her there, leaving her trembling as each finger flickered over her. Hog’s fingers stopped in their progress by the way her legs were pressed into herself. So, they pooled in her lap to caress her stomach, and run back up the length of her upper thigh toward him.

Hog’s thumb found its way onto his chin, up to his lips, and he enjoyed watching her eyes interpret what the touch was communicating between them. To her. Rat let his mouth fall open like it was an instinct, and Hog’s thumb hooked itself inside. He found himself wanting to be more obscene the harder he saw her bite onto her lower lip, and so he indulged himself in the enjoyment of watching her watch him.

“See,” Hog whispered into her ear, and he felt her body tense where he leaned into her legs, “this one is always very eager to please.”

Hog started to pull his hand away, and he eagerly followed as far as he could before Hog’s thumb slid all the way out. Hog wiped his hand dry on the side of his pants, which Rat lemented were still on, and then went to crook a finger under her chin to make her look at Junkrat.

“So, if that’s a yes,” Hog continued, as she looked on with her wide eyes at Rat who licked his lips as Hog motioned to point to him, “you should let him please you.”

A wild smile found itself drawing over his teeth, baring their sharp edges in his hungry look at her, but the tension that coiled through her remained. It was then that he noticed Hog smiling as his hands found themselves on each of her thighs, climbing up, and wrapping over her knees as he kneeled in front of them.

“To do that, though,” Hog was wrapped around her now as he leaned forward, and started running his hands back down her leg again, resting his thumbs where they were held tight together, “you have to let him.”

Rat watched as she slowly relaxed, and let him push his way between her thighs. Teasing, his fingers inward, and down until she gasped. Twisting against Hog’s touch as he watched, finding himself now between her knees instead of merely in front of them.

As one of Hog’s hands retreated up her body the other turned smoothly to its work. Junkrat found himself drawn to her inner thighs, running his teeth over the tender skin, nipping lightly when Hog’s hand elicited a twitch from her. A moan for him.

“More, please, please,” Mei’s words were barely gasps at this point.
Rat could see her hand on top of Hog’s, her fingers pressing into the top of his knuckles. Holding him back, and pushing for more all at once. They left little white lines over Hog’s arm whenever they would retreat to find a better hold, and where her nails had dug in the white lines were written more firmly in red across his skin.

Finally Rat noticed that Hog had, in fact, pulled away. As she continued to plead with gasps, and whines at the absence of Hog’s touch, Junkrat moved to fill the need.

He pushed his shoulders into the back of her legs, and his head angled down until he could lay a trail of teasing kisses down her belly as he looked up to see her anxious, yet wanting eyes. Hog’s too, watching him as his mouth closed around her as her head drove back into Hog’s tattoo.

Junkrat let his tongue linger over every movement, and the way her hips angled ever upward toward him let him know she was enjoying the sensation. Her cutely pitiful little moans, however, were begging him to move as urgently as her growing want. Not that he wasn’t thoroughly enjoying giving her a hard time. It was only fair considering what she was doing to him and Hog.

He drew out the teasing a bit longer, but even he could hardly stand stringing her along any further. He wanted to see what she sounded like when she couldn’t hold herself back. He wanted her to scream.

As he started quickening his movements he saw Hog was as well. As they had all started to kinda loose it in the moment. His hands wrapped around either side of her legs, holding a bit tighter than he needed, because he had to. He needed some leverage to push into her, to be close to her, and he saw Hog wrapping himself into her just the same. Her hands pulling Hog in. Pulling at him, leaving her lines in his shoulder as the movement of his tongue formed frantic words in her mouth.

Her thighs squeezed his head like a vice as they started to tremble, but it hardly deterred him. The way her hand wound into his hair, and the way the wet, warm, wonderful place he was immersed in pressed upward into his languid labours. It was heaven.

He hardly heard the sound of her finally letting go from between her legs at first, but she’d quickly lost control of the grip her thighs had placed around him. Squirming into him, and trying to escape him as he refused to let up. The sounds she made were just too beautiful.

So he let her make them until she’d finally managed to twist from his grasp, and push him away.

Then, for a while, there was only heavy breathing, and gentle caresses over flushed skin. She looked, well… maybe perfect, but if there was a thing better than that.

He let himself settle, and she pulled him into her. He laid against her, back to her, head on her chest. Just like she laid against Hog. He tilted his head to watch her breath, to watch the way her eyes fluttered under their lids, and he knew he was grinning again.

He felt a hand ghost over his forehead, as her tiny fingers combed through his hair, and he reached across himself to bring her other arm around his chest where he held it to him. Hog’s hand wandered back and forth between them, over Rat’s arm, across her cheek.

They were all a bundle of content sighs, and exhaustion, and some kind of elation that sticks to the back of your ribs like all your air is trying to escape.

Sometimes though, ya just know. Ya, know? That everything’s right, and right where it should be. Like all of ’em right now, just together, all sloppy spent, and sprawled across each other. Ya just know it’s gonna find a way, caus who would want it not to? When it’s right. When it is just what it
should be. Just how it is.

“I love you both.”

Chapter End Notes

So, uh, another lemony one, and short. Its a bit sloppy (excuse my use of the word), because I wanted to get it out for MeiHam Week- Day Two: Junkrat. For me- getting to do this, with them, is very much one of Junkrat's favorite things. Giving, and getting, and teasing, while being bossed around. Getting to see two people you care about in that way, and be with them in that way. Most importantly getting to feel together, and know that there is love in those arms. I dunno, a mushy scene about thresomeness, and oral sex.

Sorry again for the lack of updates, and expect minor edits to this chapter as I discover how badly rushed I was when I re-read it tomorrow. >.< Thank you all again for sticking with it! I'm gonna get back to replies soon! Your feedback is like the soothing, yet invigorating smell of rain on droughted soil!
Hog couldn’t help but fall asleep with a giant grin on his face. Hell, none of them could help but fall asleep, period, after all that. They probably would have stayed that way too if Mei could have been the only surprise to knock at their door in the waning hours of the afternoon.

“Hey, you guys in there?” Hana banged her fist against the bulky wooden barrier with a hurried voice.

“Yeah, just a min…”

“Cool,” Hana had pushed the door open before Rat could finish his sentence, “hey, you guys seen…”

There was a silence as the impatient Meka pilot took in the scene of furiously rustling blankets when out popped a very disoriented Snowflake.

“...Mei?”

It was indeed, and she was currently pawing around on the ground nearby to figure out where her glasses had gotten off too.

“Um, hello... good morning, Hana,” Mei pushed her frames clumsily onto her face, one of her arms still obviously asleep, as she attempted to sound like she wasn’t about to have a panic attack.

“Ha, definitely looks like it for you!”

Hana’s smile split her face as one hand flew up to cover her mouth, and he could tell the other stopped short of reflexively pulling out her phone for a snapshot.

Mei combed her fingers furiously through her mess of hair, a mortified blush across her cheeks, and still naked under the covers. Trying not to lean too close to him, but at the same time trying not to let the blanket expose either of them. She couldn’t seem to find a place to settle her eyes while Hana stopped laughing long enough to tell them why she’d barged in on them.

“So, Winston wanted to see you before the briefing. Want me to tell him you’ll be running late?”

Rat sat up from where Mei had dumped him out of her lap in her furious bid to emerge from the blanket with some modicum of dignity. He wriggled around a bit, adjusting, as if he was trying to drape himself over her.

“No!...No. It’s fine. I only need a minute to... change,” Mei clutched the blanket to her chest.

The warble in the little Snowflake’s voice made him smile a bit as she shrunk away from whatever it was that Rat was doing. Joints crackled as his slender partner stretched his arms over his head playing off his missed maneuver, and bless that scraggly boy, caus he knew Rat was about to open his idiot mouth and get himself in trouble. You can just tell after awhile, ya know, especially when you’re usually the one dealing with the fallout.

“Ya sure you’re alright Snowflake?”
He watched Mei as her head slowly swiveled to face what she also must have surely sensed was coming after Rat’s query.

“Caus, ya didn’t get too much sleep last night.”

*Heaven, have mercy on that boy, for he knows exactly what he does.*

Hog hid a smile as he shook his head, catching Rat’s eye as the cheeky motherfucker sealed his fate, “if ya know what I mean, ey?”

Rat poked at her with his elbow, and winked.

Hana snirked.

He didn’t need to see her face to feel Mei’s glacial stare. She sucked in a sharp breath, “I’m fine. Thank you.”

“Oh, you’re welcome.”

Rat didn’t miss his mark this time as he fell into her, all fits of laughter, and self satisfaction. Limbs crashed into a pile around her, and he managed to tangle himself into her side without completely exposing himself. Well, Hog could admire a bit more from his vantage, but, for Hana’s sake, the door side was shielded.

“So, I’m gonna let Winston know it’ll be a bit, but the briefing starts in an hour,” Hana pressed her fist into her pursed lips to keep from another laughing fit.

“Yes, please, I’ll only be a moment,” Mei’s voice came out coolly as she turned her glare away from Junkrat to smile pleasantly toward the door.

“Kk,” Hana made a little wave with the hand that was holding back her giggles, but as soon as she’d shut the door it wasn’t hard to hear her loose it in the hallway.

There was a long silence as the laughter retreated.

Uncomfortable for a moment.

“Somethin’ I said?”

Junkrat had leaned back on his prosthetic, propped up awkwardly, to pick at his teeth with his pinky nail. A goofy snarl forming to allow him a better reach around his favorite pointy gold fang.

Hog knew better than to be the first to laugh, He held his breath. 

*Don’t do it man. Hold. Hold!* 

Rat raised his eyebrows as if to repeat the question in his bored expression.

He couldn’t stop himself.

A deep belly laugh shook through him, and Mei’s head darted around to him, and then back to Rat. Of course, the cartoonish double take only served to make him laugh harder. Rat joining in a bit, as she dipped her chin into her chest with a huff, and threw her hands up in the air.

As the laughter grew to a cackle, a roar, Hog saw her falling back into him. Arms limp in surrender, letting the blanket slide down her body, as she bounced against his belly in her decent.
He looked down into her face. Her smiling face. Her laughing, happy, beautiful face.

Her fits sent them all into a new round of their own. She snuggled her back into him as she held her stomach against the jostling that obviously irritated her healing injuries. Her cheeks were red, and maybe it was a bit from her embarrassment, but it was mostly from the laughing.

Hog realized how much he needed this. This right here. Her being who she was - modest, and easily flustered, and good natured. Rat being his usual self. Him quietly witnessing these antics. He needed this part, the part where they all laughed together about it, because of how ridiculous they were. How ridiculous it all was.

And it really was. Just look at them.

Being caught like handsy teenagers, by Overwatch’s only actual teenager, in their castle suite. Trying to act like it was no big deal as three people of ridiculously varied size tried to hide under the same blanket at the same time.

“Guess I forgot ta’ put the sock on the door then?”

He knew Rat was secretly just as shaken up at the whole situation. He’d never admit it, of course, but he was painfully shy about anything to do with intimacy. At least the real side of it, and not the dumb jokes or bravado.

Junkrat scratched at the back of his neck when they’d all caught their breaths again, a little lingering grin, “ya think she’s gonna tell um all?”

“If she doesn’t her face will when we show up to the briefing together,” Mei let her head roll over his belly to face Rat, “I suppose it’s not a secret though?”

Something about the vulnerability of the question left him in a bit of a trance. He couldn’t help but fixate on the long part of her neck exposed by the way she was turned, brushing a stray strand of hair away from it idly. She shivered in a way he saw Rat found as delightful, and distracting as he had.

“.Right?” She ventured again, more unsure at their silence, her head turning back to look up into his eyes with a flash of worry.

*Who would want to keep you secret?*

“Nah, no way,” Rat piped up, squeezing himself next to her, “secrets is no good. Took too long to realize it’s easier without. Yeah, Hogs?”

“Mmm,” he agreed.

She lit up, and Rat too.

Smiles. He was getting to see a lot of them today, and he figured he should save them up in his mind. No way things were gonna get much easier anytime soon. He had to take these happy moments while he could, caus he could remember the other side easy enough, and hardship had a way of making that sort of joy scarce.

“Thank you,” Mei smiled, but her eyes danced a bit with the dim light of their room.

He could see Rat open, and shut his mouth a few times to attempt a reply. He felt he might have done the same without even thinking about it. Especially with the way she squeezed his hand where it had come to rest on her shoulder, and how her other had wrapped its way around Rat’s the same.
“I know, I haven’t been exactly direct,” He could see her face well enough as she spoke to tell her focus was far away, and it made him want to hold her close; bring her back.

“It’s going to take a while,” she rolled her lips into her mouth wetting them, “to be able to say what I mean, what I meant, and I’m afraid.”

He put his arm around the front of her chest to draw her into him reflexively now. He didn’t want her to have to be afraid, not here, not with him. But fear, it never works like that, and he knew it. So instead he wanted her to know she didn’t have to be alone. If he could spend the rest of his life proving to her how much he meant it, he would. He’d show her like he had always shown Rat.

How he was still learning how to show.

“Tell me what makes you feel afraid,” he whispered in his rich voice, “so I can help to chase away the dark.”

She nuzzled her head on his arm, bringing hers up to grasp around his wrist. To hold on. Rat had situated himself even more into her side, his arm draping over her in the opposite direction, holding hands in her lap.

“That’s what I mean. I’m afraid of what I feel,” she tightened her grip on him, “not about this, but also sort of about this. About how it will hurt, and how much it is to lose, and how much I still need it. How much I haven’t let myself feel about what I’ve already lost. What I know will be lost soon, because of what's coming. I’m sorry...”

The way she trailed off broke his heart. The way she apologized for feeling, and sharing her fears. How she’d been like him, reserved, and careful. Now, she told them what would have taken him forever to feel he could say. What was easier to say knowing full well how easy it was for forever to end.

At the last thought his fingers brushed over her, the feeling of reaffirming something is real, “don’t be.”

“You don’t gotta worry, we’re not goin’ anywhere,” Rat chimed in, a little quieter, but still with his own unique half full outlook.

“Ya see,” Rat held up his arm, dragging hers up too as he wouldn’t loosen his grip on her hand, “still got me one more o’ these, and a leggy to spare. That’s like two extra lives. Not as many as a cat, but ya won't catch me moaning ‘bout it.”

A real comfort, this one.

“Three if ya count your head,” he jostled them both with a laugh, “pretty sure you could live without it at this point.”

The little Snowflake stifled a laugh, reaching around his arm to cover her mouth, as Rat squinted suspiciously at them both.

A full few seconds passed before Rat finally let out an indignant, “hey!”

“My point exactly,” he quipped.

The Snowflake, and him tore into a new almost cackling laugh, a bit at Rat’s expense, but when had the boy held any punches?
Junkrat, being himself, crossed his arms and turned away for a good pout.

“Oh, come now, you know he was teasing,” Mei finally tried to mediate when Rat had prolonged his glowering protest, “I have to leave soon, please don’t be upset.”

He could see Rat’s stiff backed posture slackened, and he knew she’d noticed too, tapping at his wrist so he could move to let her sit up. She shuffled on her knees over to where his bare ass pointed rudely at them. Snaking her arms around his torso as high as she could get around him for how low she was.

Hog snorted at the blush that spread all the way across Rat’s chest as hers pressed into his back with the soft squeeze of her arms.

“Fine!” Junkrat threw his arms up, as she clung onto him in a way that Rat had often done to him, and turned his head over his shoulder to peer down at her slyly, “but you could make it up to me later, ya know? For bein so mean.”

Oh, boy. Here we go.

“Make it up to you?” Her head popped up from where she had her ear pressed against his shoulder blade.

“Well, yeah,” Rat twisted around to get a better look at her as she let her arms loose to sit back onto her knees, “I mean you don’t gotta, but like somethin’ nice, nothin’ too big or anything.”

A devious smile bared teeth across Rat’s face as her arms crossed in front of her now, like his had been, but in skepticism instead of sulking.

“Something nice? Like?”

Rat was about to do that thing again, where he opens his mouth, and dumb shit pours out. Something, something, covering up his real feelings; etcetera. This time, Hog wasn’t so sure it would be salvageable.

“Well, Hoggie usually lets me motorboat his tits, so I guess if you’re game that’s always a good time, yeah?”

Hog shook his head.

R.I.P. my love.

She blushed at his crassness, or maybe in anger, or disbelief, or some such cocktail of all sorts of the things that someone saying something like that out of the blue might mix up.

Point was, “you are an idiot, Rats.”

The eyes of his foolhardy Junker companion swiveled to him in, what had to be, feigned confusion at their reaction. As if he didn’t know perfectly well why that’s not the sort of thing you just say, or ya know? Ask for.

How could someone be so clever, and such a complete moron at the same time?

“I have to go.”

Her statement came in the tone of a full stop, it demanded to not be answered with any new witticisms, and Junkrat twitched at the way it was pointed at him.
She stood up, she gathered her clothes, she got dressed.

Rat flicked between watching, and shooting hopeful glances at him. He couldn't save the poor fool, no one could, and Rat certainly wouldn’t know how to dig himself anywhere but deeper.

This was usually about the time he’d doubled down.

“Hey, I..uh, didn’ mean to, ya know,” Rat ventured, making random motions with his hands to try and pantomime who knows what, as she pulled back on her boots, “suggest that. If that’s not your cuppa, well, whatever.”

She paused to look at him for a moment, and then stamp her heel to push the shoe the rest of the way on. She closed her eyes for a second, took a breath, and moved to her other foot.

Unsurprisingly, Rat took this as his que to figure out how deep his grave could get before he hit bedrock.

“Course, it can be whatever,” he lifted up his metal limb, and started to count off fingers, “I like foot rubs, well foot rub. Um, some boba maybe? Oh, oh, or if you're up to exploring some kinkier stuff we could always....”

Her other foot slammed down extra loud to cut Rat off, “Well, I’ll make you a deal, hmm? I’ll think about it if you ever give me a reason to want to be nice to you again.”

He swore she stuck her tongue out at Junkrat. Then, she smiled, stood up, and dusted herself off.

After another long, centering, sigh she worked her way over to where Hog was still sitting, and turned to look at him directly. Pointedly ignoring Junkrat as he’d returned to pouting posture.

“Like I said, thank you,” the most earnest smile draped across her features, “I can’t say how much these last few days have changed...well, everything. In the best way. I know things are chaotic, but I hope you can be patient with me while I find the right words for my heart?”

“Of, course,” he tried to reflect her smile.

The way she looked at his expression made him hopeful he had. The way she leaned in to softly press her lips onto his told him it didn’t matter, because there was no way she could miss the way he lit up under her kiss.

“I do love you,” she breathed out as she pulled away.

“I love you.”

He returned the proclamation without hesitation, and he could have easily been saying it to the look in her eyes, or the way her cheeks were pink, or how her hand lingered on his chest where she had put it to balance herself into their kiss.

She looked down shyly, his heart skipped, and those words echoed in the moment.

Then she turned to Rat whose head whipped back around so he could pretend he hadn't been jealously watching. She took a step to close the distance from his back. He watched as she ran the back of her hand along the side of Rat’s hair, down his neck, and opening her palm to mollify him.

“Thank you,” she whispered, and Rat shrugged to evade revealing the shiver her words had sent over him, “I do love you, too.”
She leaned in to press a kiss into the top of his head, despite his still dusty heap of hair, as her hand cupped his ear. Hog could see that Rat had melted, putty in her hands, but stubborn. He wouldn’t turn to her.

“I’ll see you both soon, and try to not be late, okay?” Her voice scolded knowingly, and she walked all the way to the door before she added, “be good.”

Hog could see the hint of her vulnerability once more at Rat’s silence. Of him not turning to her as she left. As she said goodbye for now.

“Idiot,” Hog pretended to cough under his voice.

“What? She oughta know I was only teasin’,” Rat was unsure of his own words as he finally twisted to see the door shutting.

“Dammit!”

The curse hissed off Junkrat’s lips as he finally did the first smart thing he had with his mouth since his aforementioned feats before they’d all passed out asleep.

Rat bolted to grab the door before it shut, opening it back up and dragging her back with it as she clung to the knob, knocking her completely off balance in the surprise. As she fell back he caught her with his body breaking her fall.

He threw himself into her, squeezing his arms around her ribs, and tucking her head under his. There was no way she could move from his full out greedy affection. He was hers, and he wanted to show her how much he hoped she returned the sentiment.

“I love you,” Rat’s lips moved against the crown of her head as he pushed kisses into it.

Mei’s head tilted back to look up at Rat’s face, at first hard to read, but then the same look she had given him spread over her expression.

Rat pushed himself up, curving his body over her, until he could face her from above all folded in on himself. With his hands trapping her cheeks he pressed his mouth onto hers, all apology, and passion, and a desire to connect. To be understood.

The kind of hopeful, begging, kisses Rat was so good at melting hearts with.

Not to mention he was completely naked with the door wide open. That was very Junkrat of him too, but she didn’t seem to mind, and that was just part of what he loved so much already.

Chapter End Notes

Wahoo! New chapter! I have...I think... seven more smallish ones to go. I usually don't like saying a number because then I go way over or under, and I get to be a mess. Anyhow, hopefully it'll give people still keeping up with the story something to look forward to, and help keep me accountable for!

Alright- as always you guys and your comments, and feedback, and kudos, and follows, are, like the smell of fresh ink on paper- invigorating, and inspiring! Thank you! Follow me on tumblr @IceyVoreadus for art reblogs, and occasionally my own art! :D
Won’t Look You in the Eye

Chapter Summary

It’s been a while, but I’m here to finish this. The final three chapters. There is fear, and fluff, love, and a juicy lemon.

If you are returning to this story, thank you for your patience. If it’s your first time, well yay for not having to wait a year+ for updates! And also thank you!

Here we go...

Mei felt like she was kinda floating as she moved into the hallway outside the room she’d shared with the Junkers. Her cheeks warm like they’d been in front of the fire she’d woken up to in her own temporary shelter before. The fire they’d started, in more ways than one, she’d supposed.

She’d emerged into the grand hall of the old fortress Overwatch had holed up in, still buzzing with activity, as various crews took their shifts. She’d quickly found Hana’s sly smile returned back at her when their eyes met from an impromptu gaming setup across the way- the tournament from the drop-ship apparently still progressing.

“He’s working in the area behind the big throne thingy,” Hana pointed with a nod of her head, “didn’t expect you so soon!”

Mei smiled shyly at the overdramatic wink the girl had added to the end as she squeezed past some boxes the former Strike Commander was starting to unpack.

“You talk to Winston yet?”

Mei shook her head, and Morrison’s expression tightened.

“I’ll join you then,” he gave a sharp whistle to get Phara’s attention, signaling for her to take charge without a word.

A grim little knot hit her. An ugly little pit sitting heavy, hanging from her ribs as they both cautiously entered the chaotic room where Winston was preparing what information was available to disseminate appropriately. Almost afraid to disturb his train of thought, Mei cleared her throat, and she swore Winston flinched just a bit at seeing who it was.

“Oh, Mei, uh, thanks for coming,” Winston adjusted his glasses and pointedly tried to avoid Morrison’s steeled gaze.

Too controlled. The control of a commander trying not to infect their team with the truth of the odds against them. It had been much colder the last time she’d seen a look like that, but she still shivered now.

“Please, just tell me,” her mind may have swam with remembered pain, but her voice was confident in her feelings.
She didn’t want to be handled with gloves.

Winston nodded, as much at her as knowingly at Morrison, turning on the viewscreen to quickly flashing clips of a well known worldwide news station.

“Widespread destruction...devastated infrastructure... it remains to be seen, but the death toll will be catastrophic on a scale we haven’t seen since...it’s hard not to think of the destruction of the last war... who’s to blame? No one has taken credit yet, but popular theory suggests... technologies being developed under the guidance of Overwatch…Mr. Carlisle can you tell us what you learned?”

The picture was building clearly when the screen paused on the interviewee the anchor Carlisle was about to speak with.

“Oh,” Mei could barely make the sound.

She knew what was coming as the playback returned.

“Here we have an environmental scientist who worked with the former Overwatch research team- narrowly avoiding the fated Ecopoint disaster. Tell us, Doctor, about your colleague, the recently revived Mei Ling-Zhou, and how you think there may be a connection between…”

The screen stopped playback again on an old Overwatch Ecopoint team photo. Too many faces her mind remembered in a much different light than the flash of Dr Fulker’s trusty camera when he’d insisted on the group shot.

Too many people you failed?

The dark little voice that had started to visit along with her memories of them whispered again.

“No,” she breathed out.

“I’m afraid so.”

Morrison’s voice was rough, but she’d gotten used to the strange way it still carried undertones of a lighter character. Empathy- here especially; the man knew about blame.

“First, this isn’t your fault,” Winston assured, “and we know this. But…”

Winston turned back to the screen continuing the video.

“As a known Overwatch operative, who had access to sensitive environmental data, is it not suspicious how quickly she returned to the once headquarters of the now SUPPOSEDLY disbanded organization in the very city this disaster is unfolding?

Look, I was just an intern back then, but I was part of the operation she was said to have perished in- which ALL of her colleagues perished in, and well, let’s just say some suspicious things were covered up. Now, this is just a theory- I didn’t have that kind of clearance, but what if they weren’t collecting data on the climate, but instead running experiments on large scale environmental altering tech. The kind that go wrong and kill whole teams without explanation. The kind of tech that makes monster storms...weaponized weather. I can’t say for sure, but so many dots connect, ya know”?Now the sole survivor returns into the center of the same kind of tragedy, now on a city sized scale. I think it’s worth looking into.”

Mei knew she would have fallen if her hand hadn’t found a nearby chair to brace herself against.
“That lowlife,” she hissed at that man's face flickering on the screens.

It was definitely him. Even though the heavy signal jamming equipment they’d already put around the perimeter was causing the feed to fizz. Blurring the picture, garbling the audio. Even then, she knew his voice.

“It was him,” her throat felt tight just thinking about it, “he’s the reason they’re all gone. Why she’s dead.”

She strung a few choice curses together in her native tongue before finally looking back at the two others in the room.

“What’s next?”

Junkrat was in no hurry at all to leave their new den. It was warm, and relatively comfortable in comparison to the last 48 hours. Best of all his blanket still smelled like the nice stuff she used in her hair.

“Get movin’, ya don’t wanna get her mad at ya,” Hog teased at him.

He tried his best to hide in the blanket, but Hog had already grabbed it, unwinding him from his cocoon. He was deposited on the floor, still naked and now cold again.

“Fine,” he sprawled out in surrender, naked cold surrender.

It wasn’t long before Hog had thrown Rat’s pants at his face, burying him in his own, less pleasant, scent just as he’d started to miss hers.

“Guess I gotta put on briefs to be debriefed, eh Hoggy?”

There was a few seconds delay before the expected sigh of disappointment came though.

“Hey,” he tried to find an honest tone, “you alright, Hogs?”

“Hmm?”

His large companion seemed distracted for a second before turning back to give him a little smile.

“It’s, all goooooo….WHAT THE!!..”

Junkrat popped up to his feet, well foot, hopping as fast as he could to see what had startled Hog - who was on his ass now.

“Hogs!?”

Buzzing around him was none other than the tiniest, angriest, volleyball of a bot. As far as he could tell, it was swearing in beeps, but it was definitely battering Hog at ramming speed. Covering him in frost as he swatted it with the hand not covering his face.

“Woah, there lil' fella!”

Rat took a few tries, but finally snatched it from the air as Snowball pulled against him with all their
force. The bot’s loud omnic rambling slowly died down into something that sounded much more sad.

“Guess ya, uh, heard all that, eh? Well I never heard sobbing in robot,” he chuckled at Snowball’s weepy little emotional display, “gotta say, pulls at me heart strings more than I would’a thought!”

Hog stood back up, looming over them, “keep popin’ out I’ll give ya something to cry about!”

Snowball’s face changed quickly to fear as they wriggled free to hide behind Rat.

“You’d cry caus it’d be my funeral- caus she’d kill me,” Hog huffed, “so I ain’t gonna hurt ya.”

At the mention of Mei, Snowball had quickly gotten over any perceived threat. Floating happily up to do a lap around them both.

“Common then,” Hog gestured to the door, “we can go catch up with her.”

Snowball rushed through the door as soon as it was wide enough to pass, but Hog shut it before Rat could pass through.

“Coat. Now,” Hog’s words were a command, and he followed them with only a little huffing.

Snowball had long left them behind in a trail of frost when they’d made it to the main hall. Seemed like the crew had just finished a round of the tournament, and by the looks of it the cowboy had lost.

It wasn’t long before Art had spotted them though, and rushed to meet them as they went to join the crowd.

“Ain’t it past your bedtime, kiddo,” He greeted the boy as he caught his breath, giving him a big wink.

“You holdin’ down Team Junk’s winnin’ spot?” Hog asked as Dani caught up.

“Of course!”

Their various fist bumps, and celebrations were cut short however, as Winston emerged with the soldier, and a very serious looking Snowflake.

Not that it stopped him from waving, and shouting her nickname across the room, “Snowflake, hey! Over here!”

Hana didn’t even bother to suppress her giggle at the few eyebrows that had raised. Mei even let a little light sneak back into her expression, and it left Rat with a big goofy smile as everyone gathered up.

“You okay?” Hog was the first to ask, softie.

It took her a moment. Lips pursed grimly.

“I will be.”

Her answer had come with a fierce, hopeful, look at them both, and it melted him. She was afraid, but she was brave. He hated that she was afraid, but had no fear that she’d find her way through it. With him, and Hogs by her side, too, if he had a say.

Winston cleared his throat just as Rat was sure he’d started to stare at her again, and broke into business without skipping a beat.
Things were bad, things would get worse, fingers were starting to point at Overwatch, and all that. It wasn’t until the screenshot of Mei’s face flickered onto the overhead with the words, “international manhunt” that Rat really started to fully understand.

“What the hell is that shit, huh? Why’s her face on the news?” He hadn’t realized how much his outburst had derailed the meeting until he saw everyone’s face turn to him.

“I, um, know this is all a lot for everyone to process,” Mei took over as Winston tried to form words to regain order, “but the situation leaves us with few options, and little time.”

“We have some choices to make, as an organization, as a team,” Winston took a deep breath through his nose, “as friends.”

Junkrat did not like where this was going. Not one little bit. Not as new newsclips with Mei’s face, with old picture of Overwatch, of Mei’s Ecopoint team, played in loops on the screens around them.

“First, It goes without saying, Agent Mei Ling-Zhou has nothing to do with this disaster,” Winston was firm, but of course no one disagreed, “however, she did work on a project that was connected to similar events. Events that never really came to light. So, we hope she can find answers behind the true terrorists, but we have a problem.”

Rat could feel his skin crawling with an anger he hadn’t felt in a long time.

“The people who did this, they’re actively trying to blame Overwatch, and specifically Mei,” Winston asserted as he turned on a recent clip.

One of some man talking about how she was the head of covert weapons testing, and “disappeared” for ten years. Implying she’d survived by knowing what was coming, and had been secretly working while she’d been, “frozen”.

“Who is that fuck, and where is he?” Hog’s tone was low and deadly smooth.

“He’s an executive from the energy sector,” a new voice answered, the Vishkar woman, “lots of ties. Multinational- Egypt, Russia, India, Mexico. Providing power for Vishkar projects, but not in Spain.”

“And a former ‘intern’ in Overwatch’s Ecopoint project,” the soldier chimed in.

“So people are actually listenin’ to this shady asshole?” He thrust his mechanical hand out at the screen as if to highlight the villain here.

“He’s married to Clear-Transmission Media’s owner,” the Vishkar lady rubbed at her temple, “so yes. Many people on many channels. Plus, he’s in the running for a seat in the Global Energy & Environmental Council.”

“So we used to fight smart bots, and now we’re up against fancy pants shitbag politicians?” Rat crossed his arms over his chest, “can’t say which I’ll enjoy blowin’ to bits more, really.”

Snowball gave him an angry beep from behind Mei’s shoulder, and the weirdly chill floating monk omnic- well he didn’t really have an expression per say, but Rat imagined it was disapproving.

“This will require more…finesse,” ol’ Vishkar raised her voice, and an eyebrow, at him.

“Yes,” Mei was a bit quiet, but she slowly gained everyone’s attention, “so that’s where our choice comes in.”
The whole room had focused once more on the little Snowflake as she gathered herself up. Rat held back an urge to cheer for her.

“We have options, but very few, and none easy,” her tone was somber, but she found a heavy smile for her friends.

“The first, and best for everyone, is to turn me in…”

“Abso-fuckin’-lutely not,” he interrupted her, but this time no one had looks for him, just shows of agreement.

Mei looked down at her feet, he could see her fists clenched, holding back the shaking in her arms.

“If you don’t, I’m a criminal, we’re all criminals,” she didn’t look up, “they’ll say I’m guilty for not. Don’t you understand?”

“Those arseholes will blame ya no matter what. Overwatch isn’t about that, sacrificing you for the sake of ourselves- it’s not happening,” Lena’s eyes were burning behind her goggles.

“Plus, whatcha got against criminals, eh?”

Junkrat couldn’t help his impulse to make the joke, but it payed off as she finally lifted her head back up. A little smile on her lips, even if her eyes sparkled with the pressure behind them.

“Our other option is considerably more difficult,” Winston broke the tension, “but it’s the only one we ever had in my mind.”

“We prove we didn’t do it, and we find out who did,” Mei’s voice was the closest to actual anger he’d ever heard as she stated their plan. Sharp, and resolute.

“We stop them from doing it again.”

Her last statement ended with cheers all around, before Junkrat cut through with the question on everyone’s mind.

“So, where do we start?”
Mei felt her whole self rattling as the briefing ended. She knew they wouldn’t let her do what she had wanted- to save them all from being on the run, but she’d hoped somewhere that she could.

“Eh, so, uh, where we going?” Junkrat’s voice startled her a bit.

“Huh?”

“Where we off to, Snowflake? Ya know, to take down the bad guys, and save the world and all that?”

Rat leaned down to be eye level, hands in the front pockets of his parka. His breath hung in the air in front of her.

“Oh, um,” she wasn’t sure how to answer.

The assumption warmed her up a bit. It implied a hope, a desire that last night wasn’t a one off. Or was it afternoon? She’d stopped keeping track.

Hog had grunted a little questioning sound at her delay as well.

“Well the plan is, um, you see,” she searched them for any sign that she would get away with her next statement, “I’m going to go to the Ecopoint.”

There was a strange, moderately worried, look when she saw their reaction, but no outright sign of the pushback she’d expected.

“I know ya got a lotta bad memories there,” Rat moved to put a hand on her arm, but seemed to hold back with the crowd still milling about, “but you know you can lean on us. Ain’t that right, Hog?”

“Mhmm,” He agreed through his mask.

Mei, however, did not. They’d misunderstood, though their looks made more sense now.

“Oh, um, okay- you know I….it means a lot to me,” she completed the gesture Rat had hesitated to make, earning her a blush from the Junker, “it really, it does, but…”

The red in Junkrat’s face quickly gathered intensity at the last word before he jerked back from her soft touch with a suspicious squint to interrupt her.

“But what?”

“I’m going. Just me,” Mei breathed out, “full stop. It’s just what it is, and I hope you understand.”

A question looked like it formed a few times as Junkrat’s stance shifted, his arms searching the air for an appropriate gesture.

“Hmmm,” Hog’s affirmation was a growl, and it pierced her, “looks like we’re not needed here Rat.”
“Oh, no, no, please,” she reached out as Hog turned, and Rat looked from one to the other.

“You, uh,” Rat’s voice warbled as his confused look settled on her, “really mean it, eh?”

“I...there’s just, you have to understand. There are a lot of factors. Dangers. The mission, just, it’s meant for... well, it just has to be this way,” Mei stumbled through the things she’d convinced herself earlier that she’d tell them about what needed to be done. What she had to do.

_Because alone is what you deserve._

Her haunting voice reminded her, twisting the knife of Rat’s expression deeper into her gut.

“It’s okay, I getcha,” Rat choked out, nodding strangely as he hugged himself, turning to follow Hog.

“Please,” she whispered through the tears dripping over her lips.

She wasn’t even convinced herself anymore as they pushed past the crowd.

“I CAN’T LOSE YOu too, please...” her shout had been strangled by a sob.

Arms straight stiff at her side, fists balled up, eyes squeezed shut, and sinking steadily to the ground, because she couldn’t face anyone after that. Especially not them.

“Pleas...”

The last syllable was knocked out along with her breath as Junkrat collided with her at full speed, wrapping himself around her in a hug that could easily be mistaken for a chokehold. Hog wasn’t far behind, sliding behind them, scooping them both up.

“You’re not gonna lose us, remember?” Junkrat’s words were warm in her hair. “We’re right here. We gotcha.”

Mei couldn’t help but bust into a full laughing crying fit now. She might not be able to see the team’s faces, but she knew what they must look like. It wasn’t until she felt her hug pile jostle that she stopped for a second.

Lena had thrown her arms as wide as she could between Rat and Hog to rest her head on Mei’s shoulder. Then Hana, and the kiddos, Lucio, Winston, and Fareeha, Reinhardt, and...Morrison? She even swore she saw Hanzo, and McCree. Pretty soon she couldn’t see anyone at all, but she felt everyone.

“Thank you,” she managed from her compressed lungs.

It took a minute before everyone had untangled, all goofy laughs, and friendly jibes. It was the first time since this started she could see the Overwatch she was here for; the one she remembered. The family. Her family.

She loved them. She was in love with a couple of them, in fact. The last to let go.

She didn’t want to let go. To go without them.

“You’ll have to pack coats,” she couldn’t stop herself, and it came with another ugly sob, “and wear them! It’s going to take a lot of quiet connections to smuggle us there- so no explosions. No larceny...”
Rat cut her off with a kiss. At least two people cheered. There was definitely clapping, and possibly a wolf whistle.

“Maybe a little’ larceny?” Hog negotiated, and she nodded as Junkrat continued to press his now parting lips into her.

“Get a room, agent,” Morrison ordered from nearby, but his tone gave away the stifled laugh.

“Yessir!”

The Junker’s compliance was enthusiastic.

Chapter End Notes

This is a short one. Sorry!
Claim You

Chapter Summary

Lemon warning! This one has sex, all consensual, and happy. Stay tuned for a short afterward to the story!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

They had packed all night, while simultaneously moving between Mei’s arctic safety lectures, and visits from various agents dropping in to update them.

Hog stuck to doing what he was told.

The situation was serious, even he knew their chances were shit, and he usually liked to see himself as a glass half full kinda guy. Still, he couldn't think of anything else he'd rather be doing. Well he could, but none of those things were reasonable given the circumstances.

He wasn't particularly looking forward to the cold, but he'd bare it, because there wasn't a chance in hell the little Snowflake woulda ever convinced them she should do this by herself. She could, sure, but no one should face that kinda history by themselves. Specially someone you love.

His mind wanted to fret about the countless reasons that very thought should be absurd- love, but he was tired of worrying about explaining himself. Especially TO himself.

He knew how he felt, and he knew that those feelings meant that it was way past too late when she'd tried to give them an out.

Journeys always seemed symbolic, but this one really felt like it carried the weight of so many feelings. Each laid out on its own path along the way. So much to be discovered, and resolved. Pain, and regret. Comfort, and love.

It felt like the kind of adventure he’d walk away from with answers. For himself, and that pesky urge of his for understanding; for a certain redemption. For Junkrat, Jamison, and his feelings- his search for a treasure worth holding onto. And so much for her.

She deserved it.

He wanted her to be able to stand with them, tell her story, listen to theirs, and share each other.

He wanted to do this for him, too. To see what it felt like to be on the right side of history. To defy the law for the greater good- for certain this time. To destroy a corruption that deserved destroying. To be a hero.

It seemed funny to think of it as self serving, heroism, but he knew it could be both. In fact, he knew people who thought they were selfless heroes usually turned out to be villains. He'd seen it first hand.

So, yeah, this was for him, her, Rat, and them.
It was just an extra streak of luck that criminal activity brought out the best in him, and what mark could be better suited than one that required going to the literal end of the earth to steal secret government documents to fuck over corrupt assholes? It was downright romantic.

Plus, there was definitely a payday at the end of this. A vacation to somewhere warm, perhaps?

He'd turned to ask where'd they'd go after just in time to find a pleasant view. Picking up boxes did require an awful lot of bending over. Rat was trying to pretend not to be enjoying the same vantage, but his lack of subtly earned him a teasing arm punch.

“Eyes on your work!”

“Oh, they are, least I was hoping there was an opening for the job here in a minute,” Rat wiggled his eyebrows at Mei.

Hog watched as she spun on her heels, and he expected another of her witty verbal parries, but she hesitated. Face all red. He wasn't disappointed in what she asked instead.

“Oh? I'm not sure you're qualified,” she dropped the box she was toting, and crossed her arms as it hit the floor hard, “got any references?”

Rat made a few weird noises trying to form an answer, so Hog saved him, “I'll vouch for his work experience.”

“Oh?” She'd let a smirk bend the serious look she was pretending to hold, “is he a team player?”

Rat was full boiled lobster red, holding a hand up as if to pantomime words Hog was sure his brain couldn't even form at the moment.

“He definitely knows how to play nice with others,” Hog let out a laugh that might have been menacing in another context, maybe it still was, “and, when push comes to shove, he's good at rollin’ over and taking one for the team too- real reliable in a tight spot.”

“Hmmm,” she was starting to lose her own fake composure as Hog started to broaden what counted as innuendo.

“Good with his mouth,” Hog slid off his mask so they could see the gesture he'd made with his tongue, “strong back, he can really push himself into the grunt work, and…”

She’d moved in front of Hog lightning fast, popping up on her tiptoes in front of him to put her palm over his mouth and silence him. It had earned her a muted laugh, puffing breaths between her fingers as the air escaped.

“You might kill him if you keep going,” she turned her eyes to Rat who looked like he might be glitching out, “he seems a bit shy about his...um, qualifications.”

She let out a tittering laugh at how ridiculous continuing this was.

“You know, don't take my word for it, I'm sure an interview would clear things up,” Hog caught her by surprise, scooping her up, “I'll even sit in on it with you, as an advisor of sorts, we could do a practical.”

He walked her to the door, closing it, and sitting against it with his back, placing her in his lap. She took a moment to look between the two of them, but the way she settled into him felt like she was still game for it.
“Well, then, um,” she cleared her throat, and composed herself, “tell us why you think you’re the right fit for this position, Mr. Fawkes.”

The way she emphasized her words made Hog giddy with the idea of having a new teammate in his favorite sport—fucking with Junkrat.

Or was it fucking Junkrat.

Both.

“Uh…,” Rat nearly tripped over himself turning to face them.

“Don’t be bashful, I’m sure this will be very,” Hog shifted pointedly, “hmmm, insightful?”

“I’ve, uh, been told I have, er…”

His hesitation got worse as she sprung up from Hog’s lap to appraise him, arms clasped discerningly behind her back, “go on.”

“A lotta, I got a lotta drive,” Rat giggled as he finally joined in, standing straight, dusting himself off, “and, I don’t quit till I know the jobs done right.”

“Is that so?” She came from behind Rat to stand in front again, turning over her shoulder to address Hog now, “he’s definitely got the potential to be a good fit, don’t you agree?”

“It’s a hard sell,” Hogs response earned him a cocked eyebrow from Rat.

Mei started to fidget a bit as Rat started back in.

“I got, uh, plenty of on the job training experience, and I’m a real go getter if you…”

“Okay, okay!” Mei’s foot stamped on the ground, eyes screwed shut, and yelling out, “I can't take it anymore!”

He saw her left eye crack open, searching their face. He shared Rat’s apologetic expression, as she let out a cute growl.

“Can we just fuck already?!”

Oh.

Oh!

“The lady knows how to close a deal,” Hog laughed as Junkrat had already descended on her.

Rat’s frame overwhelmed her as he pushed her back with his insistent kissing. Holding fast to her wrist which was still stiff at her side as her brain seemed to catch up with her words.

It wasn't but a few steps before Rat had guided her back to Hog’s lap, breaking off the kiss long enough for him to pull her shirt over her head as she undid Rat’s pants.

“You have too many buckles!” She grumbled, but Rat’s expression said that he found her frustration an interesting diversion.

Hog teased back, bringing his hands around to envelop her breasts, quite a handful, even for him, as he snaked his fingers over them. Fidgeting his thumb across their peaks, as she rewarded him with a
breathy little keen.

Her hands had paused in their work, holding fast to either side of Rat’s unbuckled belt, forcing his hips to arc toward her as her own started to trace pleasing circles in Hogs lap in time with his teasing.

Her head fell back for a moment, but as Hog slowed she’d dipped it back down, her eyes meeting Rat’s with the kind of hungry expression he hadn't had the pleasure of seeing on her face.

She never broke eye contact as she worked the fly of Rats pants open, greeted by what pressed beneath- held back only by the thin fabric of his goofy smiley face boxers.

Oh, but she didn't miss a beat, her eyes focused on her new target, and she crawled closer until her cheek could rest against Rats hip, facing the length of him head on. Rat stood trying not to rattle out if his skin as he worked out what to do with his hands.

Still, she'd given it a moment, hesitating in her momentum toward Rat to look over at Hog as her back arched in a roll of her hips. A bite of her lower lip as she nuzzled against Rats leg, so tantalizingly close to the part of him that begged for her, whispering out an invitation.

“A bit of help if you please?”

She'd moved her knees open a bit, wiggling her hips as she undid whatever held her leggings on in front, and Hog gladly rose to the occasion.

He slid his hands down her side, raking lightly with his fingertips as she curved to meet his touch, her hands clinging to Rats legs for stability all while she nuzzled closer to the sole button still holding him back. Hogs fingers hooked into her waistband, and he took his time peeling them off of her, chasing the fabric with kisses that increasingly became tastes, became bites.

He couldn't stop the impulse to tease teeth over soft willing skin, and he made throaty hums as she pushed back into him. As she was frozen in her task again moaning hot breaths into Junkrat as his fingers wound through her hair. Every sinew of Rat’s hand popped up in the claw it formed to hold back his instinct to push her into him, but she wasn't hesitating to move forward now.

As she worked Hog had a chance to admire the way her lacy blue hip hugging panties wound their way around her shape, gripping into her hips like he had, molding alluringly close to places he found himself drawn into as well.

Her face turned up to find Rat’s eyes darting between hers, and where her hand found itself finessing open a strained button. The sinewy Junker tensed from head to toe, mumbling incoherently between gasping little breaths. Now punctuated by the sharp inhale, and helpless moan she'd made as Hog’s fingers skinned along the outside of her blue lace, applying pressure at just the right spot.

He gave her a moment to return her attention to Rat, as her hand pressed up his prosthetic leg, over the scar along the dip of his hip bone, until finally up, and up as Rat’s head fell back into the arch of his whole body. She'd made a happy little sound despite herself as she slid her fingertips in a caress, then back down again as each finger wrapped around his cock. Until finally she held him in her grip, refusing to move as Rat’s free hand clawed helplessly into his own leg.

Hog was eager to spur her into motion, watching the way she teased Rat was almost a cruelty even to him, but a perfect one. Hog returned to tracing the pattern of her panties into the warmth of her thighs, petting at her, teasing her in turn as her hips chased his retracting hand.

Hog wasn't much for long lasting frustration at the moment, and so he positioned himself closer, enough that he could tease them both. His fingers began working circles over her, and in turn with
her twitching thighs she stroked her hand up and down Rat’s cock. Pausing occasionally as she lost concentration.

She took the opportunity to switch tactics. Instead of up and down, she pushed Rat close to her lips, kissing him as he shivered, moving her lips along the side of him. Flicking out her tongue, moaning with Hog’s interspersed quickening of pace.

Finally Hog had lost patience with her flimsy undergarments and with less fitness than he’d used to removed her leggings, her panties fell around her knees. Now, Hog knew he couldn’t hold himself long in the position, but he maneuvered so that he could find his face as close to her as that blue lace had been. To taste her as she tasted Junkrat.

Her body seemed eager as she wriggled involuntarily, trying to keep herself in a rhythm as her mouth explored Rat deeper and deeper. Soon Hog couldn’t hold himself in the awkward position he had been, and moved back to his knees behind her. But this time he teased a different wanting warmth, finding his earlier attentions had left her slick he let his finger drift across her, and found her body following him, pushing him into her.

“Please,” she huffed, catching her breath as her hand continued the work her mouth had been busy enjoying, “I want it, please. Ins…”

She pushed into Hogs fingers, and he obliged as she set the pace. She’d paused, letting his hand rest still inside once his palm rested flush against her as she panted against Rat. Hog gave her just a second to adjust before he gently arched, and straightened his fingers in quick succession.

She gasped, taking her mouth from Rat, it hung open, tongue out as Hog’s fingers elicited the delightful pressure of her enjoyment.

With his free hand Hog thought it might be fun to occupy her mouth once more, and he hooked his free hand around her cheek, and into her mouth. Rat watched with great interest as her tongue wound around Hog’s fingers like he had felt her doing around him moments before as her hand continued to keep pace.

“Oh, shit, shit, I'm,” Rat hissed in breaths unsure what to do, or more accurately where to do it.

Mei wriggled her mouth free from the fingers Hog had used to explore the feeling of it, and wrapped her lips over Rat’s shaft, pushing him into her throat. Continuing up and down for a moment until Junkrat couldn’t hold back the groaning growl he’d made as she’d closed her eyes to concentrate. As she paused her movement to let him buck his hips into her mouth at the pace he needed. To let the spasms along the length of him subside as her throat bobbed, swallowing what she’d teased out from him.

As her lips slid away from Rat, her tongue eliciting a last shiver, Hog continued his motions inside her. A little more, the pulling in and out a bit, and a bit more, until she started to follow his retreat. Until the gentleness seemed abandoned for a desperate meeting in the middle of the forces pushing into each other. Her needy little sounds collapsing with her, and Rat as he sank to the ground, and her head now rested in his lap. Only exposing herself more easily to Hog’s attentions.

And she let him for a bit, go on like they were, fast, and hot, and wet. Until she couldn't take it any longer, “you have to stop, oh! Please!”

He didn't want to, he knew it was only a bit further if she could just endure, but he wouldn't overstep his invitation. As he withdrew, she collapsed, sprawled out and sucking in greedy breaths.
Hog sat down close, appreciating her, and Rat’s spent and wracked half dressed forms. He was content.

She was not.

She sat up, pulling her remaining clothes all the way off, and tossing them aside. Turning her attention to Hog, crawling on all fours to him as she had with Rat, she began to run a hand up his thigh.

“Not fair,” she ran her teeth over her bottom lip, “you're still dressed. Can we fix that?”

Hog let out a little chuckle, she was certainly feeling generous, and Rat was enjoying his turn at a bare version of a view he’d enjoyed earlier.

She didn’t take Hog’s lack of movement as lack of enthusiasm, and Hog found himself enjoying her hurried tugging at the latches of his belt buckle.

“Might find that one a bit, uh,” Rat strung together a thought in his daze, “a bit hard ta’swallow!”

She yanked at Hog’s loose belt, snapping the leather as it slid free, “I like challenges.”

She moved to the buttons of his fly.

“Well, you let me know if ya wanna, ya know, team up….yeah, or whatever.”

Hog snorted at Rat’s attempt at an offer, though by the looks of it he was already coming back around. Oh, youth!

“Oh!?"

Mei’s mix of surprise, and excitement made Hog’s nervous energy subside, and he realized she’s already managed to throw open all his defenses and leave him bare, so to speak.

The way she’d sat back up a little, her arms squeezing her cleavage into an almost ridiculous slope along her chest, the way she almost seemed to be calculating him, well it pushed the last nerves from him, and opened up the floodgates.

“Oh, you weren’t joking!”

She turned to Junkrat as if to say, “are you seeing this!?"

“Hold on, watch,” Rat popped up, pressing himself into her back, and wrapping his arms around her, “this.”

Rat squeezed her nipples a bit harder than I'm sure she was expecting, twisting a bit as they jiggled at her pained gasp, though she didn't stop him from a few more maneuvers. Oh, and the way she moved! The looks Rat was giving him- It didn't take long for Hog’s cock to stand at its full attention.

“Ya see,” Rat said squeezing her again, as she writhed into him.

“Don't think I could miss it,” she gave Hog a seductive grin.

“Though I suppose to do this right I'll have to accept your offer,” she turned to Rat, “left or right?”

Rat quirked a brow, but she didn't give him a chance to pick, leaning down as her tongue lapped the top of his length before her mouth took in as much as she could, sliding it down one side.
growled in his belly to hold back as her eyes invited Rat to keep her company.

Rat had a bit more experience in this department, but never a partner in crime. Rat put his mouth around the other side, and in tandem they moved along it, their lips nearly joining at the top.

“Fuck, that's good!”

Hog could barely form the words before he'd looked down to find two opened mouths, tongues colliding against him, and each other.

It wasn’t long before Rat was distracted, watching her work seemed to have him hard again, and Hog had a new plan.

“She seems to have this handled, Rat,” Hog twitched as her eyes turned up to look at him as she kept working her tongue over him, “why don’t you use some of that energy on her?”

Rat couldn’t take his eyes off her as she slowly ran her mouth up the side of Hog’s cock. Flourishing at the tip she made eye contact with Rat, and wiggled her hips wantingly.

“Please,” she smiled at Rat, both her hands working around Hog’s shaft, “fill me up.”

Her blunt request had them both groaning with want, and Junkrat quickly moved to position himself behind her.

She let out hot little breaths on the slick places she’d left on Hog with her tongue as Rat took himself in his hands, pushing softly at her entrance.

“Mhmmm, please, fuck me!”

Junkrat slid into her as she begged. Until he’d pushed her into Hog who was winding his fingers into her hair as her tongue flicked out to languidly swirl over the base of his cock.

He could feel her grinding her hips back into Junkrat, letting herself become accustomed to his shape inside her before returning to work up Hog’s shaft.

“Please, don’t hold back,” she whined into him instructing Junkrat.

Rat didn’t need to be told twice, and he went to finding a rhythm that made her moan into Hog even harder. Her eyes all glassy, and full of an ecstasy he felt through the way she worked him.

Unable to focus like she had earlier, instead she’d squeezed her breasts together over him, rubbing his cock with each thrust Rat took. Her tongue flourishing over the top every time it emerged.

Hog almost felt bad as he came hard enough to make a mess of them both, and then again at seeing them like that. Dripping with him. Still fucking each other in a frenzy.

“Fffuuuuuccckkk,” he let himself collapse against the door, the mess was their problem now, his brain had officially checked out of reality.

He could feel one of her hands had moved between her own trembling legs, and he could hear Rat let out a deep growling moan as she tensed up. Rat pulled back adding to the sticky mess, and a few moments later the frantic movement of her hand seized up into her clenching orgasm.

After a few minutes of panting, and a few of toweling off, the two had returned to Hog, all collapsing in a pile of spent, naked, bliss.
Nap time.

Waking up felt awful. Hog just wanted to stay here, even if his hungover brain didn't know where that was.

The first thing he felt was warmth, her nestled naked into him, and Rat around her. That helped the headache.

It didn't feel like it had been that long laying here on the ground, but, his body would disagree. His muscles insisted it had been a thousand years beneath the cold earth. His joints were stone.

Worth it.

“Hey,” Mei whispered up as he looked over at her, seeing Rat pop an eye open too, “why are you lazy bones just laying around? We have an expedition to pack for!”

“5 mins,” Hog groaned.

She smiled, eyes closed again.

“10,” Rat countered.

Mei settled herself again. Nestling in between them.

“30, final offer,” she wriggled closer, “now shut up!”

And they did, after a good laugh, find a bit of peace in the quiet. Managed a whole two more hours of sleep, in fact, before they’d woken up sore, but wholly content.

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Mission Day- 0

Everything was ready to go, but there was one lingering loose end for Junkrat.

Hog, and Mei had agreed. It would give them all something to look forward to once they’d tied up their own problems.

“Hey, old timer,” Hog called out to Pappy, holding out a little earpiece, “put this on.”

The kiddos were all still asleep in this ungodly hour. Nadia on one side. Kyle on the other. Leo had apparently disappeared shortly after they’d set up camp.

Good riddance.
Pappy put in the earpiece, and Junkrat grinned at him, “hey old timer! Ya understand me?”

The old man smiled, and tapped at the device, “what can’t tech do these days, huh?”

“Yeah, and that one’s on me, so Merry Christmas,” Rat smirked, “anyway, we ain’t got much time so, let’s get to it, yeah?”

He saw Mei, and Hog share a quick smile as he unscrewed his prosthetic arm. Turning it upside down, Hog held his palm out as he shook it until the little drawstring bag inside fell out.

“So,” he shoved his arm back into the socket quickly using it to snatch the bag out of Hog’s hand, “whatta we have here, ya ask?”

He swung the bag like a pendulum as Pappy looked on amused as ever at his eccentricity.

“Tell the man what he’s won Hoggie!”

Hog let out a laugh as Junkrat ran his free hand under the bag like a game show host.

“Well, Rat,” Hog’s booming voice played along, “in this bag we have three untraceable, invaluable, crystal shards.”

Rat poured them out into his palm with a small clinking, “used to be one big one, but it’s been through a lot.”

Pappy looked at his hand, brows furrowed.

“What is this about?”

Mei chimed in at the old man’s worried tone, “to sell. For the kids. But it’s also kinda selfish. You see…”

“We want you to open up a place to help people like you guys,” Rat interrupted, “gonna be a lot of scared kiddos, all alone.”

“They’ll need someone to keep them from falling prey to the bad guys who will surely be recruiting in the aftermath,” Mei chimed back in.

“Those aren’t just some pretty stone,” Hog shifted, “they’re, uh, from an Omnium core. They form at high heats. Rarest thing on the planet right now. Only one. Er, three as it were. The bots could use that for some nasty shit, but if it’s in the right hands…”

“It’ll be worth a pretty ridiculous fortune,” Junkrat let out a high laugh, “and we already got a buyer who won’t ask ya questions.”

“Someone I trust to use this for good,” Mei smiled at what once might have been seen as a soul, now all fractured.

“As good as bots get,” Rat huffed begrudgingly holding out the core shards to the old man.

“It’s me biggest treasure,” Rat let it slide into Pappy’s hand, “so, that’s why I’m givin’ it to them.”

He nodded his chin at the still sleeping kiddos.

“So that when we come back, when we clear her name, and ours, and all of theirs,” he gestured to the whole castle, “we can keep our promise.”
“To teach them new languages, and about the planet,” Mei chirped in.

“And rocket science,” Hog smirked.

“And the genius of Junker engineering,” Rat finished with a fidgeting excitement.

Pappy looked down into his hand, and they could all see the tears dripping over the shards that glowed strangely in response.

“Then, I suppose, I’m in for another new adventure in these twilight years, eh?” Pappy smiled up at them, “so, let me give ya something to insure the investment.”

The old man tucked the crystals away into their bag, and into his jacket pocket, and pulled out a different object. A small silver lighter.

He held it up, turning it around a few times. Rubbing his thumb over the inscription like a prayer. He flipped it open.

“A flame to light your way,” he flicked the switch, and it sparked to life illuminating them all in the misty cold dark of predawn, “and to guide you back home safe.”

Then it clicked shut, and he almost missed the heat despite how small a flame it might have been.

Pappy handed it to Hog, who whispered a reverent, “five,” closing his giant hand around it.

Pappy put his own hand over the top, “you take care of eachother. Love will keep you warm, and alive, and it’ll keep you going, but don’t forget your wits. I’m gonna want that back, ya hear?”

Mei’s hand reached over to lay on top of the two others, “promise.”

“Yup,” Junkrat added his too, “promise.”

Hog nodded, “and we keep our promises.”

Pappy nodded, “just hold onto those looks- the ones you have for eachother. Warms an old man’s heart.”

They all laughed a little as their hands separated, and Rat watched Hog tuck the lighter away.

“Don’t wanna say goodbye. So tell those kiddos we said we’d see em later, yeah?”

Rat fidgeted, and Pappy nodded.

A deep breath they’d all been holding fell out, and without another word they gone to stand in the cold outside the castle gates. To watch the sun come up, and be together. Until the morning, and for as many after this one as they could manage.

“I love you both. Let’s go!”

Chapter End Notes

If you haven’t checked out the song the chapter titles were based on you’re missing out on an important element of why this story felt the way it did: “Until the Morning”, by
Akron/Family

So.

Holy wow. I can’t believe it’s finally done. Sure there’s more to the story, but this bit, this bit wraps up here. This fic has been one of my favorite writing journeys, and every single comment, Kudo, and share has been a real light in my life. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Because I’m not sure I’ll be able to write their mission further I’ll answer story questions the best I can about the loose ends if you have them. If you’re inspired by the story, and the strange cast of characters and details I’ve added, it’s open to the community to build on if anyone feels so inclined!

I love you guys! <3

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